

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

# The Politics of Widening Participation and University Access for Young People

*Making educational futures*

Valerie Harwood, Anna Hickey-Moody,  
Samantha McMahon and Sarah O'Shea



The authors have produced a strong text which takes us forward in the long journey to a university that embodies its society. It's strong in two ways that do not always go together but are combined very well here: effective use of theories of the subject, and nuanced, insightful material from students themselves. Great work.

Simon Marginson, Director, ESRC/HEFCE Centre for  
Global Higher Education, University College London



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# The Politics of Widening Participation and University Access for Young People

Young people with tenuous relationships to schooling and education are an enduring challenge when it comes to addressing social inclusion, yet their experiences remain overlooked in efforts to widen participation in higher education. *The Politics of Widening Participation and University Access for Young People: Making Educational Futures* examines the existing knowledges and feelings these young people have about higher education, and, through the authors' empirical research, demonstrates how sustained connections to educational futures can be created for them.

Drawing from an empirical study with nearly three hundred young people who have precarious relationships to schooling and live in disadvantaged communities, this book offers new insights into their subjects' experiences of educational disadvantages. It explains the different ways the university is constructed as impossible, undesirable or even risky by young people experiencing educational disadvantage. The book brings their stories into focus to offer new ways of thinking about the educational consequences of alienation from school. It shows how our understanding of the politics of experience of these young people has an important impact on our ability to develop appropriate means through which to engage them in higher education.

This book challenges and significantly advances the popular frames for international debate on widening participation and the ethical right to educational participation in contemporary society. As such, it will be of key interest to academics, researchers and postgraduate students in the fields of higher education, sociology of education, anthropology of education, cultural studies of education and sociology as well as to those concerned by the impact of disadvantage on young people's understandings of, and aspirations toward, education and attending university.

**Valerie Harwood** is an ARC Future Fellow and Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, Australia.

**Anna Hickey-Moody** is based at the Department of Gender & Cultural Studies, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney.

**Samantha McMahon** is a Research Fellow for the UOW-AIME Research Partnership at the School of Education, University of Wollongong.

**Sarah O'Shea** is an Australian National Teaching and Learning Fellow at the University of Wollongong, Australia.

## **Routledge Research in Higher Education**

For a full list of titles in this series, please visit [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)

### **Revolutionizing Global Higher Education Policy**

Innovation and the Bologna Process

*Joseph M. Piro*

### **Working with Underachieving Students in Higher Education**

Fostering inclusion through narration and reflexivity

*Edited by Maria Francesca Freda, José González Monteagudo and Giovanna Esposito*

### **Graduate Education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

A Student Perspective

*Edited by Robert T. Palmer, Larry J. Walker, Ramon B. Goings, Charmaine Troy, Chaz T. Gipson, and Felecia Commodore*

### **Transnational Education Crossing ‘Asia’ and ‘the West’**

Adjusted desire, transformative mediocrity, neo-colonial disguise

*Phan Le-Ha*

### **Experiencing Master’s Supervision**

Perspectives of international students and their supervisors

*Nigel Harwood and Bojana Petrić*

### **The Design of the University**

German, American, and “World Class”

*Heinz-Dieter Meyer*

### **The Politics of Widening Participation and University Access for Young People**

Making educational futures

*Valerie Harwood, Anna Hickey-Moody, Samantha McMahon and Sarah O’Shea*

# **The Politics of Widening Participation and University Access for Young People**

Making educational futures

**Valerie Harwood,  
Anna Hickey-Moody,  
Samantha McMahon and  
Sarah O'Shea**

First published 2017  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2017 Valerie Harwood, Anna Hickey-Moody, Samantha McMahon  
and Sarah O'Shea

The right of Valerie Harwood, Anna Hickey-Moody, Sam McMahon and Sarah O'Shea to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

A Catalogue record for this book has been requested.

ISBN: 978-1-138-83091-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-73692-1 (ebk)

Visit the eResource: <https://www.routledge.com/9781138830912>

Typeset in Galliard  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

*Dedicated to people who swerve*





*Figure 0.1* Bus – no drinking sign

A colour version of this image is available here: <https://www.routledge.com/9781138830912>

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<b>1 Educational futures</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>On the feelings of others</i>	1
<i>Bringing feeling to the fore</i>	4
<i>Emotional landscapes of educational foreclosure</i>	5
<i>Feeling educational futures</i>	7
<i>Empirical research on young lives in difficult places</i>	15
<i>Book overview</i>	16
<b>2 Method assemblages and methodology</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Empirical methods</i>	19
<i>Participants and places of the research</i>	20
<i>The research sites</i>	23
<i>About the interviews</i>	33
<i>Conceptual methodology</i>	35
<i>Valuing emotional and embodied knowledges</i>	39
<i>Assemblages and ecologies of learning</i>	42
<i>Feelings mixing through, as water</i>	45
<b>3 The embodied imagination and capacities to act</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>Corporeality and the critical analysis of reason</i>	50
<i>The embodied imagination</i>	57
<i>Affecting changes</i>	63
<b>4 Beyond the widening participation agenda – toward ecologies of learning</b>	<b>68</b>
<i>Widening participation</i>	68
<i>Enacting widening participation</i>	71

	<i>Enacting widening participation globally and nationally</i>	72
	<i>Enacting widening participation at an institutional level</i>	74
	<i>Enacting widening participation at a personal felt level: The young people in the study</i>	76
	<i>Abject from university and lost from the system</i>	80
	<i>Re-inventing widening participation: From widening participation to widening capability in an ecology of learning</i>	82
5	<b>Precarious education and assemblages of disadvantage</b>	87
	<i>Plural disadvantage</i>	90
	<i>Building on the capability approach</i>	94
	<i>Opportunities and security</i>	96
	<i>Theorizing feelings and plural disadvantage</i>	101
6	<b>Feeling different</b>	107
	<i>Full of collisions: University is school</i>	107
	<i>Sad passions and affects</i>	107
	<i>Control over one's environment?</i>	111
	<i>Affiliation and belonging</i>	115
	<i>Dangers of affiliation and belonging with disadvantaged places</i>	117
	<i>How they see me: The sad passions of being from here</i>	121
7	<b>Orientations, pathways and futures</b>	132
	<i>Orientations</i>	137
	<i>Object orientations</i>	137
	<i>Vocational orientations</i>	140
	<i>Pathways and futures</i>	145
	<i>Pathways: Knowing other people who have successes</i>	148
	<i>Pathways: Knowledges of places to go</i>	150
	<i>Adequate ideas of educational pathways</i>	151
8	<b>Reorganizing images</b>	158
	<i>Unbelievable places</i>	160
	<i>Imagining anxiety and imprisoning places</i>	163
	<i>Space, weight, time and place: Mapping the overwhelm</i>	165
	<i>Affects of isolation</i>	168

<i>Recognizing limit-experiences: Unmaking precarious education</i>	173
<i>Images and making educational futures</i>	184

## 9 Recommendations for widening participation 186

<i>Making space to swerve</i>	190
<i>Diagrammatic pedagogies: Mapping possibilities for outreach</i>	192
<i>Point A – The young person</i>	192
<i>Point B – The school</i>	194
<i>Point C – Higher education institution</i>	194
<i>Ecologies of learning</i>	197
<i>Assemblages of disadvantage</i>	197
<i>Kinds of knowledge and images of learning futures</i>	198

<i>Bibliography</i>	200
<i>Index</i>	213

# Acknowledgements

This book was supported by three grants awarded under the Australian Research Council's *Discovery* grants scheme. The views expressed herein are those of the authors of this book and are not necessarily those of the Australian Research Council. The Discovery Project *Imagining university education: the perspectives of young people impacted by low socio-economic status and disengagement from school* (DP160371009) supported fieldwork with young people living in disadvantaged communities with precarious relationships to education. The Discovery Project *Mentoring and Indigenous Higher Education: Understanding how university students mentor Indigenous school students* (DP140103690) allowed our work on disadvantage and precarious education to be refined. The Future Fellowship *Getting an Early Start to aspirations: Understanding how to promote educational futures in early childhood* (FT130101332) supported the theorization of educational futures and imagination.

The Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong (UOW) has provided valuable support for this project. The University of Sydney and Goldsmiths, University of London provided an institutional basis for Anna Hickey-Moody's work on this project. We wish to acknowledge those who made fieldwork contributions: Dr Nici Humphry [Charles Darwin University] and the postgraduate students in the School Counsellors in Training program [SCIT], School of Education, University of Wollongong. Our thanks to Sarah Hamylton for several of the photographs used in the book.

Chapter Three of this book uses concepts and material from Hickey-Moody, Harwood and McMahon (2015) 'Feeling futures: embodied imagination and intensive time' in D. Bland (Ed). *Imagination for Inclusion: Diverse Contexts of Educational Practice* (pp. 128–140). Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

*Every effort has been made to contact the copyright holders for their permission to reprint selections of this book. The publishers would be grateful to hear from any copyright holder who is not here acknowledged, and we will undertake to rectify any errors or omissions in future editions of this book.*

*Anna:* What advice would you give for improving young people's knowledge about uni, teaching young people more about uni?

*Della:* I don't know, I think that it should be glued into kids' heads as soon as they start high school so it's something to look forward to or work for.

*Anna:* You kind of wish that you'd known about that while you were going to school? You didn't know that's why you were going to school?

*Della:* Yes. *I always thought you go to school to get out of school pretty much.*

(2013 Interview with Anna Hickey-Moody &  
Della, from Towers Estates)



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# 1 Educational futures

*No wonder everyone is thick . . . inbreeding must damage brain development.*

Message posted by UK primary teacher on Facebook (Press Association 2011)

A report that the Center for American Progress published yesterday shows that teachers expect students of color and low-income students to graduate college at lower rates than white students.

(Segal 2014)

The majority of white working-class children attend persistently inadequate, low-calibre schools. The UK's education system is beset by deep problems: a lack of progress and innovation, *pessimism about students' ability*, a fetish for never-ending surface-level change, and inadequate teacher training [to name a few].

(Stahl 2014, emphasis added)

## On the feelings of others

How would it feel to be a six-year-old at the school where a teacher posted comments on Facebook about their students being 'thick' and how 'inbreeding' must 'damage brain development'? Or what would it be like if, day in and day out, based on your ethnicity or low income, you were expected to have a lesser educational future than your classmates? If the first two of these quotes seem extreme, what then of daily encounters of educational pessimism about your ability? These three quotes show up ongoing problems with education for disadvantaged students. Indeed, these problems tell a story which has ostensibly not changed for a long time. In order to develop a new perspective on experiences of educational disadvantage, we explore ways that feeling works to mark out, re-inscribe or facilitate change in the learning biographies and life stories of disadvantaged youth.

While it may be the case that some teachers say and do things that are problematic for young people and their feelings, simple *teacher blaming* is not the answer, and indeed serves to further obscure the complexity of processes that contribute to producing negative feelings in education. For instance, we need to acknowledge the sphere of pessimism that infiltrates contemporary Western



## 2 Educational futures

education, a pessimism tightly coiled with a larger culture of educational neoliberalism, one replete with maxims of ‘deliverology’ (Ball, Maguire & Braun 2012) and enactments of policy (Maguire, Braun & Ball 2015). Or as Teague (2016) carefully describes, the obeisance and hyper-vigilance to an ever present threat of student, teacher and school appraisals, such as that which occurs in England with ongoing OFSTED [Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills] inspections.

What then, *would* it be like to be at a contemporary primary or secondary school and *feel* this thick culture of educational pessimism? This brings to mind the imperative behind Geertz’s (1973) argument for ‘thick description’ and interestingly, his mention of the importance of ‘imagination’ for being in touch with others:

It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers.  
(Geertz 1973, p.16)

Getting in touch with the lives of strangers is what we are called upon to do time and again in the multifarious practices occurring in education, and especially in the ethical task of making educational futures. Yet, all too often we are mistakenly fooled to believe we *know* this other [in the sense of Foucault’s (2000) use of the French *connaissance* as opposed to *savoir*]. Teachers need to be encouraged to imagine the lifeworlds and contexts of students whom they experience as other. Developing a knowledge of, or coming to know, the experience of disadvantage is the first step in creating learning environments that are responsive to and accommodate the needs of disadvantaged students.

Getting in touch with the lives of schoolings’ strangers, then, demands we attend to the thick culture of educational pessimism that young people encounter. To do so is to engage not only beyond any simplistic assumption of *connaissance*/knowing and be alert to the lazy/thin ways young people are *known*. This is also to enter into an awake relationship to *savoir*/knowing. This demands us to be aware of how we believe we know them [and be mindful of adhering to diagnostic lines of *connaissance*]. This awareness demands of us to think through how young people feel and to appreciate their experiences with learning, schooling and education. To do so, as we argue in this book, is to ask that we engage with the feelings of others.

Heeding Arendt’s (1981) exhortation to think and ‘go visiting’ (Harwood 2010a), let us pause to think about the young people who might be connected with the above quotes. What would it feel like to experience pessimism at school and in relation to your personhood, education and learning? What would a young person do with all these feelings? How might these feelings have shaped our own learning biographies? What about how you might feel about your young child and their learning and education? Somewhat naively, misplaced assumptions are frequently made that ‘the poor’ or people experiencing disadvantage or from low

socio-economic status [LSES] ‘don’t value education’. Nothing could be further from reality. For instance, there is work that critiques assumptions of Indigenous parents’ ‘lack of engagement’ in their child’s school education (Chenhall et al. 2011; Lea, Thompson & McRae-Williams 2011). Poor engagement is a constantly circulated term, yet as Lea, Thompson and McRae-Williams (2011 p.321) argue, ‘The education sector does not systematically engage with the grinding issues that Indigenous families face in their everyday worlds . . .’. Moreover, certain discourses are activated that turn Indigenous parents experiencing disadvantages into particular kinds of problems; ‘Vague policies reproduce a normalizing discourse which posits a narrow definition of good parenting and understates the material attributes underpinning the cultivating parent’s high visibility involvement in their children’s education’ (Lea, Thompson & McRae-Williams 2011, p.334).

Research by Harwood and Murray (2016) into promoting educational futures in early childhood reveals how parents from LSES backgrounds who have not experienced further education, and many of whom left schooling early, strongly value the role of schools and education. At the same time, these parents describe having problematic feelings toward education and educational futures. This clearly is not the same as not valuing education. How, then, do we theorize and come to understand the ways in which experiences and feelings of disadvantage and precarious education impact educational futures?

Here we draw on Foucault (2000) and connect with his interest in *l’expérience* [as opposed to the existentialist or phenomenological *le vécu* or lived experience] (Gutting 2002; Thompson 2014). *L’expérience* involves:

- (1) The complex set of correlations that encompass and make possible both the subjective dimension of lived experience and (2) the objective domain of the state of affairs that it encounters and the idea of wisdom or learning gained through exploration, experimentation, or a journey of discovery (the sense of being ‘experienced’).

(Thompson 2014, p.147)

This take on experience sanctions the space to engage with experience away from an existentialist or phenomenological imperative. Following Thompson (2014, pp.148–9), *l’expérience* permits us to do three important activities in this book. Firstly, it enables us to think methodologically through the *forms of experience* and produce thick descriptions inclusive of feelings. Secondly, we work with the idea of the *limit-experience* to consider how young people respond to and effect subjectivization and desubjectivization. This second activity enables us to more exactly describe precarious relationships to education as well as the limit moments where this precariousness changed. Thirdly, *l’expérience* is engaged with the ‘. . . embodied knowledges of subjugation or exclusion . . .’ (Thompson 2014, p.149). Here we expand and develop this well-known approach by Foucault and extend our analysis to engage with Spinoza and Deleuze in order to think on the feelings of others who experience disadvantage and precarious relationships with education.

## Bringing feeling to the fore

There are many rich knowledge traditions that bring feeling to the fore, and sitting with these is instructive for a number of reasons. An example from our own learning that deeply connects with our experience and thinking helps to frame this point. Turning to Anthony McKnight's (2015) discussion of feeling and learning from Yuin Country, strategies can be found for 'thinking differently' (Foucault 1990, p.8). Most of the writing, thinking and learning for this book happened on the Countries of the Wodi Wodi People, the Dharawal people and the Yuin people in the south-east coast of Australia. The fieldwork moved onto many different Countries in Australia [which, as we explain in Chapter Two, we are not naming in order to protect confidentiality], with our participants including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Country is deeply woven into our experience and stands as a teacher reminding us to remember to listen for feelings.

Such a connection with Country also exists for non-Aboriginal people [such as the authors of this book]. Though, significantly, as McKnight explains, rarely is this acknowledged outside a Western dualistic [and arguably Cartesian], view:

Many non-Aboriginal people's identities are linked to the Country now known as Australia; however, the Western dualism connects them to enjoying the view of *Australia*, not seeing Country as placing them into identity. In Yuin ways of knowing, learning and behaving, you are placed by Country into the networks of reciprocal relationships.

(McKnight 2015, p.283)

To emphasize feelings, to conceive of the felt and embrace openness to 'thinking with feeling' or 'feeling with thinking', we can learn by 'seeing Country as placing [ourselves] into identity' (McKnight 2015, p.283). In practice this means watching, pausing, listening and learning from Country. McKnight shares with us Mingadhuga Mingayung [My Mother Your Mother], the Yuin way of learning and listening to Minga [the Mother], where we encounter the centrality of feelings, without which stories from Country are inaccessible. As he explains, 'The silence while on Country, while listening and viewing the story, provides the depth in meaning, placing the responsibility on the viewers of the story to *feel* the story' (McKnight 2015, p.282, emphasis added).

Here, the heightened accent on feeling disrupts a dominant archetype of rationalizing thought. This is the very rationalizing thought that, we might venture to argue, erases feelings from how we seek to understand and instead prioritizes what is a disembodied technique of 'knowing' chaotically applied in education. Pausing to listen is simply essential to understanding – to really understanding. Our office where we came together to work on this book is below Geera [called Mt Keira since colonization]. As Aunty Carol Speechly (Organ & Speechly 1997; Speechly 2014) explains, Geera is a teaching mountain. With our office windows often failing to automatically close [a *problem* that only through writing these

words can be recognized as a gift] we felt the *outside*, we felt mother Geera, constantly. We felt rushes of wind, lots and lots of cool, thick, rain over hot January days and long nights marked by the sounds of crickets across the Australian summer. We saw the sunsets on Geera, we heard the songs of kookaburras as darkness wrapped the trees and Grandmother Moon shone on the wet walls, weaving her light. We stopped to rethink our work, to retrace our conversations, to remember anew.

*Tuning in*, pausing, listening in this relationship teaches us to learn a way of prioritizing feeling. Listening to Country privileges feeling as awareness. Pausing to sit and contemplate how living knowledge traditions, passed on for many thousands of years to the present and into the future, hold respect for feelings gives us strength to challenge the dominance of a system of thinking that accepts a higher education system that articulates through ideas of knowledge as being necessarily distinct from feeling and preserves as abject those *lost* to the system. Connecting with and pausing to listen to different knowledge systems have helped us to remember that we can learn to listen for feelings in the stories of the young people. Pausing to listen reminds us that feeling is the beginning of all processes of learning.

## Emotional landscapes of educational foreclosure

The comments cited at the start of this Chapter might be dismissed as carefully chosen *one-offs*, or criticized as a singular misguided eugenic comment about ‘inbreeding’. The five years of empirical work on which this book is based illustrate the fact that this is not the case. Furthermore, such swift dismissal disavows the emotional impact of such thoughts and the psychic realities that accompany such thoughts. Thoughts produce feelings, and feelings about bodies impact on bodies’ capabilities. We use the word *feelings* as a term that refers to emotions and orientations; how we *feel* about things often expresses our emotions. It also signifies our proximity or distance to a thing and our orientation toward or away from it. Human feelings, the raw material of all our experience, are part of the human imagination. The imagination is made up in part from feelings as embodied responses: images, memories and what in vernacular terms we might consider our unconscious orientations to things, places and people. It would be an error, then, to assume the quotes at the start of the Chapter are one-offs. The first quote was found via a newspaper database search [Factiva] that shows many more instances in which a deficit view is taken and disadvantage, LSES, social class or ‘race’ becomes equated with lack of capacity. Media reports are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to the issues of how the educational futures of some children and young people are, to draw on Butler’s (1990) term, foreclosed. Through necessity, feelings are the starting point for all thought, and feelings are also, initially, very passive, as they are a response to experience; ‘the ideas that we generally have of ourselves, and of external bodies, are only inadequate ideas or passive affections that indicate an encounter between some external body and our own’ (Duffy 2011, p.57). Feelings are an inescapable part of life, and as

such, they matter. More than this, feelings comprise an underutilized resource in educational theory. Too often ignored, feelings should be conceived as core to all educational projects.

Dismissal of feeling also ignores the work that needs to be done to re-cast negative feelings. Such dismissal disguises the power of neuro-discourses proliferating through education as authoritative knowledges in schools that cultivate pathologizing opinions about feelings (Harwood & Allan 2014; Youdell 2011). The word feeling also signifies aspects of the work of two thinkers who developed ideas that have been of use for us in understanding young people's relationships to higher education. In our use of the word feeling, we gesture toward both Foucault's work on experience, introduced above and Spinoza's work on affect and imagination as a primary or initial kind of knowledge. Feelings are not only the first product of all experiences, they are often used by teachers in schools as ways of teaching young people ideas about themselves as learners.

What then of the emotional landscape of educational foreclosure, of having an educational future reduced or removed? Returning to the questions we posed previously, what might it be like to be six and in a classroom with teaching staff that describe you as *thick*? How does this experience manifest in feelings? What impact do these feelings have on your future? What happens when the student listens to the teacher or wants to ask a question? Two quotes from Spinoza's the *Ethics* (2001, p.139)<sup>1</sup> offer a way to map the political impact and psychic reality of this negative thinking: 'Proposition 54. The mind endeavors to imagine those things only which posit its power of acting' and 'Proposition 55. When the mind imagines its own weakness it necessarily sorrows'.

Spinoza's statements, taken from consecutive sections of his book, give us pause to think through how the mind and emotions are intricately entwined. Further, these quotes remind us that being shown one's weakness causes weakness. That sorrow manifests, that feelings move and flow through the body, is suggestive of the enormity of the moment one's mind imagines it cannot do something in the classroom. More than this, the fact that '[t]he mind endeavors to imagine those things only which posit its power of acting' (Spinoza 2001, p.139) very simply explains why some young people never imagine going to university and don't conceive themselves as good learners. If institutionalized educational cultures are spaces that posit they have no power, then as an act of self-protection, they do not imagine themselves in such spaces. Rather, they imagine spaces in which they have a power to act – their home, their skate park, the youth centre; wherever the power to act is accorded to their body. Spinoza's statements also illustrate the impacts of others on this sadness, '... sorrow is strengthened in proportion as the mind imagines that it is blamed by others ...' (Spinoza 2001, p.139).

Most of us would agree that feeling anxious or unconfident can be cumulative at times, but no major empirical study of educational disadvantage has investigated the impacts on educational futures of the feeling that one is a failure at school. Feeling one is a failure at school impacts on prospects for making educational futures. To feel a failure can have an enormous consequence and, as we show in this book, can have debilitating outcomes for educational futures. The

shutting down, or foreclosure, of educational futures for children and young people is of central concern for us. In this book we illustrate some ways such shutting down is brought about by teachers, educational policy and cultures of schooling. Here we pick up on Marginson's (2011, p.22) argument for a politics of inclusion in higher education, 'A politics of inclusion works when higher education is an instrument for advancing individual and social freedoms – and is known and deeply felt as such by the subjects of equity strategy'.

This politics of inclusion does not only concern itself with advancing individual and social freedoms, it overtly states that how such a strategy is felt is crucial. By naming widening participation as an inherently political project and connecting this to the act of making educational futures, we call for a practice of educational recognition that is inclusive in its capacities to envisage the challenges faced by young people with precarious relationships to education (Harwood et al. 2013). Thinking through how the construction and activation of practices of educational recognition can occur and theorizing ways to open out the possibilities of educational futures is thus a key agenda for our writing this book.

## Feeling educational futures

It is difficult to deny the importance of education to living well in contemporary society. Beyond the more obvious links to employment, there is strong evidence of the benefits of education to health – benefits that, premised on the social determinants of health, conclusively show how education leads to improved health and wellbeing (Marmot 2004). At the same time, as has been argued by numerous researchers in the sociology of education, for example in work by Dolby and Dimitriadis (2004) and Willis (1977), schooling, the means via which education is primarily distributed, can restrict, if not diminish, opportunities for education. This book seeks to continue the contribution of the sociology of education to this important space, a space we contend needs to be revisited and made subject to different and new angles of scrutiny in order to effect change (Harwood 2006).

In our view, the literatures of educational exclusion/inclusion do not embrace the cultural politics of schooling enough; specifically, this work does not include the feelings and educational views of the marginalized youth they seek to *include*. Disadvantaged young people's feelings are consistently disavowed across the vast range of literature on educational inclusion and exclusion, despite the fact that emotion is central to experiences of learning. Emotion is vital to how young people learn and indeed, to the experience of growing up. Despite a growing literature on inclusion in higher education, what has not been tackled enough is the influence of the affective domain on young people and how this impacts their conceptualization of educational futures. Recent work is considering and valuing the roles of feelings, emotion and affect in education (Danvers 2016; Hickey-Moody 2013; Kenway & Youdell 2011; Niccolini 2016; Watkins 2011). This theoretical shift is described by Kenway and Youdell (2011, pp.131–6) as a response to the utility of affect as a concept, 'The recent turn to Deleuze and Guattari's (2008) notion of affectivities has seen a new set of engagements with

the emotionality of education'. Affectivities are understood as the intense sensation of bodies that are pre-personal and pre-discursive. This understanding of affectivities has been taken up to demonstrate the ways that affective intensities flow through educational sites and encounters in ways that exceed any notion of a unitary subject, even an emotional unitary subject. Anna Hickey-Moody's work has been significant in provoking fresh thought and inquiry along these lines, as illustrated in Hickey-Moody and Malins (2007) and particularly in Hickey-Moody and Crowley (2010, 2011, 2012, p.133).

Our theoretical work here contributes to these broader disciplinary shifts to consider feelings and affect as critical in education and includes feelings in our mapping of material and affective assemblages of learning. We write with the belief that young people already belong to many different learning cultures, or what we call *ecologies of learning*, but this belonging has, to date, been largely ignored in the literature on widening participation. Belonging is a feeling and feelings orient our relationships with people, places and institutions. For example, in terms of the widening participation agenda, if a young person belongs to a learning culture in which universities are imagined in negative ways, the impact of this belonging and the associated feelings of fear will sensibly orient the young person away from the life path of attending university. In such instances, universities might be depicted as in-hospitable, perhaps unimaginable, *un-horizonable* places and experiences. For instance, unlike our feelings toward the sun or the moon, which we experience seeing, which we feel in myriad ways and which we learn to expect, educational futures are never there. They never have been, and are never expected to be, on the young person's horizon. From this angle, the omission of consideration of feeling in efforts to build educational futures is enormously problematic and symptomatic of a broader need to understand, be with and to include those marginalized from schools.

The central argument of this book, then, is that we must have an awareness of the role of emotions and feelings in learning, schooling and the wider project of education in order to *widen the participation* for young people with precarious relationships to education. In order to effect this change we need to begin by firstly understanding and respecting the learning cultures, or ecologies of learning, in which young people are already embedded. Secondly, we need to grasp the far-reaching implications of both precarious relationships to education and disadvantage. As discussed previously (Harwood et al. 2013) in work on disadvantage and precarious education, Butler makes a distinction between precariousness and precaritization:

- (1) precariousness, a function of our social vulnerability and exposure that is always given some political form, and precarity as differentially distributed, and so one important dimension of the unequal distribution of conditions required for continued life; but also (2) precaritization as an ongoing process, so that we do not reduce the power of precariousness to single acts or single events. Precaritization allows us to think about the slow death that happens to targeted or neglected populations over time and space. And it is



surely a form of power without a subject, which is to say that there is no one centre that propels its direction and destruction.

(Butler cited in Puar 2012, n.p.)<sup>2</sup>

Precariousness, then, accentuates the impermanent nature of one's relationship to education, it is *not a given* and is vulnerable to cultural politics. Precarization, on the other hand, forces us to contemplate the sheer awfulness of this vulnerability and the ominous hovering 'slow death' (Berlant 2011; Hickey-Moody 2015) that occupies the lives of those in the neglected strata of education. To be provocative, this 'slow death' could be referred to as depicting intergenerational educational disadvantage. This is the slow death that occurs to those who occupy the neglected strata of education that encompasses both schooling *and* widening participation in higher education.

The study at the centre of this book, *Imagining University Education*, set out to understand how university is imagined by young people with precarious relationships to education and who live in disadvantaged communities. While the young people who participated in this study could all be described as LSES, the focus was far more attuned to the specificities of educational vulnerability. As we describe next and discuss in detail in Chapter Two, this study involved fieldwork in a range of disadvantaged communities in five Australian states.

We also draw on the 2015 fieldwork from Harwood's 2014–18 study, *Getting an Early Start to Aspirations: Understanding how to promote educational futures in early childhood* [ARC Future Fellowships, FT130101332]. This project seeks to address the widening participation agenda by investigating how to promote educational futures in LSES early childhood [for example, early childhood centres, playgroups and in the community]. The first phase of the GAESTA study drew attention to the precarization formalizing relationships to education and the foreclosure of educational futures that occurs for children who have yet to commence school. This interview research, with parents who themselves have precarious relationships to education, shows some of the paradoxes of educational vulnerability: the view of education as being important while at the same time eschewing its formalizing and sombre influence on the playful and happy lives of young children. Below are excerpts from three interviews with parents held in different regional locations in New South Wales, Australia:

I: What do you think about Education?

C: It's the start of your future I suppose.

(Carol, Small Regional City, central NSW, GAESTA)

S: It's good.

L: It's important.

T: No I think it's incredibly important for – especially for the early years so up until, I don't know, a certain age that it's incredibly important so that there's some form of education.

(Stacey, Leah and Tia, Coastal Regional City, NSW, GAESTA)