On being useful: Problem-questioning approaches to policy analysis

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Context as a critical component of community psychology can be diverted by political and economic imperatives in the drive toward an exclusive focus on utility. This focus also presumes that psychological knowledge is intrinsically useful and helpful. This is particularly evident in the context of education, where typically mainstream psychological knowledge has been applied from policy through to intervention. Offered here is an example of critical policy analysis based on Foucauldian theories focusing on the ways in which wellbeing has been constructed in Australian education policy. This method is highlighted for two main reasons: as a useful way to bring an analysis of power to community psychology; and to raise questions about the assumptions of mainstream psychological knowledge, particularly around young people and education. Findings suggest that despite shifts away from more traditional psychological categorisations, newer ones such as wellbeing are producing subjectivities which fail to encompass the education realities of certain young people.

This paper develops arguments from Caplan and Nelson (1973), On being useful: The nature and consequences of psychological research on social problems. The central thesis of their paper was that as psychologists we "must be wary of uncritically accepting the idea that the promotion and dissemination of social science knowledge are intrinsically good, moral, and wise" (Caplan & Nelson, 1973, p. 211). Although their paper has a more traditional psychological focus and regards individuals and context as distinctly separate, it does try and establish the importance of problem definitions. That is, the analysis of where and how problems arise and the ways in which decontextualised versions of psychological knowledge lead to "person-blame interpretations of social problems" (Caplan & Nelson, 1973, p. 209).

Where community psychology apparently becomes distinct from other fields of psychology is in its greater focus on integrating context as a part of its knowledge and praxis. However, Fryer and Laing (2008, p. 14) comment that, "community psychology is becoming increasingly endangered as a critical alternative to mainstream disciplinary ideology, theory, procedure and practice" mainly due to the dominance of U.S. based community psychology knowledge. This is echoed by Dutta (2018, p. 274) who identifies community psychology as historically having been informed by U.S. strains of clinical psychology and that as a result "the discourse of an expanded notion of 'helping' has become part of its professional self-definition" and these have had a "close and reciprocal relationship with colonialism and racism - justifying, consolidating, and furthering the minoritizing and marginalizing of particular groups" (p. 274). Common to both these assessments is that it is not sufficient for community psychology to simply be well-intentioned about context, but that a careful eye needs to be kept on elements that may reduce, obscure or erase sociopolitical and historical context within community psychology work.

One such element is the increasingly dominant paradigm in both policy and practice which focuses principally on "solving 'problems'" (Bacchi, 2008, p. xvi). Central to this paradigm is to discover "'what works'…(i.e. 'evidence-based policy')" (Bacchi, 2009, p. xvi). The main issue here is that problem-solving assumes problems are ready made, and that problems vanish with responses or solutions (Bacchi,

2009). However, as Bacchi (2009, p. xvi) claims "it seems almost heresy to suggest that we need to shift our focus from how to solve 'problems'" and instead work more closely toward understanding how problems are constituted. Focussing only on problem-solving neglects to interrogate how a person or community is made a problem in the first place, and who or what is served by ensuring they remain a problem.

Adding to the normalisation of the problem-solving paradigm is an environment of anti-intellectual discourse both by politicians (Koziol, 2018; Tovey, 2013) and right-leaning media (Glasson, 2012) in Australia. Discourses which serve to construct an antagonistic binary between the inherent wisdom or "goodness of common sense" and intellect (Glasson, 2012, p. 111). Glasson (2012) outlines that "hard-won academic knowledge appears to work against the 'real people' and to challenge the interests of 'middle Australia'" (p. 106). A view shared by Hage (2000) who asserts anti-intellectualism in Australia is centred on the opposition between university knowledge and everyday knowledge.

Underpinning these anti-intellectual discourses is the primacy of utility, fuelled by increasingly neoliberal ideologies and rationalities, which are shaping psychological knowledge and the use of it (Adams et al., 2019; Ratner, 2019; Teo, 2018). The concern is that these forces also have the potential to push community psychology research and knowledge toward more standardised outcomes (Fine, 2012). For resource poor community organisations, or researchers, the neoliberal imperative becomes the dominant force where "standardized litmus-test indicators" become the "primary indicators of effectiveness" but in doing so "legitimate a scientific dissociation" from many of the contextual complexities particularly for those from marginalised communities (Fine, 2012, p. 428). Context, therefore, becomes reduced or erased and can "white out the threatening landscape of structural injustice in which people are trying to get by, build lives and families" (Fine, 2012, p. 426).

Trickett has noted similarly (2015, p. 199) "the rise of evidence-based practice as a social as well as scientific movement". Some of the concerns about evidence based practice (EBP) are the ways in which it can be utilised in the service of economic rationality and the way in which it obscures the conflicts involved in only producing "findings showing that a program 'works'" (Trickett, 2015, p. 202). EBP in this manner funnels community psychology toward more decontextualised problem-solving requiring less critical reflection of power, politics and economics as lamented by Sarason (1976, p. 257) in "the unreflective way in which community psychology participate[s] in governmental programs".

Burton (2013, p. 3) has detailed the importance for community psychology to understand the intersections between the State, policy, praxis and "those who are typically the objects of social policy". It is proposed that a continual process of reflection, at epistemic levels, and an interrogation of policy and of community psychological concepts, techniques and methods is required (Burton, 2013). One of the important aspects for community psychology in regards to policy analysis is the ways in which policy problematises people and communities and it has been suggested that greater attention needs to be given to the ways in which these policy mechanisms operate (Serrano-García, 2013).

Herein is offered an explanation and example of post-structural theorist Carol Bacchi's (2009, 2012, 2015) analytic tool *What's the Problem Represented to be?* (WPR) which is a systematic approach to policy analysis grounded in Foucauldian concepts of problematisations and genealogy. In doing so, the paper has two main aims: firstly, to highlight the value of such an approach to community psychology by showing its capacity as a critical methodology, something which has been noted as a needed and necessary aspect in order to lead to more critical praxis (Coimbra et al., 2012; Fine, 2012; R. Fox et al., 2019, 2019; Seedat et al., 2017). Secondly, through

an example of critical policy analysis which investigates the role of wellbeing and psychological discourses in education, it will be shown how this method ultimately uncovers spaces where community psychology knowledge may indeed be useful.

The economic and political context which surrounds education shapes everything from curricula and pedagogy (Croxford & Raffe, 2007; Mccafferty, 2010; Teese & Polesel, 2003), to education policy and policy proposals (Lingard, 2010; Peters, 2011; Wright & McLeod, 2015), to school-based psychological and wellbeing interventions (Bache et al., 2016; Wright, 2015). These intersections of socio-political/economic factors are not able to be captured by current school-based psychology which in Australia has historically been dominated by mainstream psychological knowledge (Keast, 2020).

School psychology has traditionally worked with instruments of psychological assessment sorting students by mental capacity thus identifying those who were fit for schooling (McCallum, 1980, 1984). These have given way to other normalising concepts such as mindset, emotional intelligence and wellbeing (e.g. Claro et al., 2016; Department of Education, 2020; Devcich et al., 2017; Frydenberg et al., 2017; Roffey, 2008). In part, this shift has been traced to an evolution of subjectivities around what might be regarded as neoliberal wellbeing (Binkley, 2014; Davies, 2016). Indicative of this evolution is a heightened focus in education on norms which laud personal responsibility, individualised monitoring, and regulation of emotions and behaviors, resulting in what some have called the neoliberal self (Vassallo, 2014). Such neoliberal subjectivities are bolstered by the epistemology of mainstream psychology which reduces what otherwise might be considered issues arising from social factors, as the problems of the individual (McCallum, 1984, 1990; Wright, 2011).

It is acknowledged that there is a variety of ways in which wellbeing has been conceptualised (e.g. psychological wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, subjective wellbeing) and in a review of Australian literature concerns were raised about the evidence supporting wellbeing interventions as it was "not as robust as assumed by schools" (Svane et al., 2019, p. 218). In part this is due to the poorly defined nature of the concept of wellbeing but also due to its inability to capture the contextual complexities (Svane, et al., 2019). This then raises two main questions which are at the centre of the analysis here: Who or what has been made a problem for wellbeing to appear as a solution in education policy? What are the conditions that have made it possible for this problem to exist?

Firstly, some of the theoretical background is presented to give an understanding of how this framing might work in the service of a more contextualised approach to understanding policy, but also as an avenue of critique towards more mainstream psychological knowledge around education and schooling. Then the paper will offer an example of this approach through an investigation of the three main ministerial declarations on education in Australia.

Theoretical Approaches: Problematisations and Genealogy

There has been a proliferation of the term problematisation across a number of disciplines and theorists (Bacchi, 2015), so there is a need to begin with some clarifying comments. The term problematisation is used both as a verb (i.e. to problematise) which seeks to describe what people or governments do, or as a noun which describes the outcomes of problematisation (Bacchi, 2015). As a verb it can be used to describe a type of critical analysis, and a reference to something being designated as a problem or "to give shape to something as a 'problem'" (Bacchi, 2015, p.2). Analytically, problematisation is concerned with how and why, at particular times and under certain contexts, specific phenomena are brought into question, are analysed, classified, and regulated, while others are not (Deacon, 2000). Foucault (1988) defines problematisation in this way:
Problematisation doesn't mean

representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.) (p. 257).

While it would be easy to conclude that this kind of analytic work falls in to the category of theorising, for Foucault (1980, pp. 207–208) "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice". Problematising in this sense is praxis, it seeks to intervene, to disrupt, to challenge the status quo. Problematisation offers a strategy for community psychology to work against some problem-solving, or person-blaming interpretations of social issues.

Problematisation is also central to genealogical analysis, as genealogy problematises what is taken for granted (Deacon, 2000). A genealogical analysis is not simply historical mappings of the past (Hook, 2005; Koopman, 2013) and in fact genealogical analysis ought to target those "objects, practices and sentiments that appear to transcend history" and attend to the "localised conditions of possibility" (Bowman & Hook, 2010, p. 67). This repositioning of history as a relativist discourse, rather than as a universal object, means there is not an underlying secret waiting to be unveiled as by more traditional historical methods (Ball, 2013).

Genealogies, therefore, have a more specific job than outlining what has gone before us, they are conceived and undertaken in order to articulate, make sayable, make visible "the problematisations of our present" (Koopman, 2013, p. 24). Knowledge is a central focus of genealogical analysis because of its relationship to power and the way in which it is connected to experts/expertise and their role in determining how we should understand or see ourselves (Ball, 2013). Therefore, genealogy is really an analysis of power but not as if it resides within certain people,

although it does not disregard that there are indeed certain social positions that afford people more or less influence (Foucault, 1990). Rather it is more concerned with the ways in which subjects are able to be constituted through discourse which is analyzed in terms of the conditions under which certain sentences or statements are afforded a truth value, and are therefore capable of being uttered (Hacking, 2004).

Much has been written about genealogical analysis but often from outside the discipline of psychology (see Miller, 2010; Nealon, 2008; Rose, 1998; Rose & Miller, 1992). One of the reasons cited for the lack of use in psychology research is that "genealogy and psychology are uneasy bedfellows" (Hook, 2005, p. 28). This is chiefly due to the fact that "genealogy is a mode of critical history" which puts it at odds with the discipline of psychology not renown for it "historical sensibilities" (Hook, 2005, p. 28). But Hook (2005) and others (see Parker, 2013) are strong advocates for this kind of analysis precisely because it is able to apply a critical lens to psychology itself. It is the very fact that as a discipline of knowledge it positions itself as ahistorical, apolitical and universal (Parker, 2007; Teo, 2009) that makes it "one of the human science disciplines most in need of genealogy's attentions" (Hook, 2005, p. 28).

Histories, origins and genealogies (in the more traditional sense of the word) have certainly figured in a range of community psychology endeavours (Sonn, 2010; Sonn et al., 2016) and Foucault's ideas have certainly been used within community psychology research and literature, but genealogy is somewhat absent, with some exceptions (e.g. Bowman & Hook, 2010; Hook, 2005). Notably, there has been a body of critical psychology work in Australia that has referenced Foucault theoretically and methodologically (R. Fox et al., 2019, 2019; see R. Fox & Fryer, 2018; Nic Giolla Easpaig & Fryer, 2013; Watson & Fox, 2018) but largely have not put genealogy into practice.

In summary, the genealogical project looks to locate discourse as both an effect

and instrument of power (Bowman & Hook, 2010) and it is here we return to problematisations, as one of the operations of power in societies and one of the key reasons Foucault deployed genealogy which was "in order to clarify and intensify problematizations" (Koopman, 2013, p. 61).

Critical Policy Analysis

Policies (in their broadest sense) are about power, governing, and acting on people (Bacchi, 2012; Rose & Miller, 2013; Serrano-García, 2013). They are not static documents that simply outline institutional/governmental desires, but are calculated articulations that are elaborated in discourse (Bacchi, 2009). Policies are "both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended" (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Policies are inherently connected to expert knowledges (such as psychology), and the networks of power vested within those knowledges. Some of the discursive power of psychology is the way in which it normalises and naturalises certain concepts, categories, values and morals into the everyday (Brinkmann, 2011a; De Vos, 2013). This psychologisation then becomes normalised into the ways we frame and understand people, communities and the issues facing them (Brinkmann, 2011b; Hacking, 1986; Rose, 1998).

Solutions presented by policies are also often positioned as common sense, as a natural conclusion and as such can become acritically (re)enacted and translated in a variety of ways. Because of the seemingly obvious, natural, problem-solving nature of policy, often what is missed in any analysis is the "identifying of deep-seated cultural premises and values within problem representations" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 7). That is, the ways in which people or communities have been made a problem for a particular policy or policy proposal to be the solution. Behind what may seem the most obvious solution proposed by a particular policy are a whole range of problem representations (Bacchi, 2009).

In an effort to simplify some of the complexities of problematisations and genealogical analysis, Bacchi (2009) has provided a series of questions in her approach to policy analysis named *What's the problem represented to be?*(WPR) and they are:

1. What's the problem (e.g. of 'problem gamblers', 'drug use/abuse', domestic violence, global warming, health inequalities, terrorism, etc.) represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? Consider three kinds of effects: discursive effects; subjectification effects; lived effects.
6. How/where is this representation of the 'problem' produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (p. xii)

It should be noted that this method also has a component of self-reflection or self-problematisation as it encourages people to apply the same level of interrogation to one's own proposals (Bacchi, 2015). Although a full example of this method is beyond the limits of this paper, the following case will demonstrate some of the elements of this type of analysis and its value for recontextualising and repoliticising problems.

The Policies

In this case, the main documents for analysis are three ministerial declarations, the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (Australian Education Council, 1989), the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for schooling in the 21st Century (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). Although they are

distinct documents, they also represent a continuous evolution of a collective governmental voice about the role of education in Australia.

State, territory and federal ministers of education originally met in Hobart in 1989 as the Australian Education Council, chaired by the minister for education in Tasmania at the time (Australian Education Council, 1989). The main concern of the ministerial meeting was "that the schooling of Australia's children is the foundation on which to build our future as a nation" (Australian Education Council, 1989, para. 1). The determination of the council was to "act jointly to assist Australian schools in meeting the challenges of our times" and agreed to address areas of common concern thus making an "historic commitment to improving Australian Schooling within a framework of national collaboration" (Australian Education Council, 1989, para. 1). The production of the Hobart Declaration represented the beginning of a more united approach in conceptualising the purpose of government funded education and its role in Australian society. As a part of these new commitments and collaborations The Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs was formed in 1993 and produced the subsequent ministerial declarations. There has been no ministerial declaration subsequent to the 2008 version.

Wellbeing, Education and Psychological Citizens

Although wellbeing does appear as a specific item in one of the policies here, the analysis is also concerned with a wider range of psychologising discourses and their resultant subjectivities. Useful here is Hacking's (1986) concept of "making up people" which suggests that through a range of authoritative mechanisms categories are created by which people reference and understand themselves. However, their interaction with them can shift and change those categories in a "looping effect" (Hacking, 1996). This conception avoids the notion that discourses are exclusively directive and that people have no agency in the matter. Rather, the idea here is

that there is a culmination of dominant versions of selfhood that emerge around education, informed and empowered by expert truths which are then taken up by educators, parents, principals, and young people as a normalising reference point.

Educational aims began to shift from the early 1970s in Australia toward the development of the individual; the development of more psychological skills and the "exploration of feelings" (Barcan, 1993, p. 139). This turning toward a psychological self has also been highlighted by a dramatic increase in education based studies of self-efficacy, self-regulation, which it has been suggested are primarily focussed on "the self's ability to monitor, manage, motivate, strategize, and reinforce itself to the successful completion of specific academic tasks" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 53). Martin and McLellan (2013), in their critical history of educational psychology, propose that these conceptions of selfhood are painted as "highly rational and deliberate processors of information" (p. 54), and that a key component of this selfhood is the ability to self-regulate. A further note to make here about this emerging psychological self around schooling and education is that it is associated with more scientific worldviews, ones that can reduce selfhood to logical processes and in doing so engenders the self to "research and interventional practices of disciplinary psychology" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 37).

The ideas of a psychological self were beginning to emerging in the Hobart Declaration (1989) but were around talents and capacities, and that education should focus on "knowledge, skills, attitudes and values" so that students are able to "participate as active and informed citizens" (point 7). While there is mention of self-confidence, optimism and high self-esteem in the 1989 document, it is framed in a way that suggests schooling will enable students to develop them. On the other hand, in the Adelaide Declaration (1999) there is a shift towards these interior attributes being something that students already have, but that schooling may be able to add to them:

"schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future" (preamble). The Adelaide Declaration is also where the term self-worth appears for the first time.

These policy aims are not simply aspirational discourses of self-betterment, but are also about the framing of being/becoming an Australian citizen where the psychologising of educational aims becomes linked to subjectivities of economically productive citizenry. The Adelaide Declaration (1999) positions the goals for schooling as being able to "assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts" (preamble) and that students "have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning" (goal 1.5). The 2008 document proposes that "(A)ctive and informed citizens…are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life" and are "are responsible global and local citizens" (p. 10). The 2008 declaration then continues to advance the ideas that young people are able to attain the level of "confident and creative individual" through accumulating the following psycho-social attributes: "have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing" and "are enterprising" and "embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions" (p. 10). This paints a subjectivity which is both an individualised, agentic self and one which also psychological. This sets up a binary of successful/unsuccessful learners where successful learners are implicitly those who are willing and able to manage their self as psychological. In doing so they become productive citizens contributing to Australian society. This

responsibility is clearly stated in the 2008 document where it states successful students "have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment" (p. 9).

The norm of young people's obligation to be productive was gaining popularity through a range of other discourses during this time in Australia; particularly around welfare. The work for the dole scheme was made compulsory in 1998 and required all job seekers aged 18–24 years that had been claiming benefits for six months or more to join the scheme (Hawke, 1998). Job seekers aged 17 or 18 years and who had left Year 12 had to join the scheme after three months of job seeking (Hawke, 1998). Receiving welfare without working could have been conceived during this time as both unproductive and an economic strain on government.

In the 1999 declaration, when students leave school they should have "the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time" (goal 1.8). This reference to leisure time is absent in the 2008 version and instead students should "have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives" (2008, p. 9). Aspects of wellbeing now clearly shift towards those relating to personal health rather than leisure, with the inference that maintaining health is an obligation.

Wellbeing as Mental Health

While it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the concept wellbeing encompasses all of the problematisations represented here, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of wellbeing during these decades is also proliferating through a range of other school-based policies, proposals, interventions and practices both in Australia and overseas (see Ecclestone, 2012; Sointu, 2005; Wright & McLeod, 2015). In early 2000 the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council, along with the

Australian Psychological Society, spearheaded the development and rollout of Kids Matter (Littlefield et al., 2017). This initiative for primary schools, followed shortly after by Mind Matters for secondary schools, was "a resource and professional development program supporting Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing of all the members of school communities" (Mind Matters, 2008, para 2).

There is also an ongoing connection made between wellbeing, mental health and academic achievement. One that is proliferated in The framework for effective delivery of school psychology services: a practice guide for psychologists and school leaders (Australian Psychological Society, 2018) which sees "Psychologists in schools apply[ing] their psychological and educational expertise to support students to achieve academic success, psychological health, and social and emotional wellbeing" (p. 5). Wellbeing is cited or referenced approximately 24 times in the 44 pages of this document.

High statistics of youth mental health issues "provide a compelling argument for policy and research aimed at improving youth mental health in Australia" and have also fuelled "imperatives for schools [to] prioritise student mental health and, more broadly, wellbeing" (Svane et al., 2019, p. 210). A review of Australian school wellbeing interventions found many of the conceptions of wellbeing are psychologised ones (Svane et al., 2019). It was also found that although schools are encouraged to adopt evidence-based programmes and practices to address wellbeing, a lack of a clear definition "compromised the validity and trustworthiness of the research currently used by schools" in assessing the relevancy and efficacy of wellbeing interventions (Svane et al., 2019, p. 218).

This analysis begins to show how wellbeing can be constructed and so a return to the question of what's the problem represented to be? This might be approached by considering who/what is un-wellbeing.

The problem of un-wellbeing would seem to construct subjectivities which fall along the lines of less/un-productive, under/un-employed, less/un-civil, and less responsible or less attendant particularly to a psychological self. These categories or "spaces of possibility" created by these subjectivities (Hacking, 1986) have previously been captured by the notion of delinquency, one with a long with a history connected to psychology and criminality (see Glueck, 1960). The category of delinquency has historically been was deployed in the governing of young people, particularly those from working-class backgrounds (McCallum, 1990, 2014). These wellbeing subjectivities also speak to the longstanding claim that schooling is a civilising force in society (Crittenden, 1988).

Wellbeing as a Solution

Wellbeing did not simply emerge as the good idea of ministers, psychologists and educators. For wellbeing to seem like a solution it had to make sense of a certain situation or time and therefore there is a need to look at some of the broader contexts around education. Firstly, government funding was extended substantially to non-government schools, and from the 1980s onward, "the principles of market-based competition and consumer choice were introduced to the schools system in general" (Bonnor & Shepherd, 2016, p. 7). This created an environment whereby schools began to compete for "customers", and was the beginning of the current system described as a quasi-market where a mix of government and non-government schools receive a portion of federal and state funding, "but each operating under different conditions and serving different populations – while assuming quite different obligations to the Australian community" (Bonnor & Shepherd, 2016, p. 7). This system saw the beginning of parents shopping around or seeking out schools with higher achieving students (Bonnor & Shephard, 2016). Overtime this has created school-based inequities concentrating poorer performing students in poorer performing schools in certain neighbourhoods (Teese & Polesel,

2003).

Another significant change to the education landscape between 1980-1990 was that retention rates almost doubled (Long et al., 1999). This rapid rise was mainly due to the economic downturns, which in fact began in the '70s but was propelled by a greater turn in the '80s, which saw an overall trend toward universal reliance on secondary education as a kind of economic shelter (Teese & Polesel, 2003). What this trend meant was that larger proportions of working-class and lower middle-class students were staying at school longer and more were completing schooling. This trend meant that there was an accumulation of social disadvantages within schools. These dramatic changes in schooling populations also changed the relationship of education to society as expressed by Teese and Polesel (2003):

> Over 5 decades the flood tides of economic change have left the school system permanently altered. It is now almost completely integrated into national economic life, retaining groups who can get no foothold in the labour market, filling low-paid jobs with low achievers, shaping the tastes and expectations of more successful students, giving training and credentials. Secondary education is now exposed to the economic needs of the whole population. (p. 10)

Government schools began swelling with more issues relating to social disadvantage and with no substantial increase in funding to attend to these issues which meant that previous ways of explaining schooling's civilising success/failure such as mental fitness (McCallum, 1990) became less valid, and less popular with educators (Wright, 2011). Intelligence testing, which had been a stalwart of school psychology in explaining why some students succeeded and others did not, which largely fell along lines of social class (McCallum, 1984, 1990), was simply less plausible in the environment of these new student cohorts.

There is not sufficiently detailed evidence to directly link social class with specific ethnic groups and educational success, yet enduring patterns have emerged globally to suggest there are relationships (Teese et al., 2007). Part of the problem is that no one factor can be attributed with the success or failure of a student, but rather an array of factors often centered around social class. Generally, for students from low-socioeconomic families, attending low-socioeconomic schools, in low-socioeconomic areas, the challenges to educational success are significantly greater than those from those from high-socioeconomic ones (Croxford & Raffe, 2007; Smyth, 2007; Teese, 2007a; Teese & Polesel, 2003). Lower socioeconomic background also often signifies students from migrant/non-English speaking backgrounds, rural and regional students and certainly indigenous students (James et al., 2008).

Thus, what seems to be emerging in policy is a solution to the problem of too many social issues arising within schools, which in turn gave rise to subjectivities hinged on individualisation, responsibility, entrepreneurship and self-regulation. Vassallo (2015) describes these kind of subjectivities as a "neoliberal self" and one that

> self-strives for autonomy, fulfilment, and meaning by strategically deliberating over choices that can optimise personal value. Life outcomes are treated as a matter of personal responsibility, and one's life is a project that is never complete. The neoliberal self is active, calculating and continuously striving for self-betterment (p. 83)

Importantly, these subjectivities are both class and colour blind. They do not capture the realities of working-class/migrant/indigenous students' lives in school nor the reality that Australian schooling has fairly consistently reproduced academic outcomes on a range of measures along class lines (Brown, 2019; Donovan, 2018; Teese & Polesel, 2003; Thomson et al., 2016). So it might be said that wellbeing and its subjectivities has not simply arisen as a good solution, but rather as a response to a

complex range of socio-political, economic, and cultural factors around government schooling. As a result, wellbeing now encompasses a range of discourses that enable truths to be uttered about young people, their education, futures, and the civic responsibility they have to attend to wellbeing .

Conclusion

The first aim of this paper was to suggest a method of analysis for community psychology that brings a critical focus to the contexts in which problems are constituted. The WPR method offers a condensed and structured way in which to analyse policy, proposals, and other governing documents; a way in which problems are not seen simply as things to be solved, but rather things to be questioned. In part, this is to answer the calls for an increased critical focus in community psychology in general, but also it is proposed as a way to challenge some of the decontextualising forces which encroach on community psychology work, research, and knowledge.

The second aim of this paper was offer an example of the method to show how specifically problematisation and genealogy might work towards these aims of a more critical community psychology. Critical in that it raises questions about the assumptions of more mainstream psychological knowledge and interpretations, but also critical in that it repoliticises the context in which problems are constituted. The problematisation element of the analysis around wellbeing in education policy was framed by the questions: what is the problem represented to be in the policy? and what presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem? It was shown that the problem represented in the policy documents is one of young people for whom schooling will not lead to productive economic citizenry, and it is presumed that attending to a psychological selfhood will ameliorate this in some way. It is also presumed that this greater focus inward, towards wellbeing, will enable education to continue to claim to be a civilising force in Australian society.

The genealogical aspects were framed by the question: How has this representation of the problem come about? Drawing on the wider context of the education and sociopolitical landscape it was established that due to a combination of changes in funding, economic downturns, and shifts in educational aims, government schools found themselves with a higher proportion of students from lower socioeconomic positions. It was further concluded that this increased cohort of students likely came with a range of social problems unable to be explained by the previously blunt psychological methods around mental ability. So for education to be able to explain these differences in educational outcomes new categorisations had to appear in order to sustain a democratic ideal about the role of education. Thus arriving, a swell of neoliberal wellbeing subjectivities in education policy, which in short, returns to a person-blame interpretation of social problems.

If one of the roles of community psychological knowledge is to offer contextually in-depth perspectives, this should not be lost in the pursuit of simply responding to problems. Instead, to engender critical praxis, community psychology should continually interrogate the construction of problems themselves, particularly when policy problems contribute to marginalisation. However, this may mean unsettling previous practices or knowledge that hold implicit assumptions which involves a critical problematising of community psychology itself. Pushing toward greater epistemic reflexivity can ensure community psychology is not caught reproducing discourses that flatten or erase the experiences, realities and subjectivities of young people and their communities.

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