Feeling futures: the embodied imagination and intensive time

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Abstract
Introduction Young people with tenuous relationships to schooling and education are an enduring problem for addressing social inclusion. To understand how educational failure is produced, we develop an appreciation of the influence of embodied imagination: the affective, and gesture towards embodied imagination as a form of intensive time that arrests possibilities of some kinds of future imaginings. We contend that young people who 'fail' in educational terms do so for practical reasons: reasons that relate to relationships between class, gender, 'race', geography and experience. There are dimensions of this experience of 'failure' and cultural disengagement that can be read as youth resistance to governmental imperatives, modes of resistance that are conscious and unconscious expressions of some young people’s experiences of alienation. This chapter introduces Spinoza’s work on embodied imagination and gestures towards Deleuze’s work on intensive time, outlining how these ideas can be put to work to provide new insights for understanding just how critical feelings are to the production and disavowal of educational futures. The exclusion of students’ feelings from existing studies of widening participation is a way of further excluding and silencing students whose voices and experiences should be at the centre of this debate. In order to rectify this issue, we develop a framework that positions young people’s bodies, experiences, voices and emotions firmly at the centre of our theoretical work.

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Introduction
Young people with tenuous relationships to schooling and education are an enduring problem for addressing social inclusion. To understand how educational failure is produced, we develop an appreciation of the influence of embodied imagination, the affective, and gesture towards embodied imagination as a form of intensive time that arrests possibilities of some kind of future imaginings. We contend that young people who ‘fail’ in educational terms do so for practical reasons: reasons that relate to relationships between class, gender, race, geography and experience. There are dimensions of this experience of ‘failure’ and cultural disengagement that can be read as youth resistance to governmental imperatives, modes of resistance that are conscious and unconscious expressions of some young people’s experiences of alienation.

This chapter introduces Spinoza’s work on embodied imagination and Deleuze’s work on intensive time, and outlines how these ideas can be put to work to provide new insights for understanding just how critical feelings are to the production and disavowal of educational futures. The exclusion of students’ feelings from existing studies of widening participation is a way of further excluding and silencing students whose voices and experiences should be at the centre of this debate. In order to rectify this issue, we develop a framework that positions young people’s bodies, experiences, voices and emotions firmly at the centre of our theoretical work.

The study
The Imagining University Education project on which this chapter draws, focused on imaginings of university from young people who have difficult relationships to education and who live in communities in comparable LSES regions of Australia. These areas all had low rates of university participation. Two hundred and fifty young people, aged between 11 and 18, were interviewed for this national, Australian project. Sites comprised a range of urban, suburban and regional settings across five Australian states (Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland). Selection was based on whether the site: had proportionately low rates
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Anna Hickey-Moody, Goldsmiths College, University of London
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of undergraduate participation by persons aged 18-20 (Birrell, Healy, Edwards and Dobson 2008); was LSES (ABS 2013; Vinson 2007); rated highly on indicators of disadvantage health, community safety, economic factors and education (Vinson 2007), had reported high rates of behavioural problems; and had school engagement problems as indicated by school nonattendance rates, rates of school non-completion to Year 12, and attendance and absenteeism intervention programmes (DECS 2010; NSWDET 2009; Stehlik 2006). We pause to note that, given the high correlation between disadvantage and school based behavioural problems (Harwood & Allan, 2014) in our view, high rates of behavioural problems suggest a good deal about the disadvantages experienced in a place. In this sense we are taking a critical stance of such disordering practices, and are opposed to accepting the notion that people experiencing poverty are simply more ‘disordered’.

Participants were recruited through youth sector and related agencies, with youth professionals often joining interviews. Across these sites young people were interviewed using semi-structured interviews in youth settings such as youth centres. Interviews featured questions specifically designed to work with imagination (Harwood et al. 2013), including asking participants to close their eyes and feel and imagine what a university would be like. Transcripts were transcribed and uploaded to QSR NVivo™ for thematic analysis.

The Sensory Imagination

In order to achieve at school or university, students need an initial sense that their participation in an educational environment is possible. Either implicitly or explicitly, they need to be able to imagine participating. Such an act of imagination is often a radical defiance of the dominant narratives that students have been told about their aptitude for learning. In order to think about the role that feelings and the imagination play in making further education a possibility for those excluded from schooling, we draw on Spinoza’s conceptualization of the imagination as initially embodied. Spinoza provides the framework for understanding how feelings provide raw ‘feeling’ material that is processed and negotiated through thought. Spinoza contends that the materiality of sensation is part of our imagination, which is
grounded in the body. The materiality of imagination is sense and this arises from the relations between ideas and the bodies and places that are their objects. Mind and body are different attributes of the same substance. Our minds are the idea of our bodies (2001: 56-7). This method for thinking through the body affords power and agency to the human form. Spinoza employs the term ‘reason’ to refer to an analogous method of thought, a method that he contrasts to the human imagination. Imagination is our sensory experience of the world, an experience that is a kind of collective awareness, as our bodies are an extension of our contexts.

Focusing on human relations, emotions and imagination, in his discussion of God (Ethics Part One, 2001: 16) and his account of the origin and nature of the affects (Ethics Part Three, 2001: 98), Spinoza articulates his method for considering corporeality though affect. Affects are a means of mapping and understanding the body and the mind:

The affects … of hatred, anger, envy, considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and virtue of nature as other individual things; they have therefore certain causes through which they are to be understood and certain properties which are just as worthy of being known as the properties of any other thing in the contemplation of which we delight. I shall, therefore, pursue the same method in considering the nature and strength of the affects and the power of the mind over them which I pursued in our previous discussion of God and the mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if I were considering lines, planes and bodies. (Ethics Part Three, 2001: 98)

Spinoza employs the ideas of lines and planes, simple and complex bodies, as methods for theorizing human actions and desires. We need to cultivate an appetite for engaging with formal educational contexts in young people excluded from school. We need to cultivate appetites for thinking differently and becoming differently.

Spinoza’s philosophy also supports the argument that human actions and desires are
powerful, real and affective aspects of bodies. The body and its emotions are one and the same. To understand the interactions of affect and imagination through the concepts of ‘lines, planes and bodies’ (2001: 98) is to undertake an earnest approach to mapping and theorizing elements of human life that had previously been treated as unfit for significant academic investigation (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 24). This method for considering affect and imagination affords reason, or analogical thought, the opportunity to access powerful and individually unique aspects of our existence: our feelings.

Working with the premise that affect and imagination allow us to access unique aspects of our existence maintains a scholarly focus on bodily context. Relationships between bodies determine the emotions and passions to which one must actively respond. Spinoza articulates this crucial point in his construction of the imagination (Ethics Part One, 2001: 40, Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 11-40). By considering embodied affect and imagination through definitions, axioms, demonstrations and corollaries, ‘reason’ is able to traverse the imagination. The interactions of human passions and imaginations come into view as reason traverses the imagination. The affections of the human body lay down a range of associational paths in thought. These associational paths arise from an individual’s patterns of experience. A variety of individual patterns exist in contrast to the unitary order of reason, as individual patterns are multiple and they arise in various forms. All idiosyncratic associational paths are the product of an individual’s engagement with the community, a process of engagement that occurs by virtue of a body’s existence. Bodies uniquely articulate their surroundings because they offer an idiosyncratic extension of their context. (Spinoza, Ethics Part Two: 63)

In bringing a contemporary political focus to Spinoza's work, Gatens and Lloyd (1999) explore the powers accorded to embodied knowledges, or imagination. Through arguing for an ethics of community and collective awareness, they theorize the significance of Spinoza's conceptualization of the body as a unique extension of context. Gatens and Lloyd (1999: 25) lay the foundations for their argument through
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the way Spinoza draws together his physics of emotions with the project of theorizing human bodies as both collections and as parts of collective entities. An initial point of intersection in Spinoza's *Ethics* (2001) between a physics of emotions and the project of theorizing human bodies as collective entities can be found in his argument relating to associational paths of thought. It is Spinoza’s contention that:

Variations [of imaginative thought patterns] are not a product of the affections of individual bodies in isolation from others. Farming and military activity give rise to different associational paths that reflect different practices. (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 25)

Similarly, belonging to different socio-economic and educational contexts gives rise to different associational paths surrounding education and learning and these both reflect and inspire different practices. One of the effects of Spinoza’s understanding of the mind and body as individually specific and culturally grounded is that an individual’s imaginative associations are always considered products of the shared affinities of human bodies. One’s imagination is, by definition, the product of one’s relationships with other bodies. Thus, one person's beliefs and actions directly limit or extend the actions and beliefs that other people associated with it can undertake.

Shared affinities of human bodies produce an individual's imaginative associations; which are reinforcements of human beings’ mutual strivings for personal strength (conatus). This process of striving for personal realization, or the accumulation of personal strengths, involves forming larger associations between singular bodies. The patterns of association that arise from occupational habits (habits which are themselves the products of larger associations between singular bodies) and their resulting occupational dispositions feed into, or inform, different people’s imaginations, or ‘tempers of imagination’ (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 26). Every person possesses a temper of imagination, which is an individual combination of imagination and affect that predisposes their orientations.
Desire and conatus, the innate striving of all human beings, are very closely related. To be an individual, to exist as a 'finite mode' (2001: 1), is to be determined through the mediation of other finite modes. For example, every individual object, such as an animal, a car, an object, is a finite modification of substance, a finite mode. The construction and perception of new finite modes of being occurs through the process of relations between bodies:

Since imagination is by definition the awareness of our own bodies together with others, this interaction between bodies (interaction required in order for desire and conatus to occur) essentially involves imagination … Our bodies are not just passively moved by external forces. They have their own momentum --- their own characteristic force for existing. But this is not something that individuals exert of their own power alone. For an individual to preserve itself in existence, as we have seen, is precisely for it to act and be acted upon in a multiplicity of ways. (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 27)

The way Spinoza defines ‘imagination’ as bodily awareness moves considering human corporeality into the core of human well-being. His ideas about bodily affects and the way they work are contingent on his physics of bodies. The simplest bodies we can speak of are no more than imperceptible elements of things that join together in order to create perceptible objects. These simple bodies are defined in terms of motion and rest. Simple bodies are the ‘proper’ objects of the human mind, as the mind thinks what it is the idea of before it is able to think what it is not. Gatens and Lloyd (1999:15) further explain this idea through their suggestion that: “Minds, rather than being composed of minute bodies, are ‘ideas’ of bodies – corresponding modes of substance under the attribute of thought”.

Spinoza’s work, and later, the work of Deleuze, develops this mapping of senses an empirical ethics. A key component to Spinoza’s ethics can be found in his argument that human beings experience both ‘active’ and ‘passive’ thought processes.
Active processes are products of our minds’ activity, as our mind imagines things that are not automatically presented to it and develops new ways of conceiving the world. In contrast to this process of active thought, ‘external’ forces effect passive thought-processes, as our mind thinks of the objects or circumstances that are immediately presented to it. Transitions between active thought processes and passive thought processes play a crucial role in Spinoza’s understanding of personal ethics and the nature of individual freedom: possibilities for choice and for imagining otherwise:

The mind’s capacity to gain freedom from the vicissitudes of passion is bound up with its capacity to represent itself, and hence to gain an understanding of, what is not actually presented to it as bodily modification – of what is absent or no longer existent (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 16).

For Spinoza, we are free when we are capable of ‘imagining otherwise’, when we can combine an awareness of our present with imaginings of other possible existences, of metaphysical forces that shape our worlds and of the passive roles that we can play in contributing to totalitarian ideals. For a child expelled from school, freedom might be the possibility to imagine a future in which tertiary education was interesting and engaging and, in which they belonged.

Spinoza argues that through engaging with ‘active’ thought processes the mind is able to think what is not there. However, the process of thinking can never be a strictly solitary enterprise. We have already introduced Spinoza’s argument that the mind, by virtue of its composition, is only able to think of ‘what is not there’ because it is grounded in materiality, grounded in what is ‘there’, or immediately presented to it. Imagination and sensation are grounded in materiality, and these generative, germinal physical attributes give thought its collective nature. Spinoza’s description of the mind’s grounding in materiality is based upon his contention that bodies are complex entities, and that it is through complex bodily sensations that our minds perceive the nature of a great many bodies, as well as our own. To experience
personal sensation is also to have a collective awareness:

“The human body is of a higher degree of complexity than other bodies, incorporating a greater number of subordinate unities; and this greater complexity makes it capable of acting and being acted upon in many ways at once.” (Gatens and Lloyd 1999:18)

Sensation, memory, imagination, and inter-personal relationships are co-produced, then. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze talks about intensive time, which opposes and precedes extensive time. Extensity refers to the actualized dimensions of a phenomenon: its height, its specific components. Intensive qualities cannot be simply reduced or divided without transforming their bearer entirely. Intensity governs the processes through which differences interact and shape the world:

"It is intensity which is immediately expressed in the basic spatio-temporal dynamisms and determines an 'indistinct' differential relation in the Idea to incarnate itself in a distinct quality and a distinguished extensity" (245).

Intensive time is passive, in the respect that it is the temporality produced with and for a given empirical assemblage.

Spinoza theorizes memory as an embodied phenomenon: “our bodies retain traces of the changes brought about in them by the impinging of other bodies” (1999:18). Thus, one of the implications of Spinoza’s bodily physics is his argument that the human mind has the capacity to regard other bodies as present even when they no longer exist. This imaging of bodies that are not physically present is also described by Spinoza as a ‘bodily affect’, and these affects are a product of the embodied nature of the imagination that are brought about through the material residues of experiences that live on in our imagination. These material residues form traces of experiences past, and serve to provide points of departure and points of reference for future experiences.
Following on from his understanding of the imagination as an awareness of bodies at the same time as being aware of one’s own body, Spinoza suggests that his theory of affect has arisen from the way in which “it may happen that we love or hate a thing without any cause for origin known to us, merely, as the phrase is, from sympathy or antipathy” (Spinoza 1997: E111, P xv p 10). In exploring the power of affect, Spinoza suggests that in order to apprehend something in thought, a person must have a previous imagining of the things ‘essence’. The sense of joy that a body often experiences is a result of the mind’s capacity to participate in the essence of those it loves, and the mind’s capacity to form strong emotional bonds within which individuals come to form part of a wider whole. Indeed, theorizing the relations between individuals and wider collectives constitutes a fundamental component of Spinoza’s work in ‘Ethics’ and ‘Tractus Theologico - Politics.’ (Spinoza 1632-1677)

Spinoza sees human ‘passion’ as operating in conjunction with images, and as organized around images. He goes so far as to map the geographies of human passions, arguing that images ‘cluster’ around points of emotional intensity. Spinoza argues that organized patterns of affect and image can be re-worked through logical thought. Those interested in widening participation need to effect exactly such thought processes in those excluded from school.

People will always strive to increase their powers and this process occurs through association with other bodies of similar dispositions. Furthering the polemic, Spinoza contends that bodies will instinctively distance themselves from affects that erode their powers. Thus, within Spinoza’s conceptual framework, the embodied mind operates through a logic of positive association, an “associative logic which could be just as appropriately described as a logic of emotion and especially a logic of desire, as it can be described a logic of imagination” (Gatens and Lloyd 1999: 26).

In order to change established patterns of affect and image that surround negative experiences with educational institutions, one must challenge the appropriateness of the images (the ‘ideal student’) that lie at the core of the organized
patterns of affect. Political activism is the act of reimaging the university student. Through his belief that organized patterns of human passions are grounded in the personal structuring of image and affect, Spinoza imbues his analysis of the operations of the passions with highly practical and personally ethical dimensions.

**Confused ideas, feelings, changes: Deleuze’s Spinoza**

Spinoza says “By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (2001: 98). For Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, ‘affect’ refers to changes in bodily capacity. The body to which Deleuze refers is not necessarily human. It is a degree of power held within any given assemblage or ‘mixture’. Affects extend or decrease the limits of what a ‘body’ – or a given assemblage or mixture – can do. An affect, then, is the margin of modulation effected by change in capacity: a material section in its own right that articulates an increase or decrease in a body’s capacity to act.

For example: a student is repeatedly rejected at school, and feels like a failure. They are expelled and are glad to be free from the place that made them feel bad. They dislike institutions and get an apprenticeship. The mental image of the school impacts not only their present, but their imagining of the future and possible futures. Places of formal learning are embodied negatively. A similar ‘alteration of mixtures’, in which experience changes mental images and/or images change physical responses, was effected through our research. From our conversations with young people, we can suggest that a juxtaposition of university and schools was pedagogically effective in terms of disrupting the idea of university as a big school.

In our interviews with the young people, the interviewer opened a discussion about what university was like and offered to answer questions they may have about university. One of the amazing things that were pedagogically effective in these discussions was when the interviewers offered direct comparisons between university and school. The interviewers did this simply by highlighting the difference between
the two in terms of: weeks of attendance per year (26 at university versus 40 at school); the number and flexibility of face-to-face teaching hours per week (12 at university versus 30 at school – so you can work and study); curriculum content (mandated school content versus studying within your chosen field at university, e.g. if you do not like mathematics you do not have to do it); disciplinary differences (learning and attendance is your responsibility, versus suspensions and expulsions at school); physical differences (campuses often have cafes, bars, post offices, shops, food halls; schools are private property but most Australian universities are public spaces so you can just walk in and check it out); and social differences (student unions, O-week parties, social calendars). In some cases this moved young people from disinterest to curiosity in terms of what universities can offer, and sometimes a resolution to attend.

The use of juxtapositions via market differentiation campaigns may be an effective tactic when promoting universities to potential non-traditional students. Such marketing might create positive affective landscapes of higher education. The main aim of such marketing could, and should, be differentiating university from schools in a way that disrupts understandings of ‘university as a big school’ and makes pursuing educational futures at university an attractive and achievable option. We would call for those responsible for marketing the widening participation agenda to strongly consider marketing efforts that differentiate schoolteachers from university teaching. Finally, we recommend that universities recognise conversations with LSES and that educationally disengaged students are a crucial part of their widening participation work (Harwood 2014; Harwood et al. 2013).

While on one level what we argue for here is a change in marketing, this is because we want to effect and increase in subjective capacity to imagine university education. We want to make an affectus. In Spinoza, *Practical Philosophy* Deleuze (1988: 49) articulates affectus as: “An increase or decrease of the power of acting, for the body and the mind alike.” He then expands this definition through arguing affectus is different from emotion. While emotion is the psychological striation of affect, the
way in which our experiences of change are captured by subjectivity, affectus is the virtuality and materiality of the increase or decrease effected in a body’s power of acting. Deleuze explains:

“The affection refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the affectus refers to the passage [or movement] from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. Hence there is a difference in nature between the image affections or ideas and the feeling affect” (Deleuze 1988: 49, parenthesis our own).

Thus, affectus is the materiality of change: it is “the passage from one state to another” which occurs in relation to “affecting bodies”. The image affections -or ideas- to which Deleuze refers, are generated by a specific kind of movement. Increasing or decreasing one’s capacity to act is the modulation of affectus: the virtual and material change that prompts affection or the ‘feeling of affect’ in consciousness. Deleuze’s work on this process of change begins with his reading of Spinoza.

In Spinoza: Practical Philosophy, Deleuze tells us:

[t]he affections (affectio) are the modes [forms of life] themselves. The modes are the affections of substance [matter, the universal] or of its attributes … These affections are not necessarily active, since they are explained by the nature of God as adequate cause, and God cannot be acted upon … At a second level, the affections designate that which happens to the mode, the modifications of the mode [affectus], the effects of other modes on it. These affections are therefore images or corporeal traces first of all … and their ideas involve both the nature of the affected body and that of the affecting external body. … [then, quoting Spinoza’s Ethics] ‘The affections of the human body whose ideas present external bodies as present in us we shall call images of things ... And when the mind regards bodies in
Feeling futures: the embodied imagination and intensive time
Anna Hickey-Moody, Goldsmiths College, University of London
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This way we shall say that it imagines (Deleuze, 1988: 48).

This quote explains affection or feeling as a signifier of affectus; Deleuze is arguing that feelings mark embodied changes. This framework for thinking about the ways ideas and interactions create changes is very practical when looking to change how people feel about education and how they imaging their future. For Spinoza, substance is the stuff of which life is made. It is expressed in modes, which are changed (affected or ‘modulated’) by affections (affectio). Affectio are traces of interaction: residues of experience that live on in thought and in the body. They make affects. Aspects of human bodies; molecules, muscles, blood, bones, communicate with each other, exist in relation to each other, and in relating, form an assemblage, mixture or body. Moving beyond the body, contexts and relations between human bodies are equally as constitutive of corporeal capacity.

Like Spinoza, then, Deleuze (2003) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1996) explore ways of thinking the body as a changeable assemblage that is highly responsive to context. For Deleuze and Guattari, each body’s embodied mind is a performance of difference, the mind is the ‘idea’ of the body; human consciousness is a product of corporeality. Our subjectivity is the embodied accumulation of our actions. Every human mind is as different as its body. It is impossible to compare the individuality of each body: every person has “the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration) — a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 262). The relationship between Spinoza’s philosophy and Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the body is evident in their (1987: 262) often cited contention that every body is “… a longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between formed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects”. Here, as in the passage from Spinoza’s Ethics quoted by Deleuze earlier, we are reminded that the body is an extension of substance, a variation of the two universal attributes of thought and extension. Human bodies are consistently re-making themselves through their actions: relations, interests, the contexts in which they live. This re-making can be understood as the images of education that bodies produce and consume, as these are
technologies of subjectivation and ways of learning about the world.

After Spinoza, Deleuze believes the materiality of sensation is the part of our imagination grounded in our body. To feel or sense is to imagine. The materiality of imagination, feeling, is relations between ideas and the bodies that are their objects: different attributes of substance. In his discussion of God (2001: 16) and his account of the origin and nature of affects (2001: 98), Spinoza argues affect enables him to consider the constitution and power of emotions in terms of ontology. Emotions are a barometer of affectus and are one of the ways in which bodies speak. He says:

“… affects … have therefore certain causes through which they are to be understood and certain properties which are just as worthy of being known as the properties of any other thing in the contemplation of which we delight”. (Spinoza, 2001: 98)

In Spinoza’s work lines, planes, simple and complex bodies are methods for thinking about corporeality, feelings, actions and desires. He also employs this method to investigate the human mind. Embedded in this process of inquiry is the conviction that feelings and desires are powerful, affective aspects of bodies. Corporeality and emotion are the same attribute. They are shaped by the aesthetics of their encounters. By considering embodied affect and imagination as “lines, planes and bodies” (Spinoza, 2001: 98), reason is able to negotiate (make a road map of) the imagination, to understand the ways we make feelings. Processes of making feelings are mixtures, or ‘assemblages’ of bodies, places, times, events.

Spinoza sees human passion as operating in conjunction with, and being organised around, images (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999). In constructing a relationship between human passions and sensory images, he acknowledges the aesthetic responsiveness of human subjects and opens space for thinking about how art and the aesthetics of daily life change what it is we are able to do. The aesthetics of everyday life choreograph connections and resistances to people, situations and events. Sensory images cluster
Feeling futures: the embodied imagination and intensive time
Anna Hickey-Moody, Goldsmiths College, University of London
Valerie Harwood, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong
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around points of emotional intensity (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 40). Organised patterns of affect and image can be reworked through thought that is driven by emotion (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 65). Research in the humanities and social sciences imagines bodies, societies and interactions in particular ways. Changing our imaginings through research, and researching to map such changes, are political acts grounded in the aesthetics of practical. One route such research might take is to map the politics of feeling; unpack how aesthetics teach through making assemblages we learn through feelings.

Following on from an understanding of the imagination as an awareness of bodies (one’s own body in relation to others), Spinoza’s theory of affect suggests to comprehend something in thought, a person must have a previous emotional relationship to the subject (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999: 22, 79, 82) – a prejudice against it, or fondness for it, based on an initial imagining, or first feeling. It is a relationship to this essence that generates affection, such as a sense of hostility or anxiety that the expelled student might retain toward the educational institution. The emotion experienced by the student once expelled when thinking of returning to school or university might be anxiety. The affect of this would be the ex-student avoiding education in the future.

Images, experiences and information, then, can change established patterns of thinking. One way it can do this is through affect and image. Methods that work with affect need to challenge the appropriateness of the images that lie at the core of organized structures of feeling that discourage low SES students from engaging with Higher Education. For example, many of the images used when marketing Higher Education in the U.K feature attractive middle class white young women enjoying life in a non-vocationally oriented way. One university sells an image of a blonde girl in a white frock reclining on a beach, looking fit and healthy and slender. Another has a blonde girl walking up some stairs in a short skirt, looking backwards and smiling, with the tagline “I got more than a degree”. Yet another has an image of a white woman standing in a quadrangle and smiling up at a man. One of the most prestigious
universities in Britain sells its programs to women with an image of a carton of eggs and a tagline asking if they want to keep their eggs for later in life. Clearly, there is a social imaginary being created and mobilized, or what Lauren Berlant would call an intimate public, that speaks to the role of tertiary education in developing middle class, largely white, reproductive femininity. Part of the affective work of such landscapes of images is to exclude those who feel like they do not belong to the socio-economic grouping pictured in the images – those who are not middle class, white, interested in reproducing, and so on.

Thus, we feel that Higher Education institutions need to change community imaginings of the appropriate university student offer new images through which lower SES might imagine university as part of their future.

ABS 2013;


