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# Editorial

Chaos and calamity due to circumstance have been unable to dampen the flame of knowledge – a flame that is vital to illuminating the path to truth and social justice.

Welcome to the second issue of the *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*. It has been a difficult few months for those of us associated with the journal. During this time we have seen the utter devastation of the once precious infrastructure of the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, an entity JAYS staff have all helped to build up, contribute to and engage with over the years. Yet out of the loss of the moment we have risen even more determined to help shape a better future. And this, too, is part of the Mission of the present journal.

Our collective concern is not just with “knowledge” as such. Rather we see JAYS as a vehicle for knowledge transfer – with purpose. We want to publish contributions that can make a difference at the level of practice, as well as in how we think about the world around us. The emphasis therefore is on impact and provocation, as well as insight and evaluation.

Accordingly, this issue of JAYS establishes new features that will be incorporated into the fabric of the journal. Specifically, the content structure now includes a section on ‘Projects and Practice’, which allows for elaboration on specific programs, practices and practitioners from around the world, and ‘JAYS Spotlight’, which provides an opportunity to present particularly useful and insightful material or commentary from other sources. We will also continue to present book reviews to provide a forum for critically constructive feedback on monographs pertinent to applied youth studies. These sections all complement the core of the journal, the refereed articles that feature the trends, issues and responses to what is happening in the worlds of young people and those who work with young people.

In addition to articles submitted by academics and practitioners, policymakers and public commentators, we also plan to publish the occasional “special issue”. If any of our readers has an idea for a special issue and would like to assist in putting such together, please do not hesitate to contact us here at *JAYS*. In the meantime, please enjoy the present issue, learn from its wisdoms and pass the torch on to others.

*Rob White*

*Academic Editor*

# Youth employment in Australia:

## A comparative analysis of labour force participation by age group

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LISA DENNY AND BRENDAN CHURCHILL

**In the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), concern regarding youth unemployment in Australia and in many other countries has been escalating, and justifiably so. However, the proposed policy solutions – where they exist – may not be the most effective. This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of Australian labour-force engagement by age group over the past two decades, specifically by levels of labour force participation and unemployment rates. It finds that policy levers to address the challenges of population ageing, as identified in four Australian government Intergenerational Reports, by increasing female and mature labour-force participation and increasing immigration, combined with a lack of employment demand post the GFC, may have been detrimental, at least in recent history, to youth engagement in the labour force.**

In 1996, economist Mark Wooden undertook a review of trends in the Australian youth labour market between 1966 and 1995 and described the period as one of “enormous change” marked by a decline of the full-time labour market for young people and the rise of part-time and casual employment. In his conclusion, Wooden (1996, p.158) contemplated “whether and in what ways will the future labour market experience of today’s youth cohort differ from that of previous cohorts”. Responding to those questions, this paper, beginning

where Wooden finished in 1995 and concluding in 2015, examines the experience of younger cohorts in comparison with other age groups in the labour market over the past two decades.

Since 1995, the Australian youth labour market has undergone further change as many of the trends identified by Wooden (1996) have continued to unfold. The most significant change has been the continued decline in the youth full-time labour market. The proportion of young people engaged in full-time employment has declined from 40% of all young people aged between 15 and 24 in 1995 to 29% in 2015. In contrast, part-time employment for young people increased over the period from 20% in 1995 to 30% in 2015 (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond 2015). The youth cohort during this period has come to be defined by the precariousness they encounter in the labour market. Indeed, they are a central part of the “new precariat” for whom insecure and non-standard employment has become the norm in a flexible, deregulated economy like Australia (Standing 2011). Since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), a heavy contingent of Australian politicians, business groups and non-government organisations has come to see youth unemployment as an endemic crisis. This rhetoric matches the harsh reality for the just under 290,000 young Australians aged between 15 and 24 who are looking for work, including 60,000 long-term unemployed young people.

## Background

While there has been a long-held assumption that “[y]ouths have always entered the labour force in precarious positions, expecting to have to prove themselves and learn” (Standing 2011, p.66), this has not always been the case for young Australians making the transition from school to work. For young Australians in the 1950s and the early 1960s, “the wide availability of full-time work provided a steady transition into the world of adults” (Cuervo & Wyn 2011, p.8). During this period, the life course pathway for young people was to leave schooling at the age of 15 and enter the full-time labour market. For these youth cohorts, job security was an expectation as Cuervo and Wyn (2011, p.7) note, “once they had arrived to their preferred employment, there the unchallenged expectation was of upward mobility in the workplace”. In contrast to the contemporary labour market, young people’s prospect of being



unemployed was exceptionally low during this period. In the following decades, however, the linear transition from school to work came to an end. From the late 1960s onwards, young cohorts in Australia would enter the labour market in increasingly precarious positions as the post-war boom came to an end in both Australia and in economies in the global North amidst the effects of a global recession and the transformation to service-oriented economies (Bessant & Cook 1998). Of these events, the most significant was the gradual erosion of the primary sector and manufacturing industries, which were heavily reliant upon the unskilled labour of young people and which were then replaced by the service industries that demanded professional, skilled labour (Cuervo & Wyn 2011).

The “death” of the full-time labour market for young people occurred following the restructuring of the economy and its labour market in the late 1980s, which led to a recession in the early the 1990s. In 1988, almost two-thirds of young people aged between 15 and 19 were in full-time work; however by 1998, only a third were in full-time employment. At the height of the recession, youth unemployment was 25% (Cuervo & Wyn 2011). The scars of the recession and high unemployment “produced a generational change in culture with young people becoming aware that without a secondary or tertiary qualification they had minimal chances to gain access to meaningful and/or rewarding employment” (Cuervo & Wyn 2011, p.16). This was met by a government agenda, which sought to not only alleviate the demand for further education but also maximise productivity and competitiveness by more closely aligning education and employment outcomes and focus on senior secondary school retention and completion for all Australians (Cuervo & Wyn 2011). Such changes would ensure that “every young Australian should be in education, training or employment” (Keating 1994, p.13). This phrase would become a mantra that would be repeated by successive prime ministers and treasurers, outlining youth policy in Australia. Together, these changes resulted in a de-standardisation of the transition from school to work, as Cuervo and Wyn (2011, p.11) observe:

... structural change with an emphasis on greater efficiency and productivity and policies aiming to increase school retention rates to produce a more qualified workforce, including parental perception that educational credentials

(school and/ or tertiary) lead to a higher income and a full-time job, have affected the traditional transition from school to full-time work (at 15/16 years) enjoyed in the fifties and sixties.

It is during this period that “youth policy became synonymous with education and training policy, with an emphasis on the promotion of the nation’s human capital, with the creation of higher skills from its workers” (Cuervo & Wyn 2011, p.18). Youth were viewed from a policy perspective as the “future” and as a “natural resource” to be invested in (Bessant & Cook 1998). This is part of a youth policy framework in Australia, which has focused upon transitions prefaced on the idea that young people make a series of linear transitions from schooling to post-school qualifications and finally to the full-time labour market, at which time they are deemed to have made the “successful adult transition”. This is part of a way of both identifying risk associated with being young in a neo-liberal, deregulated labour market and fostering social inclusion for those who do not make the “successful transition”, i.e. from school or post-school qualifications to unemployment (Woodman & Wyn 2013). This is in spite of decades of research that has demonstrated that transitions for young people in the contemporary labour market are anything but linear. Woodman and Wyn (2013) suggest that the centrality of transitions in youth policy at the time “offered the possibility of managing the youth employment crisis while reinforcing the possibility and desirability of a normative standard of transition within youth and education policies”.

The transitions-focused framework still underlies current approaches to youth policy in Australia, as evidenced by the response to youth unemployment following the Global Financial Crisis. Although the crisis had a limited impact upon Australia’s economy compared to other global economies, the crisis did affect the labour market, leading to a rise in unemployment. While the unemployment rate for both the overall working age and youth populations increased following the crisis, the overall unemployment rate has declined; the youth unemployment rate, however, has stayed persistently high in the aftermath of the crisis (Junankar 2015). Prior to the crisis beginning in late 2008, youth unemployment had been trending downwards throughout the first half of the 2000s in tandem with the resources boom. In early 2008, the youth unemployment rate was 8.8%, which was close to the low youth unemployment

rates of the 1970s. Almost eight years later, the unemployment rate is 13.6% (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2015; Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond 2015). These figures highlight the fact that even though prime-age workers make up a greater proportion of the labour market, there was a “disproportionate impact of the crisis on the jobs held by youth” (ILO & OECD 2014, p.26). Furthermore, while it is largely accepted that young people fare worse in recessionary times because of the types of industries they are employed in (Junankar 2015), they “experience a faster and stronger turnaround when economic conditions improve” (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond 2015, p.9). However, this has not been the case post GFC. This scenario is further complicated when considering the fact that Australia did not experience a recession following the GFC, yet youth unemployment rates, while not at the high levels of early 1990s, resemble recessionary youth unemployment rates. In response, the Coalition government introduced a “youth employment strategy” predicated on the transitions-focused youth policy framework as a part of the Budget (2015), which included the “Youth Work Transition” program for those “at risk of long-term welfare dependence”.

The likelihood of these programs to alleviate youth unemployment is poor as both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) advise “the youth employment crisis will not be overcome without stronger employment growth” (ILO & OECD 2014, p.10). They suggest an immutable and interdependent relationship between growth and improved employment opportunities for youth unemployment. In Australia, however, the youth cohort is not understood as an important driver of economic growth. As reflected in the last four Intergenerational Reports (IGRs), which inform and justify future policy development on issues surrounding productivity, participation and population, the youth cohort and future generations are conspicuously absent. Rather, the reports have argued for greater labour force participation and increased productivity from its older working population in combination with higher levels of skilled migration as a way of addressing future economic growth and demographic change (Churchill, Denny & Jackson 2014). Specifically, the IGRs have advocated for an increase in the preservation age to access superannuation benefits from 55 to 60 years and raising the age-

pension age, as well as introducing a range of superannuation tax concessions to entice ongoing participation in the labour force (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, 2007, 2010; Treasury 2015). In line with this policy framework, there have been specifically funded programs, such as Restart, announced in the 2014–2015 Budget, a wage subsidy for workers over the age of 50 to increase labour force participation.

In the next section of the paper, youth employment and labour force participation are examined using population-level data in comparison with the rest of the working-age population, delineated by five-year age groups, to consider trends in youth employment and the impact of these policy frameworks.

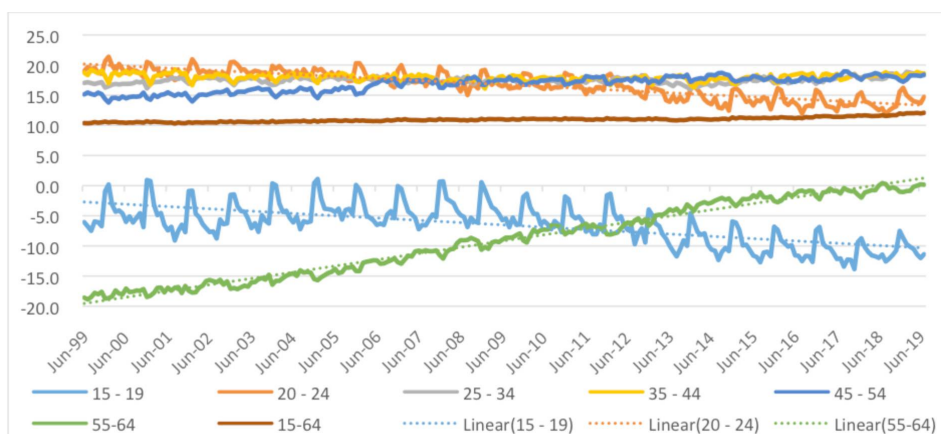
## Method and data

To determine whether youth employment has improved or deteriorated over the two decades since June 1995, comparative analysis of age-specific labour force participation and employment with the equivalent total rates is undertaken to identify any change over time and the resultant effectiveness of any policy intervention over the same period. Measures of the level of employment include the labour force participation rate<sup>1</sup> and the unemployment rate.<sup>2</sup> Not included in this analysis is underemployment where employed persons want, and are available for, more hours of work than they currently have. To enable comparative analysis over time, the change in percentage point difference between both the labour force participation rate and the unemployment rate for each age group<sup>3</sup> and the overall rate as well as the prime working age (those aged 15 to 64 years) rate is used. To account for change in employment demand contributing to the rates of participation and employment by youth and other age groups, analysis of population growth and employment growth is also undertaken using the employment to population ratio.<sup>4</sup> To balance the demand-side analysis with a supply-side viewpoint, investigation of change in the size of age cohorts is considered as well as their respective level of confidence in obtaining work in the labour market.

# Findings

## Labour force participation

**Figure 1. Labour force participation rate percentage point difference with overall labour force participation rate, by age group, Australia, 1995 to 2015**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour force, Australia, detailed – electronic delivery*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001.

Over a 20-year period between June 1995 and June 2015, the greatest changes in labour force participation rates have occurred among the youngest and oldest segments of the Australian working-age population. As Figure 1 illustrates,<sup>5</sup> during this period age-group-specific labour force participation rates compared with the overall participation rate have changed markedly for those aged 15 to 19 and 55 to 64, and to a lesser degree those aged 20 to 24. Comparatively, the labour force participation rates for all other age groups have varied little, with the prime working-age group (those aged 15 to 64) rate consistently around ten percentage points greater than the total rate and incrementally increasing in recent years.

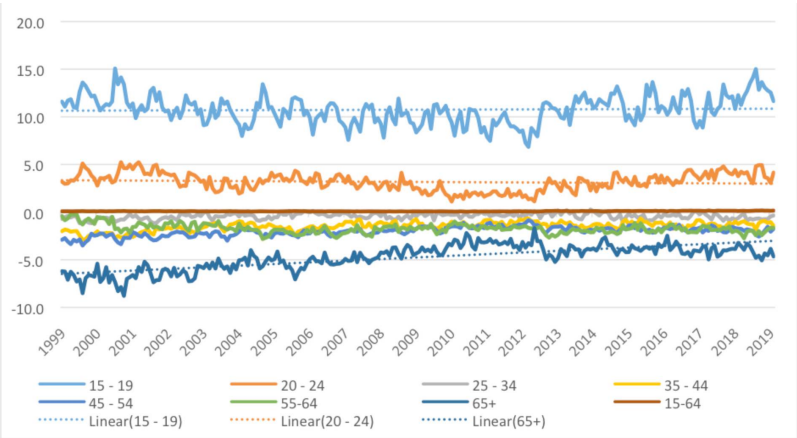
For young people aged between 15 and 19, the percentage point difference compared with the overall rate has increased over time from 6.7 percentage points less than the total labour force participation rate in July 1995 to 12.0 percentage points less than in July 2015. This trend reflects the increased participation in education and training for this age group and the relative level of confidence the cohort has in securing employment in the workforce. For younger Australians aged between 20 and 24, the labour force participation

rate percentage point difference compared to the total labour force participation rate has deteriorated slightly since 1995, from 19 percentage points greater than the total rate in July 1995 to 14.7 percentage points greater in July 2015. Again, this can be explained by increased participation in education and training by this age group as well as the relative level of confidence in gaining employment.

In contrast, the participation rate among older Australians has increased over this period. For those people aged between 55 and 64, the percentage point difference with the total rate has improved dramatically, closing the differential completely. In July 1995, the percentage point difference was 18.9 lower than the overall rate. By July 2015, the labour force participation rate for 55- to 64-year-olds was 0.2 percentage points greater than the overall rate. This is consistent with policy intervention to increase both female and mature-age labour force participation rates, coupled with the raising of the superannuation preservation age and age-pension age (for women). In addition, the impact of the GFC on the value of superannuation investments has prolonged the planned exit from the labour force by older workers.

### Unemployment rate

**Figure 2. Unemployment rate percentage point difference with overall unemployment rate, by age group, Australia, 1995 to 2015**



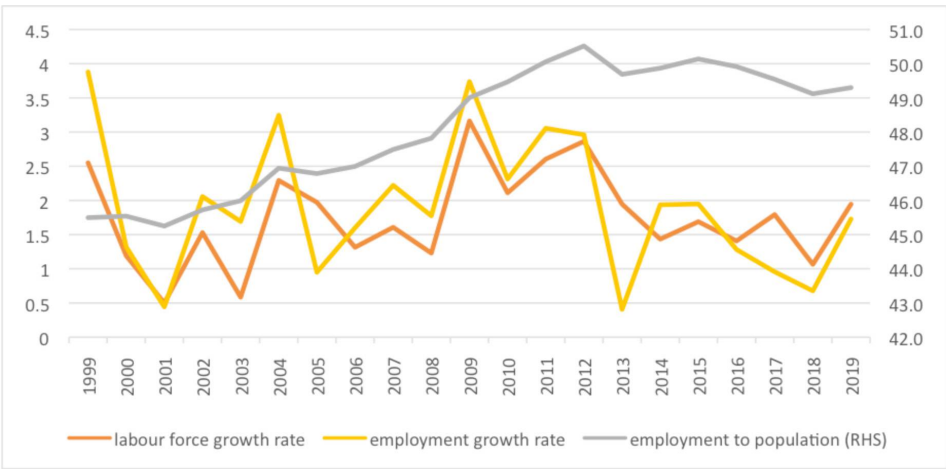
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour force, Australia, detailed – electronic delivery*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001.

Since 1995, the percentage point difference between age-specific unemployment rates and the overall unemployment rate has remained consistent for all age groups, apart from those aged 65 and older, with the differential improving considerably over the past two decades. However, given the comparatively low levels of labour force participation, this improvement is relatively insignificant. Even so, the improvement suggests that those who want to remain in the workforce after the age of 65 are able to do so.

For both youth cohorts, those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24, the cohort unemployment rate has been consistently greater than the overall unemployment rate for the past two decades with the percentage point difference for those aged 15 to 19 averaging 10.7 since 1995 and for those aged 20 to 24, averaging 3.2 percentage points greater than the overall rate. All other age groups' unemployment rates have been lower than the overall rate for the same period, as illustrated in Figure 2. Importantly, however, given that unemployment rates are measured as a proportion of the labour force, those rates are influenced by the level of participation in the labour force, which gives a clearer indication of the level of confidence a cohort may have in gaining employment.

### Employment growth rate

**Figure 3. Growth rates: employment and labour force and the employment to population ratio, Australia, 1995 to 2015**

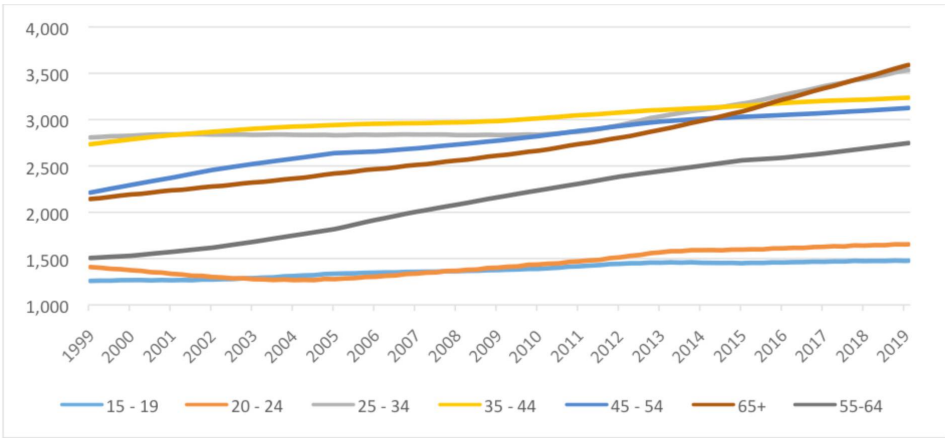


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour force, Australia, detailed – electronic delivery*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001, *Australian demographic statistics*, Cat. No. 3101.0.

Participation in the labour force (and subsequent employment) is influenced by the demand for employment. As is illustrated in Figure 3, the rate of employment growth generally exceeded the rate of growth in the size of the labour force (the supply of labour) for most of the period, resulting in increases in the employment to population ratio. In 2009, however, there was a decline in both the employment growth rate and the size of the labour force, which was caused by the economic downturn resulting from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) as well as some effects resulting from the ageing population. Importantly, the decline in the rate of employment growth during this period was greater than the decline in the growth rate of the supply of labour, apart from a brief hiatus during the Commonwealth Government Building the Education Revolution (BER) stimulation package. This has consequences for participation and unemployment as is evident by the employment to population ratio in Figure 3. Prior to 2009, this increased demand for employment was met by increased participation and employment by those in the 55 to 64 age group. During the year to June 2015, both the labour force and employment growth rates increased, resulting in an improved employment to population ratio for the first time since 2011. These improvements should bode well for youth employment, provided appropriate policy measures are in place.

## Labour supply

**Figure 4. Supply of labour: population by age group, 1995 to 2015**



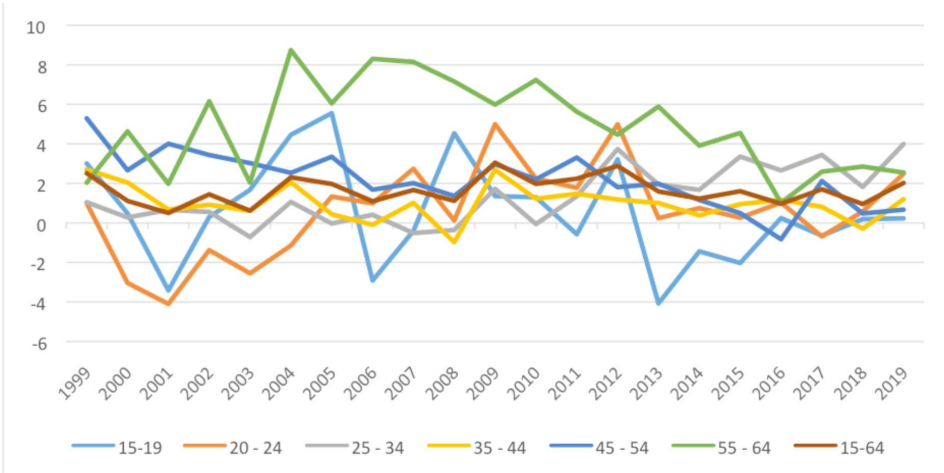
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian demographic statistics*, Cat. No. 3101.0.



The size of a labour force cohort is influenced by two factors, the size of the cohort of the population and participation in the labour force. As is evident in Figure 4, the size of the youth cohorts has increased marginally over time, whereas the size of the cohort aged 55 to 64 has increased considerably, as has that of those aged 45 to 54, but to a lesser degree. While the size of the cohort aged over 65 has increased at a greater rate, the low level of participation in the labour market for that age group renders this growth insignificant. The growth in the size of the older age groups, however, also predicates an increasing number of older workers eventually exiting the workforce, creating opportunities for youth and future generations.

The rate of participation in the labour force provides an indication of the level of confidence a person has in securing employment. As in Figure 5, the rate of growth in the size of the labour force for each age group has varied the greatest for those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 (with variance of 6.45 and 5.05 percentage points respectively), fluctuating between growth and decline, with the most pronounced change during times of strong or poor economic performance. While the labour force growth rate for those aged 55 to 64 had the highest average growth rate over the period (4.85%), the group also experienced a high variance of 5.2 percentage points consistent with economic performance and policy intervention. The rate of growth in the size of the labour force for all other age groups has varied little comparatively.

**Figure 5. Supply of labour: labour force growth rates, by age group, 1995 to 2015**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour force, Australia, detailed – electronic delivery*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001.

## Discussion

The findings from this paper show that since 1995 employment for youth has fared comparatively worse than employment for all other age groups. The findings illustrate a consistent trend over the past two decades, with a slight deterioration evident since the economic boom and bust of the late 2000s: young people aged between 15 and 24 have had considerably higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of participation relative to all other age groups. The findings also suggest that older age groups, to the detriment of the youth cohort, have benefited from increases in employment demand in the labour market over the 20-year period. Furthermore, this suggests that young Australians have not benefited from a strengthening economy in terms of labour market participation and brings into question claims from the ILO and OECD about the impact of economic growth on youth unemployment.

Also evident from this analysis is that once a cohort reaches the age of 25 they have higher levels of confidence in gaining employment, as demonstrated by a relatively higher labour force participation rate, and a greater likelihood of securing employment, as demonstrated by relatively lower unemployment rates than the overall rate. This is likely to be explained by increased completion rates in terms of education and training and also the gaining of relevant work experience, indicating that “successful adult transition” has occurred – but at what cost? This raises the question of how policy levers are failing those in Australia who want to enter the workforce at a younger age, i.e. aged 15 to 24.

The dominant policy position to increase labour force participation in response to the challenges of an ageing population has been to increase participation by mature-age and female workers, with scant policy positions for youth participation (Churchill, Denny & Jackson 2014). The policy positions include increasing the preservation age to access superannuation benefits to 60 and raising the age-pension age, as well as a range of superannuation tax concessions to entice ongoing participation in the labour force (Commonwealth of Australia 2002, 2007, 2010; Treasury 2015). Policy positions to increase female labour force participation focus on improving the ability to combine both work and parenting.

Regardless of these policy positions, increases in labour force participation rates by mature age and female workers are expected to stabilise given that the historic increases are attributable to cohort, period and age effects (Euwals, Knoef & Van Vuuren 2011; Parr 2012). This scenario should create opportunities for Australian youth, particularly given that the large, ageing workforce cohorts will eventually exit the labour force (Churchill, Denny & Jackson 2014).

However, these opportunities are conditional on two things: first, that current youth successfully avoid the scars of the GFC and are labour market ready when the time comes; and second, that over-reliance on immigration is resolved.

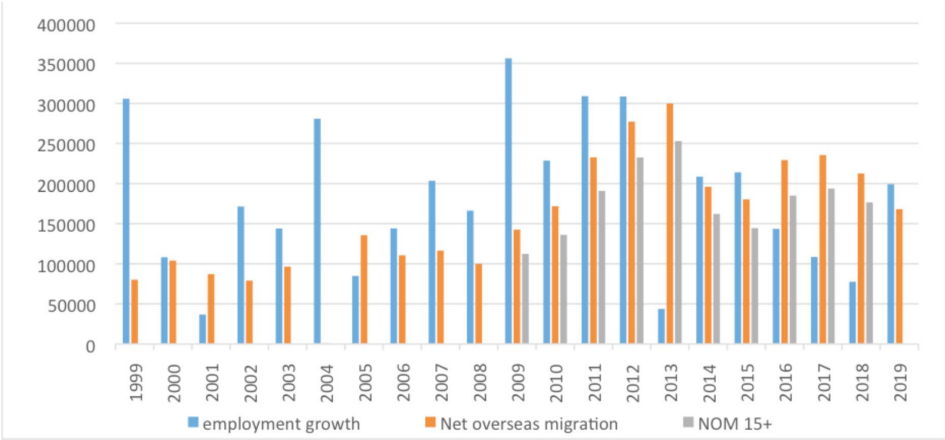
In the instance of projected skill and labour shortages, current government policy is increasingly turning to immigration as a solution, particularly through its skilled migration stream and temporary work visa programs. As noted by Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2011, p.28) the decision to move to a demand-driven program in early 2008 highlighted a significant and growing mismatch between the skills and experience on offer and those demanded by the Australian labour market, suggesting that there is not a lack of labour *per se*, but a mismatch between supply of skills, knowledge and experience and demand. Pincus and Sloan (2012) argue that immigration has the potential to undermine the workings of the labour market which would otherwise self-correct skill and labour shortages. A slowdown in the size of the working-age population should require governments to increase the effectiveness of education and training provisions and policy governing working conditions to encourage increased participation in the labour market. However, as immigration provides an immediate (relative) solution to labour demand, this is at the expense of a more effective training policy (Birrell 2010; McDonald & Temple 2010), and, as a policy position, is counterproductive to the investment in education and training of Australia's youth (Robinson & Lamb 2012).

The impact of this policy focus is clear. As pointed out by Borland (2013), Australia's changing unemployment rate between 2008 and 2013 was almost entirely explained by poor economic performance, but at the same time the size of the labour market increased considerably as a result of a corresponding

increase in net overseas migration. Birrell (2014) points out that since 2003 Australia has experienced a massive increase in net overseas migration (NOM), largely attributable to a shift in immigration policy and, to a lesser degree, to a change in the methodology used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to calculate NOM.<sup>6</sup> The restructured immigration policy is designed to meet employment demand by outsourcing the size and characteristics selection of skilled migrants to employers through the opening up of both the permanent entry visa and temporary entry visa subclasses to employer sponsorship.

Since 2005, overall employment growth has exceeded total NOM, providing some justification for the introduction of the employer-led immigration policy. However, since the introduction of the new immigration policy and the subsequent GFC in 2008, NOM has considerably exceeded employment growth, not including the two BER years of 2010 and 2011, resulting in a far larger labour market than employment demand. In the five years to 2015, NOM exceeded employment growth by over 30,000.<sup>7</sup> Even so, for the first time since 2011, employment growth during 2015 exceeded total NOM, explaining recent improvements in both labour force participation and employment rates. (See Figure 6.) Provided employment growth continues to exceed net overseas migration into the future, opportunities for young Australians to engage successfully in the workforce should improve.

**Figure 6. Employment growth, net overseas migration and net overseas migration (working-age population), Australia, June 30 1995 to June 30 2015<sup>8</sup>**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour force, Australia, detailed – electronic delivery*, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.001, *Migration, Australia, 2013-14*, Cat. No. 3412.0.

## Conclusion

While efforts to improve youth employment outcomes focus on skill deficiencies, work ethic and the education system to produce job-ready workers, the reality is that poor economic performance and high levels of skilled migration are impacting on the ability of young Australians to enter the labour market for the first time. We know that once a person reaches the age of 25, confidence in gaining and securing employment is evident through both improved labour force participation and unemployment rates. This suggests that the focus on transitions from school to work is not only failing young people, but is also conceptually out dated. In the current economic and demographic conditions in Australia, a reliance on the transitions framework, which underlies youth policy in Australia, has seen businesses and employers neglect to engage and invest in young people. What is needed is better integration and training and workforce development through strategic workforce planning policies.

Opportunities for youth in Australia are dependent on a number of factors, predominantly: economic performance generating employment demand; ageing workforces; a shift of education and training policy; and provision towards encompassing employability skills as well as practical workplace experience and knowledge, including intergenerational knowledge transfer.

While it is well known that the transition from education to work has become more complex and less linear with increasing demands in the workplace for additional skills, knowledge and abilities beyond what is provided in the post-school education and training system, policy attempts to address this issue have been misguided. This is in contrast to evidence of successful policy initiatives that have improved labour force participation among older Australians. While participation in education and training has improved, there is also evidence that this has not translated into improved employment outcomes for young Australians, ultimately suggesting a mismatch between education provision and employment opportunities. As stated by Churchill, Denny and Jackson (2014), “there is an urgent need for both the preparedness and realignment of the relationship between education provision and employment”. The labour market experience of youth cohorts today and in the

future must differ from that of previous cohorts. To account for these experiences, policymakers might need to abandon the transitions framework in favour of a “generational frame” to provide policy solutions for a generation “who are studying longer, taking longer to find suitability in the job market if they find it at all ... as they struggle to balance the new pressures the generational conditions they face have placed on them” (Woodman & Wyn 2015, p. 272).

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## Endnotes

- 1 The proportion of the civilian population of the same group who are either employed or actively seeking employment expressed as a percentage.
- 2 The proportion of the labour force, of the same group, who are actively seeking employment and able to start work, expressed as a percentage.
- 3 Those aged 15–19, 20–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–65 and 65 and older.
- 4 The employment to population ratio is calculated by the number of people employed to the total population and is a measure of economic activity.
- 5 The age group of 65 years and older has been excluded from this figure as the percentage point difference has averaged at 56 percentage points less than the total rate since 1995.
- 6 The ABS method for measuring NOM is referred to as the '12/16-month rule' where incoming

overseas travellers (who are not currently counted in the population) must be resident in Australia for a total period of 12 months or more during the 16-month follow-up period to then be included in the estimated resident population. Similarly, those travellers departing Australia (who are currently counted in the population) must be absent from Australia for a total of 12 months or more during the 16-month follow-up period to then be subtracted from the estimated resident population. Previously, NOM was measured using a continuous approach, the '12/12 month rule'.

7 Net overseas migration by age data was not available for the year ending June 2015 at the time of publication and therefore working age comparison is not possible.

8 This data is limited to that available at time of writing. Net overseas migration working age data was not available for the 2015 financial year. NOM working age data is only available since the 2005 financial year.



# Using student videos in the prevention of cyberbullying in higher education settings

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MARGARET ANNE CARTER, ARIELLA VAN LUYN AND MARIE M'BALLA-NDI

**The push towards online tertiary education has many benefits; however, it also increases the risk of cyberbullying in higher education settings. This paper reports on the early stages of a multidisciplinary research project involving the design of educational resources to prevent cyberbullying. It focuses on the use of student-produced videos of fictional scenarios of cyberbullying, which are included on a 'prevent cyberbullying website'. The paper argues that the production of student videos is one means by which higher education students can explore their own experiences with intervention in and prevention of cyberbullying.**

The global nature of today's education sector, the political and economic agendas aimed at making higher education more accessible and cost effective, and rapidly changing learning technologies all contribute to the appeal of learning online to an increasingly diverse and more demanding twenty-first century student cohort. The introduction of blended learning (that is, combinations of online and offline delivery) in higher education institutions has led to an increase in online collaborative cultures and innovative, collective-learning communities.

While these electronic technologies have a wealth of advantages, because of the “everywhere, anytime” aspect of asynchronous and synchronous access (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2003; Patchin & Hinduja 2006; Tokunaga 2010), students need to enact safe and protected ways of networking and collaborating online. The research discussed in this article is a component of a larger project conducted at a regional university located in the tropics of northern Queensland, Australia. A multidisciplinary team of researchers working in guidance and counselling, journalism and creative writing invited journalism students in a third-year video production class to create video stories enacting fictional cyberbullying scenarios based on research into cyberbullying and their own experience. Some of the videos were then uploaded onto a website to educate students in higher education about cybersafety and the consequences of cyberbullying for people’s lives. This innovative way of engaging with the target audience of the website avoided ethical concerns such as the potential identification of cyberbullying victims and perpetrators. In this pilot project, 17 students worked in teams or individually to produce a total of five videos. Three videos were selected to be included on the website.

The outcomes of this project suggest that the production of student videos is one means by which students can explore their own experiences of intervention in and prevention of cyberbullying, and more deeply reflect on the definitions, causes and probable impact of cyberbullying on victims, bystanders and bullies. The authors contend that students were engaged at a deep level in this issue by making films and that the activity is an effective way to access students’ perspectives on cyberbullying.

This article begins with a definition of the modalities of cyberbullying, followed by a review of the literature on cyberbullying in higher education contexts. The “prevent cyberbullying educational website” is then introduced, followed by a discussion of how the fictional scenarios in the videos provide a means for students to explore the research on cyberbullying, and observations and reflections on how the students responded to the task of producing the videos in order to more deeply understand the modes and causes of cyberbullying. The paper concludes with student and researcher reflections on the significance of the project.

## Defining cyberbullying

One difficulty associated with understanding the phenomenon of cyberbullying is that it has yet to be clearly defined, with many researchers assuming it functions in a similar manner to traditional bullying, distinguished primarily by the medium of electronic communication devices. Given that the literature provides multiple definitions of this construct, we have opted for the following definition in our research: cyberbullying refers to an intended, offensive, unwanted, repeated aggressive behaviour with the potential for harm, inflicted by an individual or group, carried out through electronic communication devices (Calvete, Orue, Estévez, Villardón & Padilla 2010; Patchin & Hinduja 2006; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippet 2008; Grigg 2012; Carter 2013). The modalities of cyberbullying, categorised by Willard (2007) and Chisholm (2014), are encompassed in this definition (Table 1).

The liberating possibilities of information and communication technologies, “where opportunities to remain blameless or create an alter identity are easily obtainable” (Wong-Lo, Bullock & Gable 2011, p.318) are often perceived as unrelated to real life. This culture of deception can influence users to become disconnected from real world ethics, freeing them to be unchecked when communicating online (Kowalski & Limber 2007; Berson, Berson & Berson 2002; Mishna, Saini & Solomon 2009). Identification of behaviour as bullying varies between individuals, with many advocating their right to freedom of speech (Finn 2004; Li 2006; Cassidy, Jackson & Brown 2009). However, behaviour not classified as bullying by some perpetrators may be considered bullying by victims. In an online environment, by the click of a button, users can disseminate information beyond boundaries of time and space. The scale of circulation is difficult to limit, and the number of observers after the fact is often unknown (Kowalski & Limber 2007; Ozdamli, Hursen & Ercag 2011).

**Table 1 Modalities of cyberbullying**

Flaming	Electronic messages with fuming and discourteous language (Willard 2007, pp.1-2).
Harassment	Continually sending offensive and rude messages online (id.).
Denigration	Spreading rumours online to harm reputations or relationships (id.).
Impersonation	Masquerading as someone else and breaking into someone's account; impersonating a person and posting inflammatory material as that person to damage their status or relationships (id.).
Outing/Trickery	Convincing someone into declaring confidences, and circulating this information online (id.).
Exclusion	Maliciously excluding someone online (id.).
Cyberstalking	Habitual online harassment and defamation (id.).
Ratting	Remote controlling computer/webcam without person's knowledge or consent and controlling the operations of their computer (Chisholm 2014, p.79).
Catfishing	Deceiving people into emotional relationships by devising fictitious online identities (id.).
Malicious sexting	Distributing humiliating and/or sexually suggestive pictures online without consent (id.).
Shock trolling	Spiteful and aggressive messages intended to aggravate or degrade someone in order to incite a reaction (id.).

References: Adaptation of Willard 2007, pp.1-2; Chisholm 2014, p.79.

## Cyberbullying in higher education

A number of studies, including Young-Jones, Fursa, Byrket and Sly's (2015) research with Midwestern undergraduate students in an American university (n=130), reported persons bullied in higher education settings were also victimised in primary and secondary schooling, and that there was a decrease in self-reported victimisation between bullying at school and later in post-secondary contexts.

Finn's (2004) convenience sample case study, conducted with undergraduate students from New Hampshire, USA (n=339), attested that repeated, intimidating and distressing emails (16.2%) or Instant Messenger (IM) texts (19.3%) were received by students irrespective of whether they demanded the sender to stop. While online harassment was conveyed to an authority 6.8% (n=23), with 30.4% (n=7) reporting it either to an internet service provider or to the university, 47.8% (n=11) stated that cyberbullying continued. Nilan, Burgess, Hobbs, Threadgold and Alexander (2015, p.3) state that this capacity for cyberbullying to be continuing and repetitive is one of the qualities that make it distinct from standard forms of bullying; because of the nature of the electronic medium, derogatory or demeaning comments may stay online for some time and harmful images or texts may be downloaded and saved to mobile devices, even after they have been removed from their original location.

Turan, Polat, Karapirli, Uysal and Turan's (2011) research with students attending three Istanbul universities (n=579 students aged 18 to 30 years) revealed that 59.8% (n=346) had been intimidated on electronic media, and more than half (54.4%) were affected by the aggression.

Findings from MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman's (2010) research with undergraduate students at a Midwestern university in the USA (n=439) showed 38% of subjects knew victims of cyberbullying, while 21.9% were victims, with only 8.6% reporting cyberbullying events to someone else.

Faucher, Jackson and Cassidy (2014) surveyed research conducted across four Canadian universities (n=1,925 students) and reported that over a third of participants had experienced cyberbullying. Participants described very real ramifications for their studies including curbing "their ability to do their assignments; it affected their relationships outside of the university; they experienced mental health issues; and/or they felt that their emotional security or their physical safety was threatened" (Faucher Jackson & Cassidy 2014, p.5). While most respondents could not stop the bullying, females were more likely to confide in friends, partners and/or family members (60% females compared with 42% males). Few respondents in this study talked about bullying with academics, professional staff or support services; 32% of females compared

with 47% of males associated electronic bullying with online interaction, with 58% of males and 43% of females decreeing freedom of expression online permitted them to communicate as they wished without censorship.

While there remain gaps in the cyberbullying in higher education literature, including minimal Australian studies (Fleur 2014; Nilan et al. 2015; Albury & Crawford 2012), it is evident that prevention and intervention are significant problems in higher education institutions, and that innovative approaches different from those adults may have been exposed to in childhood and adolescence are justified. Consequently, the research team embarked on developing an educational website to familiarise students in higher education with cyberbullying behaviour and the very real consequences of cyberbullying for people's lives. The content on the site was directed at lessening the stigma associated with being the victim of cyberbullying, creating a sense of hope and optimism, growing knowledge of help-seeking behaviours, and, at all levels across the institution (students, academics and professional staff), building awareness of and efficacy in online ethical engagement.

## The “prevent cyberbullying” website

Aware of the increasing number of students engaging in blended spaces in their higher education studies, the first author began examining mechanisms for educating students in this space about ethical online engagement that targeted intervention in and prevention of cyberbullying. As Lukens and Solomon (2013, p.65) explain, “ethics rests upon assumptions about agency, which is the ability of persons to deliberate and act with intention”. The author systematically reviewed policies and processes in the author's own university to ascertain what material existed on ethical behaviour when engaging online. The author also found inconsistencies across the higher education sector regarding guidelines for ethical behaviour for both students and staff in online teaching and learning spaces. Some universities, such as University of South Australia, have created detailed guidelines for cyberbullying; however, to date, many educational institutions, as well as the broader legislative environment, have not undertaken a detailed examination of the legal issues involved with cyberbullying (see Campbell, Butler & Kift 2008; Butler, Kift & Campbell 2010). This situation has impacted on the articulation of clear regulations regarding

the ill-defined concept of cyberbullying. The universities' responsibility in the eyes of the law is also not widely understood, which poses another obstacle for universities attempting to articulate their in-house policies on cyberbullying.

Similarly, legislation against cyberbullying in Australia is not uniform. Pearson (2012, p.350) writes:

Attacks upon others via the internet or social media go under a range of names according to their type, scale and jurisdiction [...] Some are criminal offences where offenders can be fined or jailed, while others are civil wrongs where courts can award damages to victims. Some are litigated under other actions, such as defamation, privacy and breach of confidentiality.

The introduction of the 2011 Brodie's Law in Victoria saw bullying (cyber or other) added as an offence to the state's criminal code, providing a maximum sentence of 10 years gaol (see Little 2013). However, other states record mainly civil actions in cases of bullying. Overall, there is a lack of clarity in Australia in the legislation on and policy about the definitions and consequences of cyberbullying. It is hardly surprising that cyberbullying is a problem in the higher education context.

## Producing the videos

The researchers used action research methodology (McNiff & Whitehead 2006) to consider how a multidisciplinary research team could develop a "prevent cyberbullying" website, educate students about cyberbullying and design innovative education resources for university students. In this initial stage of the project, the researchers invited third-year journalism students enrolled in a subject on video journalism to engage with research on cyberbullying (much of which is presented in the above section) and to produce scripts and videos based on this research. Students were invited to participate in the project at the beginning of the semester, and in their second week of class, they were briefed by the authors on the project and the website, their role in it and the implications of their participation. The video production was to be assessed and graded, and counted towards the students' final mark for their subject. However, students were given the choice to decline participation in the project without need for justification; those declining participation were to be given an option to write a script and produce a video on an alternative topic in

consultation with the lecturer. None of the students in the cohort declined participation. The students all consequently were provided with an information sheet and signed a consent and release form agreeing to produce scripts and videos for the website as part of their enrolment in the video journalism subject, as well as consenting to the publication of their work on the website.

The students produced the videos in groups as part of their assessment requirements. Five videos were produced in total; out of these, three were selected to be added on the website. The third-year journalism students involved in this project had a sound knowledge of media law and ethics as they had completed a law and ethics subject in the second year of their degree. This subject tackles issues of harassment, defamation, confidentiality and privacy. However, the specific issue of cyberbullying was still obscure to most of the students, who mainly relied on their own perceptions and experiences at the beginning of the project.

The students faced the challenge of adding their own understanding of cyberbullying to the limited amount of academic literature on the subject. One of the main tasks was to make sense of this literature and link somewhat heavily theoretical conversations to their “hands-on” experiences. The students worked in groups of three for each video. Peers or friends from diverse disciplines at the higher education institution volunteered as actors in their videos, while in some groups the journalism students also acted in their own productions.

## Why videos with fictional scenarios?

When planning the website, the researchers envisioned including stories of actual victims who had experienced cyberbullying and, where appropriate, adults who had participated or witnessed cyberbullying that had transformed their thinking about principle-centred online behaviours. However, the ethical implications of including real-life victims, bullies and bystanders were considerable. Former bullies and bystanders faced possible repercussions, as did victims, a circumstance that was further exacerbated by the setting being a regional, close-knit community in North Queensland. If victims’ tormentors saw publicly available discussion of bullying incidents, they might retaliate. At



the time the website was initially planned, the university and wider regional community had been shocked by the story of a student organiser of a 'Reclaim the Night' march who had been threatened online while organising the event (Willis 2013). This publicly available narrative demonstrated both the currency of discussions of cyberbullying and the very real risk students face of emotional trauma from online attacks, as well as the sensitivity of the community to the issue. As a result, students were encouraged to produce fictive scripts and videos based on academic research, news and archival research on the topic of cyberbullying.

Ethnographic researchers Heather Piper and Pat Sikes (2010, p.567) experienced similar difficulties concerning ethics when researching the sensitive issue of child sexual abuse in schools. They observed that with such sensitive issues, those being researched may not be adequately protected by pseudonyms and the changing of personal and contextualising details. Piper and Sikes's solution was to use fictive narratives, which were composite constructions based on interviews they conducted, not only to protect their participants but also to demonstrate the lived and emotional impact of accusations of child sexual abuse (Piper & Sikes 2010; Sikes & Piper 2011).

Similarly, Margaret Vickers (2014) writes fictive stories based on her extensive interviews with persons with disabilities experiencing workplace bullying. She notes that one of the limitations of bullying research is its focus on quantitative analysis and statistics. She argues that her fictive stories respond to calls for victims' voices and emotional experiences to be heard in research about workplace bullying. Fictive stories based on research are thus a means of overcoming some of the ethical dilemmas associated with representing bullying experiences. At the same time, they can represent emotional and lived experiences. While Vickers and Piper and Sikes wrote text-based stories, the same argument can be applied to fictional narrative enacted in short films.

The fictional short stories that Piper and Sikes and Vickers produced demonstrate that fictional narratives, although not "true" in the sense that they can be directly correlated to a real-life person, can represent research in a manner that is universal rather than specific to a particular context. To think of

fiction as “lies”, as Carolyn Ellis accuses some critics of doing (Davis & Ellis 2008, p.113), is perhaps reading the form too simplistically. Rather, as Van Luyn (2013) has argued elsewhere, drawing on literary theorist Stephen Greenblatt’s work, fiction has the capacity to both enact dominant social ideologies and expose modes of maintaining power. Because fiction can at once reinforce and subvert dominant social ideologies, it operates as a “safe space” for writers to test out ideas about the world. Fiction therefore does not directly represent the world, nor does it “lie”. Rather, the form offers a metaphorical space to explore ideas about society.

Ethnographic fiction writers have come to similar understandings about the way fiction can serve to re-present research data. Ethnographic fiction writer Robert Rinehart (1998, p.204) observes that:

Fiction comes to its truth almost incidentally, as an outgrowth of discovery of truths based on the motivations of characters, the story line (or plot), and the interaction of the elements of the story. Fiction might be based on actual events, but often, it is based on the writer’s interpretation of actual or imagined events.

Inherent in Rinehart’s statement is the assumption that fiction’s specific qualities – its concern with character and narrative, for example – operate as means by which a writer can come to a personal realisation of her or his perception of an event, or rather, as Greenblatt would have it, test hypotheses about the world. Pavel (2000, p.521) concurs, stating that, “we use literature as a springboard for reflections about the human condition. It should raise questions, ask readers to ponder hypotheses and debate issues”. The students’ fictional stories of cyberbullying presented in the films are thus a means of metaphorically showing cyberbullying taking place and the social conventions that allow cyberbullying to occur, while also representing an imagined character’s lived experience of bullying, either as a victim, bystander or bully.

While the statistics about cyberbullying are compelling, they do not capture the lived experience of victims, bullies and bystanders. The students creating the videos observed this in their answers to a questionnaire about their experiences creating the videos:

*From experience, telling and lecturing people that bullying is bad is not an effective way of curtailing this. Showing the effects and the outcomes of bullying give [sic] a more realistic picture for viewers to grasp the full impacts of bullying.*

Davies (2001, p.270) argues that fiction is a source of “affective knowledge”: the knowledge about what it is like to be in a particular circumstance. Similarly, the student quoted above believes that modelling the effects of cyberbullying, albeit the imagined effects, is more compelling than providing statistics. This is significant because it demonstrates that narrative discourses, which represent a character in a setting experiencing conflict with little or no explicit explanation, are more like real life than academic depictions. This effect has been observed by ethnographic fiction writers who argue that fiction better captures their subject’s lived experience than academic discourse does (Schoepflin & Kaufman 2011, p.224). Imagined narratives can thus play a role in cyberbullying education by representing the lived experience of cyberbullying in a way that feels real without running the risk of implications for people affected by cyberbullying.

Unlike written fiction, which has the capacity to represent a character’s interior (Van Luyn 2013), short videos of imagined scenarios can only show a character’s exterior, except where the character’s thoughts are revealed through a voiceover. Generally, however, empathy can still be achieved through facial expressions and gestures. This was particularly poignant in one of the student videos, which imagined an experiment where bullies read their online abusive messages to victims face-to-face; the students’ choose to focus on the victim’s hand gestures and the impact of abuse was envisioned as hands shaking and a nervous clutching of both elbows. This visual cue directs audiences to imagine the emotional effect of bullying on the victim. Researchers in advertising have established that short, narrative films can persuade audiences by representing emotion (Yu & Chang 2013). While the students’ films are not advertisements per se, they do have a more persuasive purpose than films created solely for enjoyment. In theory, the short films they created have the capacity to persuade because they visually display the emotional experience of victims, bystanders and bullies in cyberbullying events.

Victoria Foster (2009, p.238), an academic researcher who uses arts-based approaches to explore social phenomena, argues that research using participants' personal narratives to share stories, for example in videos, encourages self-reflection by and deeper understanding of those being researched. We argue that, similarly, fictional narratives in the form of videos can be used to encourage deeper understanding of cyberbullying, although perhaps not explicitly. Rather, fictional narratives, by representing emotions and generating empathy, become a space where the audience can enact and explore concepts. The researchers invited students to engage with contextualising research in the development of their films, which the students did in unique ways to represent and explore notions of cyberbullying.

## The student videos

All five videos had common criteria including a restriction on the length of the clip to three to four minutes, the inclusion of ambient sounds and royalty-free music, and the right to include lower-thirds, signs, captions and any other form of text when necessary.

In the video of the imagined social experiment, the students both enacted and challenged the act of cyberbullying by using a literal metaphor to represent bullies as disconnected from reality and then highlighting the illusionary nature of this perceived safety. For example, in one vignette a young woman types a derogatory message on Facebook underneath an image of another woman in a bikini. This act takes place in a white room with generic furniture representing a bedroom. The woman then encounters her victim face-to-face in a white room empty of anything except the two chairs the characters sit on during the encounter. This depiction of cyberbullying taking place in the private space of the bedroom, while the face-to-face encounter takes place in a generic "any place", appears to represent the distinction between the online, which is perceived as private, and the "real" space of the face-to-face encounter and its emotional impact. The students depicted the social conventions that allow bullying to take place in a perceived private space, disconnected from reality, and then challenged this perception by presenting the "real" impact of the bullying – the personal impact on both the victim and on the bully herself, who broke down and apologised while reading aloud what

she had written online to her victim. Students enacted the research that suggested bullies are disconnected from their victims in online environments while also showing the emotional impact on both the victim and the bully.

In another video, students appeared to focus on the enduring nature of cyberbullying. In this plot, a young man is shown lying unconscious on the ground near a toilet, presumably after drinking too much alcohol. Two young women, laughing, take pictures of him and post the images on Facebook. The photos are then liked by other bystanders and shared. In this way, the video represents a form of bullying unique to the online environment: bullying that is public and repeated. At the end of the video, a young man witnesses others laughing at the picture and, after an internal dialogue, decides to speak out against the bullying. Again, the video demonstrates that, in telling fictive narratives, a message can be delivered in the ironic gap between what is being represented (the act of bullying) and the audience's interpretation of that event. In representing the act of cyberbullying and its perpetuation, the video reveals the power imbalance that allows victims to be bullied and the pivotal role of the bystander in conspiring with the bullying or taking a stand and saying "no" to online aggression.

The students who created the video stated, "we chose to highlight this fact as it [cyberbullying] is often seen as something 'fun to do' ". The characters in the video do indeed seem to be having fun, but the viewer is cued not to participate in their enjoyment because of the obvious vulnerability of the victim and the depiction of the victim's response to the video, as well as the bystander's response of condemning the bullying. The fact that the audience has access to the bystander's internal thinking through a voice-over aids in creating sympathy for the bystander's point of view. Gregory (1998, p.28) argues that fiction,

... unlike life, does provide direct access to others' minds, and in so doing yields essential data, which we use in order to sharpen the accuracy and to increase the depth of our inferential knowledge about the interior lives of real-life persons.

In representing a character's awareness and knowledge of their own thinking, the video invites the viewer to understand that the character thinks just as they do. This technique has the persuasive effect of evoking empathy with the bystander by linking him more closely with the audience and modelling the

thought processes that make an argument against participating in cyberbullying.

The students who produced this video stated they wanted to draw attention to how bullying occurs on social media. In a questionnaire, the group noted that when they read the research provided, it did not adequately represent the experience of bullying at a university level:

*What was also unexpected was that the papers that did mention bullying at a tertiary level were either dated to the point of having little or no relevance, or the issues investigated did not apply to the type of bullying found at universities. For example, social media was barely examined.*

The video revealed how university students may use social media to engage in acts of bullying, and demonstrated the ease with which an act of cyberbullying can take place in an online environment and be spread boundlessly in the virtual space.

## Student and researcher reflections

In one of their last video journalism classes, the students reflected on the videos they produced. This exercise benefited the students involved in this project in several ways. For example, some students claimed that producing their videos made them realise that they may have, at some point in time, been unconsciously playing “a passive” role in cyberbullying by “liking” a picture on Facebook, or sharing posts humiliating someone. In this sense, the students realised that there are several levels and layers of cyberbullying, and that just because bullying messages and photographs did not originate with them, did not mean that they weren’t perpetuating the bullying act. Along the same lines, the students also realised that ignoring instances of online cyberbullying may implicitly perpetuate it. In some videos, the students emphasised the responsibility of “bystanders” to report such online content rather than remain silent.

“The students realised that just because bullying messages and photographs did not originate with them, did not mean that they weren’t perpetuating the bullying act.”

Students also felt that acting in the videos, and/or knowing the actors, caused them to be somehow more sensitive to the issue of cyberbullying. This is a concept used when training journalism students and teaching them about law and ethics. They are advised to put their judgement into perspective when researching or producing a news story by asking themselves, “What if this story were about your mother/father/siblings? Would you publish it as is? Would you research it more? Would you even investigate it?”

When producing a story about relatives, journalists tend to be more anxious about the information they are handling and about the repercussions for the subject. Similarly, the journalism students sometimes felt uncomfortable witnessing the fictional portrayal of the damage caused to the reputation of one of their peers by an online post or picture that might at first seem harmless. The simulated emotional damage caused by a cyberbullying act to someone the journalism students knew, helped them understand the extent of the issue of cyberbullying from a deeply insightful perspective. The production of cyberbullying videos was, for the students involved in this project, an experience that offered them a deep and concrete understanding of an issue omnipresent in their everyday life, but of which they seemed quite unaware at first.

## Conclusion

Based on analysis of the videos and student comments and reflections, it appears that this pilot project involving the production of videos about cyberbullying helped students understand the complex issue better, and the fictional scenarios allowed students to enact often dry research in an engaging manner. In addition, fictive videos seem able to represent acts of cyberbullying while challenging students through a number of means: providing the capacity to represent emotional experiences; claiming or reclaiming control, hope and optimism; creating empathy by representing events that “seem real”; and creating imagined scenarios that enact research through the ironic gap between the representation and the audience’s perception of it. In forthcoming stages of the project, the researchers will investigate the success of these videos and other learning resources available on the website by inviting university students to provide feedback on the site.

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# **Reviewing the policy and implementation of multipurpose youth centres**

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**ROBYN BROADBENT**

**In 2009 the Australian Federal Government provided \$10 million to fund five major youth service centres to integrate education, health, justice and housing services in local communities. The decision to prioritise this funding aligns with the national research priority of promoting good health by strengthening the social and economic fabric of the country. Similarly, in 2010, the (then) Victorian Government announced a major new program for vulnerable young people and established an \$8 million coordination unit for programs, processes and protocols to improve interagency collaboration between the education and community sectors.**

**Despite significant public investment in such projects, research is urgently needed into their effectiveness in informing public policy on the provision of integrated youth services. In the current research, a small group of managers of youth centres in Victoria, Australia, were involved in the process of establishing a community of practice. Many had years of experience building centres and programs but none had published the lessons they had learnt. Those lessons, like many in the community sector, vaporise as people leave their employment and move onto other challenges. This paper represents one component of a move to establish a community of practice that will share lessons of good practice about co-located youth centres.**

Creating public service systems that work across disciplines has been a goal of community service policy for governments over the past decade. However, there is little research on policy and practice related to integrated services despite significant ongoing investment by federal and state governments in Australia. Co-located youth services often have differing and sometimes colliding philosophical frameworks, multidisciplinary diversity, funding competition, complexities and pressures, resource allocation priorities and a mix of government, third sector and private entities all providing services under one roof.

An integrated service seeks to counter the “silo effect” through re-alignment of multiple services, effective use of resources to avoid duplication, timely transfer of information, and the development of a transparent and seamless response to the complex needs of individual service users. This paper has collected narratives from the coal face through focus groups and interviews with seven managers of multipurpose, co-located youth centres as one component of establishing a community of practice. The discussion considers some of the more challenging aspects of building a co-located youth service and ensuring that it is operational, including economic considerations, the establishment of good governance and, what is often not as well planned, the physical infrastructure of the centre.

All managers confirmed that the physical infrastructure components of a new centre were just as important as the services located within it. Underpinning the decisions on infrastructure is the economic model of the centre, which is based on who pays the infrastructure development cost, fit out and/or rental component of a building and the location of the centre.

Where to locate a centre is a strategic decision for every community. It is important that the site is easily accessed, close to transport and in the hub of the community. These aspects of location are pivotal, but have to be considered within the challenge of building a service platform in a community where service funding is often not place-based but regional. The government practice of funding large regional community services as opposed to place-based community services highlights the difficulty in establishing a service platform

in a community and, in particular, the right service mix for that community. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that there is almost no practice-based research and evaluation based on the learnings of youth centres in Australia or internationally. There are models in other countries and, in some, such as the United Kingdom, the number of centres is more significant than in Australia; however, the evidence base remains limited. This paper aims to contribute to a community of practice by sharing lessons identified in this collective narrative of managers of youth centres.

## About the centres

The participants were currently managing centres funded by local government or the third sector – not-for-profit centres that were managed by incorporated bodies. Four of the centres were built and supported by local councils. This meant that staff and operation of the centre had a separate budget and were not funded from the youth centre income. Two centres were built and funded by the third sector, commonly referred to as the welfare or charity sector. In each of these cases, the managers were responsible to a board of directors that imposed a strict economic framework within which they had to operate. Each of these centres had an economic model that involved leasing space to other providers to enable them to fund the centre's operations, including the wages of the centre manager and the reception or intake and referral staff. One centre had a regular grant from local government to support its activities. The perspectives of the managers, particularly on the economics of a centre, were not always aligned. This was perhaps not surprising given their funding allocations.

## Contextualising integrated youth work practice and youth centres

A review of the past 40 years of youth and social policy reveals that governments periodically focus on the problems of their youth constituency. More often than not when unemployed, violent and/or frustrated young people are visible on the street, governments react by adopting a deficit policy model based on their concern that there is a tear in the social fabric. However, increasingly through the nineties, as governments became more concerned

about the complexity and the intractable nature of youth problems, their understanding of the broader social context in which solutions could be sought improved. Accordingly, there was a growing understanding of the importance to young people of social capital, community connection, risk and protective factors and, more recently, resilience and strength-based approaches.

A raft of reports researching youth “at risk” were commissioned by the Victorian and Australian governments (Dwyer et al. 1998; Robinson, Fleming & Withers 1998; Ward et al. 1998; King 1998; Stokes 2000; Bradshaw et al. 2001; Brown & Holdsworth 2001; James, St Leger & Ward 2001). These reports concluded that policy development was required to address the problems associated with existing services that were not well-coordinated, nor universally accessible, and which had contradictory objectives and short and uncertain life-spans. In addition, research suggested that early intervention is probably the one area of public policy that could deliver the greatest return in terms of increased social cohesion through reductions in levels of family breakdown and long-term welfare dependency (Morris 1995).

Some reports identified and agreed upon risk and protective factors embedded in holistic and multi-dimensional approaches and identified resources, values, policy and programs at the society, community, family and individual levels that support young people. In recent years, social scientists such as Cox (1995), Gauntlett et al. (2000), Putnam (2000) and Whalen (1999) have identified the broad synergies that must exist to enact change within communities. These social scientists define synergy within the context of social capital. Whalen (1999) asserts that risk factors for young people decline as social capital investment is enhanced. High levels of community competence, such as safe communities, family cohesion and opportunities for young people to engage in youth organisations and school extracurricular activities, are reported as enhancing social and psychological integration.

According to Beadle (2009), acknowledging this research has meant that policymakers and practitioners in the sector face the longstanding challenge of evolving the service system to recognise and respond to the multifaceted and challenging needs of young people experiencing complex problems.

Fragmentation and inflexibility between and within health and social services have been identified as particular obstacles in this process (Edwards 2003; Rankin & Regan 2004).

Co-location is advantageous for service users. Having multiple services at the one site is convenient and it reduces clients' need to travel. The physical presence of other services clients have not used before may also increase access and uptake. However, co-location alone does not provide a single gateway for the assessment and referral of young people's needs (Bond 2010).

Youth centre models can be distinguished according to whether they aim to co-locate or integrate youth services and programs. In a co-located model, multiple services and programs operate independently at one building or site, with possible benefits in terms of sharing administration costs and resources. The increased visibility of these services may create synergies between agencies and increase referrals, especially if communication strategies, involving informal channels, formal periodic meetings or planning days are fostered. However, multi-agency engagement requires formal agreements or obligations to undertake joint planning, otherwise organisations may view themselves merely as co-tenants.

Partnerships, joint ventures, whole of (or joined up) government approaches, international treaties and information campaigns to influence lifestyle choices are all variations on this strategy (Public Service Commission 2007).

Coordinated relationships/partnerships require some organisational change, meaningful training and a commitment to the aims of the other players.

Collaborative relationships imply change and innovation and are often started at the grassroots level. Integration requires partnership in participation and can include joint planning, implementing and evaluating of policies (Franklin & Streeter 1995).

The current definitions and service labels that continue to be used to distinguish boundaries between and within services highlight this issue. These services are designed to meet single rather than multiple needs and often have a "fixed idea of what constitutes their core business" (Rankin & Regan 2004, p.12). Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson (2005) suggest that, in Australia,

autonomous rather than collaborative and integrated services are a result of different funding streams, philosophies and credentials across services. The result is that rather than a single service encompassing multiple needs, “different services chip away at different parts of the problem and don’t join up to maximise their impact” (Edwards 2003, p.7). Unreasonable expectations are placed on young people to negotiate a confusing maze of services.

In an evaluation of one-stop-shop legal services in the UK, the four areas critical to the delivery of this multi-layered advice service were identified as accessibility, seamlessness, integration and tailored services. Accessibility was related to the logistics of access, e.g. location and hours, knowledge of the service, experiences at reception and client satisfaction. Critical to seamlessness was the clear identification of roles and responsibilities, and clarity in policy and process, including organised paperwork, procedures for sharing case management, information exchange and aftercare. Integration related to the ability of advisors to detect multiple problems and future needs. The tailoring of services depended on advisors’ judgments about client capacity, their understanding of service aims and their perceived role within the wider service context (Buck et al. 2010).

## Co-location to integration

The establishment of an integrated youth service must start with strong partnerships to build collaborative and integrated governance. Fine, Pancharatnam and Thomson (2005) suggest that the terms “whole-of-government” and “service integration” are used to cover a myriad of service structures that occur on a continuum from agency linkages and collaborations, coordinated case plans through to pooled resources and budgets. It is argued that this approach “can create synergies leading to innovation and streamlining of service delivery through information and skill sharing” (Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson 2005, p.7).

Beadle (2009) suggests that integration relies on cooperation at a number of levels. This cooperation may be evident in a favourable organisational environment with good management of services, communication between and within services, and individual (worker) understanding and endorsement of



service interdependence. Improvements in collaboration at these levels may be informed by consideration of situations where collaborative and more integrated practice is working successfully. For example, the “wraparound” model is one that has successfully informed collaborative and integrated practice in the United States and Australia (Wyles 2007). Emerging from ecological systems theory (Wyles 2007), the wraparound model of service delivery encourages the maximising of collaboration between the young person, their immediate support network and services involved. The result is an individualised, team-based response (Wyles 2007). A recent review (Wyles 2007) of the wraparound model suggests that its successful practice relies on several components: involvement of the young person and their family in decisions affecting them; the existence of a hospitable system, which depends upon the policy and funding context and relationship management across systems; flexibility in design and implementation, which reflects the needs of individual communities; and ongoing evaluation of the process.

Further, a recent study (Roberts & O’Connor 2010) that explored successful integration practices within health and social services in Toronto, Canada, found effective collaborations:

- usually had a “bottom up” approach and were backed by motivated and willing service providers;
- usually formed to respond to complex community needs rather than to simplify services for their own sake;
- depended on a reliable stream of (financial and other) resources to build and maintain labour-intensive collaborations; and
- often grew out of informal partnerships between different agencies (therefore such activity should be promoted).

Drawing upon the skills and resources of different agencies is a key objective to achieving the overarching goal of integration (i.e. pooling resources and gaining access to a range of specific expertise). As such, it is an integral component of a successful integrated service model.

## A centre for young people: Key principles of practice

What is distinctive about the literature on youth centre models is the practice context that drives and connects them. Success, it would seem, is based on good governance, appropriate facilities, the professional practice of those delivering the services, the relationships of providers to each other, the resources available and good policy frameworks. The task, therefore, of engaging services in the delivery of a collaborative or even co-located youth centre should not be underestimated.

One of the common narrative themes expressed by managers was that a number of services were *not the right ones: they did not understand the model, or their practice was not collaborative as they tended to only focus on their own core business*. While identified previously in the community sector, in this context these practices frustrate attempts to create common approaches or to work towards common goals. One manager said, in hindsight, he would run a “Collaborative youth centres 101” course and ensure that services made decisions about the level of integration they could commit to BEFORE they were invited into a service model. Though it is important that some programs grow organically in a community through emerging partnerships, established working relationships and a collective goal to respond to an escalating issue, not all can be left to the relationship clause between services.

The provision of a set of principles that drives the practice of each youth centre binds services to a common theme and assists staff to understand and build their role within them. One centre had a set of principles that focused on building the capacity of the community to respond to issues and to provide the infrastructure that would enable the participation of other youth services in the community. The principals discussed their model of holistic provision as a strong practice example. These ideals may be standard fare for many centres but this centre highlighted the role of the centre staff in facilitating integrated service delivery for young people and developing collaborative decision-making mechanisms with other youth services (Hart 2010).

## Universal v. targeted programs and services

All managers discussed the need to understand the program mix and carefully choose programs based on the desired outcomes. Many youth centres provided universal and/or targeted programs and services, most offering a combination of the two. Universal services may include careers advice, health services, extracurricular social activities (e.g. drama, sport) and community volunteering. Some youth centres focused on universal provision to ensure that all young people have a comfortable place where they can go to seek support and participate in activities. They invite participation by diverse young people and try to avoid domination by specific groups. According to the National Youth Agency in the UK, this approach has been observed to increase interaction between genders and ethnic groups that otherwise would not mix (National Youth Agency (NYA) 2006).

Targeted provision, on the other hand, seeks out young people deemed at “at risk” on the basis of socioeconomic disadvantage; disengagement from school, training or work; homelessness; antisocial and or criminal activity; or poor health outcomes. Some programs are about early intervention, other services are more intensive and may include case management. The managers were easily drawn on a discussion about the mix of services and how difficult it is to cater for more high-risk young people and how doing so is often at the cost of more universal programs. Centres can quickly gain a limiting reputation in the community if they have programs that are considered to be focused on one group; most managers discussed the importance of maintaining a generalist youth service platform that acted as a primary means of engaging young people. The platform programs seek to promote young people’s personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole (NYA 2006).

## Building a community youth centre – a checklist

Within the context of the focus group, the managers broadly discussed a checklist they thought would have been very useful when building their centres. Though each had some previous experience, and most had visited other centres, the context for each centre differed. One group discussed their

initial experience of trying to gather intelligence on building a new centre. The essence of the narratives was based around how limiting a visit to another centre is:

*... because you need a week to understand each program, in that space for that community and if it is working and if not why not. You also need to understand what has been tried and failed and what have been successes and again in the context of the place so that those lessons can be translated into the infrastructure or at least understand how the infrastructure contributed to the success or otherwise.*

Based on their own successes and failures, the managers produced a list of infrastructure requirements to be included in the planning and establishment of a new centre, starting with the importance of quality:

*Youth centre facilities must be appealing and of high quality if they are to send the message that young people are valued. That includes the often overlooked reception area. Having a welcoming, youth-friendly reception has been identified as a critical factor. While centre models vary, the reception was perceived as the common entry point. It needs to be open and not in a closed booth that forms a natural barrier between the service and young people. Risk assessments have to be contextualised by the usage patterns of young people and what is best practice in relation to engaging young people to come into a youth centre. The reception must have a youth worker who undertakes the important role of intake and referral at the front desk. They must look like a youth worker and understand how to engage quickly, ascertain what may assist the young person and have ample information available about the different services. What a reception service also provides is a secure entrance for a young person to ask about services or make an appointment with a service provider. When they enter a co-located youth centre they could be attending any number of services and so their privacy is protected but, more importantly, they are more likely to come to a service where the stigma of attendance or being seen going into the building has been removed.*

The Better Youth Services Pilot in Wyndham noted:

The development of a local intake/triage and referral service that is operated and supported by generalist youth workers would form a clear service entry and coordination point. Additionally, it could enable a more streamlined approach to marketing, simplify access to state government services and provide navigational support to vulnerable young people. (Wyndham City Council 2010)

According to the managers' list, youth centres typically included a space for specialist services (e.g. counselling, health care, training). Depending on the model of the specific centre, this space will allow services to outpost or hot desk on a visiting basis but the planning of the centre also needs to allow for the possibility of specialist services locating on a full-time basis within the centre. This generally means space that can be redeveloped to suit the particular office needs of the service as they take on a more traditional lease and outfit the space accordingly.

Almost all managers felt that a social enterprise was a desirable component of a youth centre, but none had successfully managed to incorporate one, and there is little documentation on how to plan and build for a social enterprise within a youth centre. Depending on their locale, a number of hospitality models of social enterprises were considered, including the current street coffee carts in Melbourne. Regardless, hospitality services are essential for a youth centre, so a functioning kitchen improves the program mix of service delivery and the flexibility of the centre to host events and activities. All but one of the centres included a multipurpose kitchen in their planning.

The use of lounge space was a contentious issue, and there were a number of different models. If the centre has a focus of being an integrated service model for all young people, then planning and consultation needs to be included in the design of a casual space. From an economic perspective, casual space is expensive because it cannot be utilised for any purpose other than providing a space for young people. The economic modelling of the centres often resulted in divergent points of view because of the different funding models. For this reason, program space was one of the most contentious issues. If casual space is considerable, it can be utilised by young people in after-school programs but may limit the focus of the centre for the rest of the daylight and evening hours

when programs could be offered. It also means that the centre manager may not be able to rent casual space to other services, a factor which was an important consideration to the not-for-profit centres. A careful mapping of the service mix within the context of the economic model was necessary to understand how space could be best utilised. Regardless, each of the centres identified the importance of having some creative space and/or small group space for general programs in the centre, but for those with economic constraints it was vital that this space could be used for multiple purposes.

Possibly the most contentious of all of the issues was that of the security of the centres. These conversations, though acknowledging the need for appropriate critical incident policies, were more focused on the provision of a safe environment for staff that was also welcoming to young people. The variety of responses highlights this issue as one needing further work. All agreed that first impressions and how young people were ushered into the centre were very important; however, there was no agreement on the best approach to security.

Some centres used the standard window reception, two with youth workers and one with council staff. The reception at two centres was an open desk with only a small height barrier over the desk. Two others had separate entrances for different programs, which complicated security. Security was openly acknowledged as one of the wicked problems of youth centres. Attracting young people, the right mix of staff and having a welcoming reception are factors sometimes at odds with the potential for incidents to occur with some young people who use the services. One service, which maintained an open reception, said there was constant tension between the welcome and the security of staff.

“Security was openly acknowledged as one of the wicked problems of youth centres.”

For the third-sector centres, the tension generated by the provision of a reception facility was also underpinned by the need to fund reception staff. For

these centres, staff were funded largely by income generated using an economic modelling of rental recovery, with only a small amount able to be levered off program grants. Maintaining a reception facility was an added hurdle for these centres.

Other important considerations in design include environmental sustainability and providing a green facility. The planning of the centre surrounds was also seen as an opportunity to provide place-based identity for a community facility. If the centre is located in a space that allows some passive recreation it will enhance its credibility as a centre for all young people. Spaces to sit with seating facing each other and/or places to congregate on grass outside the centre will enhance the role of the centre as a safe communal space. Alongside passive recreation, incorporating a half court with a hoop that can be a multipurpose activity space enables youth services to use more tools to engage young people.

## Good governance

Underlying the approach to providing an integrated youth service is the assumption that services *can* engage with each other in an integrated planning and strategic sense, *can* share information and skills to better meet the needs of their client group and *can* respond to emerging sectoral issues. As one manager reported, collaboration is very hard work and cannot be assumed, particularly in an environment of competition. Building these types of professional relationships takes time and presumes all involved services will be funded in the next round.

Four of the managers had worked on the establishment of a management group in their organisations and considered that aspect of governance to be pivotal to the success of the centre. It is the group that will drive the shared vision, mission and values, as well as create the right culture. The group is also an important driver of service agreements (e.g. lease or license agreements), cohesive practice and even who takes credit for what programs and how credit is shared. Most importantly, however, this group will manage the data collection that will form the evidence base for the centre's outcomes. As one manager put it, devising a cohesive system of data collection is the greatest

challenge faced by youth centres. In summary, the group adopted a checklist of good governance, which included consideration of:

- the model itself, funding, governance structures and infrastructure
- access and referral points for young people both into and within the model (internal barriers)
- how information can be shared across professional boundaries
- the impact of legislation and policy (structural barriers) on the creation and sustainability of integrated youth services
- the impact of political and stakeholder influences (political barriers)
- the impact of competitive and time-limited funding on individual providers within the model; the potential of youth services to co-finance under partnership; and service-level arrangements to enhance integrated service models (part internal and part political barriers)
- elements of disciplinary work practice that form structural boundaries to integrating the work of one profession with another
- the type of human resources model employed and how will it be shared. Who will fund the intake youth work role, will it be shared and are there reasonable expectations for a one-point entry to the centre
- the funding model overall, which will be a complex array of circumstances that will be different in every community.

## Conclusion

Interestingly, Brechman-Tousaint and Kogler (2011), in their work which reviewed integrated youth services nationally and internationally, concluded that although these services state they are integrated in that they all worked to address local needs, there does not appear to have been an attempt to specifically share skills and knowledge across services, or to implement common tools for working together. Services appear instead to have remained content- and skill-specific. So, for example, schools appear to take responsibility for achievement of educational goals, and local social service



organisations retain full responsibility for problems and issues relevant to their area of expertise (Brechman-Tousaint & Kogler 2011).

Drawing upon the skills and resources of different agencies is key to achieving the overarching goal of integration (i.e. pooling resources and gaining access to a range of specific expertise). As such, it is an integral component of a successful, integrated service model. Successful integration requires a certain amount of innovation and thinking outside the square. However, there also needs to be a willingness to have effective evaluation strategies in place to determine the impact of the initiative, and a willingness to change direction if things are not working as expected.

It is argued that formulating good practice “can create synergies leading to innovation and streamlining of service delivery through information and skill sharing” (Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson 2005, p.7). There is sufficient evidence to suggest that service delivery models based on centralised, hierarchical models do not work and that some social “problems” cannot be solved without collaboration (Broadbent, Papadopoulos & Whitehead 2008). The “silo” approach has resulted in a multitude of interventions with little evidence of successful outcomes or cost-effectiveness. Furthermore, the demand for social services is increasing as available public funds are decreasing (Clarke & Stewart 1997; Szirom et al. 2002).

A substantial proportion of these scarce resources is being earmarked for youth centres by local government even though research on what is good practice is limited. Most of what is learnt may strengthen the practice in a specific community, but does not translate to documentation. What is worse is that these lessons are learnt after the building has been built and resources expended. A number of the managers talked about the constant retracing of work to make necessary adjustments in the absence of agreements, a cohesive policy and operations framework, and the ability of the physical space to respond to the variable needs. This paper aims to be a part of a community of practice that shares these lessons so that good practice becomes common and can be expected and not left to chance.

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# Trauma and youth alcohol and drug use

## Findings from a youth outpatient treatment service

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JOHN KELLY, ROBERT HARRISON AND ALISON PALMER

Research has recognised the high prevalence of trauma among adult patients attending alcohol and drug (AOD) treatment services; however, prevalence among youth patients is unknown. The current study aimed to explore prevalence rates of trauma among patients attending a youth AOD treatment service in Brisbane, Australia, and any associations with patient characteristics, AOD use and psychological wellbeing, to guide service treatment interventions.

Data were collected from 905 young people (aged 12–24) attending a youth AOD treatment service. Trauma was identified using the Primary Care PTSD (PC-PTSD) screen and clinical interview. AOD was assessed using the Drug Check Tool, Severity of Dependence Scale and AUDIT Alcohol Consumption Questions. Participants also completed the Kessler 10 Screen of Psychological Distress and a Quality of Life item.

Over 77% of young people reported a trauma exposure, with 63% screening positive for trauma and probable PTSD. A significantly higher trauma prevalence was reported by females, same-sex attracted and Indigenous youth. Trauma-positive young people reported significantly earlier age of initiation to AOD use; AOD dependence; higher rates of cannabis, opiate and benzodiazepine use; more AOD risk-taking behaviour, with higher levels of psychological distress; and lower ratings on quality of life.

**The high co-occurrence of trauma and complex AOD concerns demonstrates the need for integrated treatment in youth AOD services. Routine screening for both trauma and AOD use is imperative and should be accompanied by the adoption of trauma-informed interventions that emphasise the reduction of risk-taking behaviours to enhance outcomes for young people.**

There has been growing recognition in the research literature of the high prevalence of past trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among patients attending alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services (Dore et al. 2012; Williams et al. 2008; Mills et al. 2005; Reynolds et al. 2005). Within adult AOD treatment services, up to two-thirds of patients have been identified as having past trauma exposure or experiencing PTSD symptoms (Dore et al. 2012; Mills et al. 2005; Reynolds et al. 2005). There have been no Australian studies exploring trauma prevalence within youth AOD treatment services. With approximately 13% of patients aged 10–19 years and 27% aged 20–29 years presenting to Australian AOD treatment services (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014a), having an understanding of trauma prevalence and characteristics within youth AOD-using populations is important to provide effective AOD treatment interventions.

Exposure to childhood and other trauma is associated with a greater risk of developing problematic patterns of AOD use (Kilpatrick et al. 2000; Roseknranz, Muller & Henderson 2012; Shin 2012). Compared with individuals with an AOD-use disorder alone, individuals with co-morbid PTSD report more polydrug use and suffer poorer social and occupational functioning, poorer physical and mental health and higher rates of attempted suicide (Dore et al. 2012; Mills et al. 2005; Reynolds et al. 2005; Ouimette, Goodwin & Brown 2006). Furthermore, a history of trauma and PTSD has been consistently associated with poorer treatment outcomes, higher rates of AOD relapse and hospital readmission, ongoing drug use, poorer health and functioning and a chronic course of illness (Dore et al. 2012; Mills 2008; Mills et al. 2007; Ouimette, Finney & Moos 1999; Mills et al. 2005).

The majority of international literature exploring adolescent AOD use and trauma has relied on national samples (e.g. McLaughlin et al. 2013; Begle et al.

2011; Cisler et al. 2011) and has revealed inconsistent findings in the associations between young people exposed to trauma and their AOD use. Some studies have found that experiences of physical, sexual or childhood abuse have been associated with earlier initiation of AOD use (Lansford et al. 2010; Kingston & Raghavan 2009; Tonmyr et al. 2010; Sartor et al. 2013; Nelson et al. 2006), increased risk-taking behaviour (Begle et al. 2011) and higher rates of injecting drug use (Kerr et al. 2009; Hadland et al. 2012). Tonmyr et al.'s (2010) review of international literature found that early initiation to AOD use was associated with adolescents who had experienced neglect and domestic, physical and/or sexual violence. Despite this finding, other studies have found no impact of childhood sexual abuse on age of AOD initiation (Kingston & Raghavan 2009) suggesting that AOD use may increase risk of trauma exposure due to decision-making impairments associated with acute intoxication effects. Young people exposed to trauma have been found to engage in AOD use more frequently and are more likely to have AOD problems than young people not exposed to trauma (Williams et al. 2008; Shin 2012).

A number of theories have been developed to explain this interplay of trauma with AOD misuse. The self-medication hypothesis (Ouimette, Goodwin & Brown 2006; Ouimette et al. 2010) holds that AOD dependence arises following repeated use of a substance to alleviate symptoms associated with a traumatic experience. Alternatively, the shared susceptibility hypothesis proposes that the increased arousal and anxiety that often accompanies AOD misuse, in addition to a lack of coping skills, increases biological vulnerability to developing PTSD after a trauma exposure (Jacobson, Southwick & Kosten 2001; Stewart et al. 2000). The high-risk hypothesis (Chilcoat & Breslau 1998; Acierno et al. 1999) suggests that the lifestyle factors and risk-taking behaviours commonly associated with dependent AOD use, increases the likelihood of experiencing traumatic events and indirectly developing PTSD. Finally, the common factors hypothesis offers that PTSD and AOD disorders may have shared psychological and biological traits, increasing the likelihood that they will co-occur (Brady et al. 2000).

Generalising findings from adult-based samples to young people is inherently problematic as evidence exists to suggest that trauma responses vary with

developmental age (McDermott & Palmer 2002) and that the patterns, prevalence and reasons for AOD use are different between young people and adults (Roxburgh et al. 2013; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011). The current study aims to explore trauma prevalence rates for young people attending an outpatient youth AOD treatment service in Brisbane, Australia. This study will also examine relationships between trauma prevalence, patterns of AOD use, AOD risk-taking behaviours, psychological wellbeing and other unique patient characteristics, to guide recommendations for enhancing youth AOD service treatment and interventions.

## Method

### **Sample and recruitment**

Analysis was undertaken on a cross-sectional sample of young people (aged 12–24) who attended a government youth AOD outpatient treatment service from January 2012 to November 2014 in Brisbane, Australia. Only young people aged under 25 years who presented to the service with clinically significant AOD concerns were included in the analysis. Ethics approval was obtained from The Prince Charles Hospital Human Ethics Committee.

### **Measures and procedures**

Each participant undertook the service's routine intake clinical assessment process, conducted by allied health clinicians. Young people completed registration documentation to obtain demographic information, including age, gender, cultural identity and sexual orientation.

AOD use was assessed via completion of the Drug Check Tool (Alcohol and Drug Training and Research Unit 2012), a brief screening tool to identify drugs used, amounts and frequencies, duration of use and age of initiation.

Dependence was assessed via the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS), a five-item questionnaire used to assess illicit drug dependence (Gossop et al. 1995). A cut-off score of >4 has been found to be a reliable indicator of substance dependence in studies on youth populations (Dawe et al. 2002; Martin et al. 2006). Alcohol use was assessed using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C) questions (Bush et al. 1998). AUDIT-C scores

ranged from 0 to 12 with a cut-off score of  $>5$  used as a reliable measure to indicate hazardous alcohol use for adolescents and young adults (Chung et al. 2000).

Participants were routinely screened for trauma exposure with a clinician asking them questions from the Primary Care Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Screen (PC-PTSD) in the clinical interview. The PC-PTSD is a four-item screen, which includes an introductory sentence to identify trauma exposure and to cue respondents to traumatic events, with participants deemed trauma positive when they answer yes to three or more items (Prins et al. 2003). Although this tool has not been used within a youth sample, it has been used in primary care (Bliese et al. 2008) and AOD treatment settings (Kimerling, Trafton & Nguyen 2006), with results indicating excellent reliability, sensitivity and specificity in identifying probable PTSD (Bliese et al. 2008; Kimerling, Trafton & Nguyen 2006; Oumiette et al. 2008). Participants who screened positive on the PC-PTSD were then assessed in accordance with trauma criteria described in the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 4th edition, text revision* (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association 2000) in the clinical interview. Clinicians matched the type of traumatic events as disclosed by participants to one of seven categories, modified from the DSM-IV list of events qualifying as traumas: i) childhood abuse/neglect, ii) witnessing violence, iii) victim of violence, iv) sexual assault, v) perpetrator-induced trauma, vi) accident/disaster and vii) other.

Level of psychological wellbeing was assessed by participants completing two measures. Psychological distress was assessed using the Kessler 10 Screen of Psychological Distress (K10) (Kessler et al. 2003), with a cut-off score of  $>16$  used as an indicator of a mental health disorder (Andrews & Slade 2001). This measure has been used in studies with Australian young people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011). Quality of life was assessed using a single item from the Australian Treatment Outcome Profile (Ryan et al. 2014) in which patients self-rate their overall quality of life on a 10-point scale from 0 (poor) to 10 (good). This item has been shown to have concurrent validity with other quality of life measures (Ryan et al. 2014).



## **Statistical analyses**

Participants' responses were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 (IMB Corporation, Somers, NY, USA). Checks for multivariate normality indicated the sample was normally distributed. Descriptive, frequencies and comparative statistical analyses were undertaken. Comparisons were made using Pearson's chi-square tests. Significant differences were calculated at a 0.05 level.

A series of independent samples multivariate t-tests were performed to explore differences between trauma and non-trauma exposed samples on age of AOD initiation, psychological distress and quality of life. Bivariate and multivariate logistical regressions were used to examine the relationship between trauma with primary drug of concern, and for risk-taking behaviours (offending, unsafe sex, hazardous alcohol use, injecting drug use and violence behaviours).

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

Of the 979 young people (aged 12–24 years) who attended the service, 92% (n=905) were screened for trauma via the use of the PC-PTSD screen within the clinical interview and were included in the analysis. The average age was 17.96 (SD 2.88), with 67% (n=610) male, 32% (n=293) female and <0.5% (n=3) transgender. Of the sample, 13% (n=119) identified as same-sex attracted, 13% (n=115) identified as Indigenous Australians and 20% (n=184) identified as culturally diverse. See Table 1.

### **Trauma prevalence**

Of the sample, 77% (n=697) reported having experienced a lifetime trauma exposure. A total of 63% (n=569) of participants screened positive to trauma and probable PTSD on the PC-PTSD screen, with 97% (n=551) of these participants meeting the DSM-IV trauma criteria (referred to as trauma positive).

The types of traumatic experience were identified for 97% (n=551) of the trauma-positive participants, with 56% (n=308) disclosing having experienced two or more trauma exposures. Childhood abuse and neglect was most widely

reported (52%; n=286), followed by witnessing violence (37%; n=202), being the victim of violence (36%; n=201), sexual assault (17%; n=91), perpetrator-induced trauma (9%, n=52) and experiencing serious accident or disaster (6%; n=36). Gender differences were evident, with a significantly greater number of females screening trauma positive than males ( $\chi^2=19.22$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Due to this gender association, the impact of gender was corrected for in the subsequent analysis. Trauma prevalence was significantly greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth ( $\chi^2=10.95$ ,  $p<.012$ ) and for same-sex attracted youth ( $\chi^2=10.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There were no differences found for age and trauma. See Table 1.

### **Trauma and AOD use**

Cannabis was the most widely reported principal drug of concern (53%) (n=477) followed by alcohol 21% (n=187), stimulants/hallucinogens 16% (n=147), opiates/benzodiazepines 7% (n=59) and other drugs (such as tobacco, inhalants) 4% (n=36). Of the sample, 96% (n=874) presented with poly-drug use concerns, with 70% meeting dependence criteria on the Severity of Dependence Scale for their primary drug of concern.

Significant differences were found between trauma and primary drugs of concern ( $\chi^2=13.85$   $P<.008$ ). Specifically trauma positive young people were more likely to use cannabis (OR 1.35, 95% CI: 1.03–1.77,  $p=.017$ ) or opiates and benzodiazepines (OR 3.22, 95% CI: 1.185–5.62,  $p=.001$ ) than non-trauma positive young people. A significantly higher proportion of trauma positive young people met dependence criteria (71%) than non-trauma positive young people (29%) ( $\chi^2=67.73$ ,  $p<.001$ ) for their primary drug of concern.

Significant differences were also found for age of initiation to AOD use, with trauma positive young people reporting earlier age of initiation to AOD use (M 14.21, SD 2.28) than non-trauma positive young people (M 14.59, SD 2.25);  $t(903)=2.42$ ,  $p=.016$ .

**Table 1. Demographics, AOD use and mental health for trauma positive, no trauma and total sample**

	Trauma positive		No trauma		Total		x <sup>2</sup>
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	
Respondents	570	(63)	336	(37)	905		
Average age	18.06		17.80		17.96		
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	213	(73)	80	(27)	293	(32)	x <sup>2</sup> =19.22, p=.000
Male	354	(58)	256	(42)	610	(67)	
Transgender	3	(100)			3	(<.5)	
<b>Cultural identity</b>							
Anglo-Australian	373	(62)	233	(38)	609	(67)	x <sup>2</sup> =10.95, p=.012
Indigenous Australian	87	(76)	28	(24)	115	(13)	
Culturally diverse	110	(60)	74	(40)	184	(20)	
<b>Sexual identity</b>							
Same-sex attracted	91	(76)	28	(24)	119	(13)	x <sup>2</sup> =10.50, p=.001
Heterosexual	479	(61)	308	(39)	730	(86)	
<b>Drug of concern<sup>a</sup></b>							
Cannabis	284	(60)	193	(40)	477	(53)	x <sup>2</sup> =13.85, p=.001
Alcohol	115	(61)	72	(39)	187	(21)	
Stimulants/hallucinogens	98	(67)	49	(33)	147	(16)	
Opiates/benzodiazepines	49	(83)	10	(17)	59	(7)	
Other	24	(67)	12	(33)	36	(4)	
<b>Severity of Dependence<sup>b</sup></b>							
Dependent	456	(71)	182	(29)	638	(70)	x <sup>2</sup> =10.73, p=.001
Not dependent	114	(43)	154	(57)	268	(30)	

a Principal drug of concern refers to the substance the young person identified attending the service in relation to.

b Based on criteria from Severity of Dependence Scale, with cut-off of >4.

Trauma positive young people were more likely to report engaging in AOD risk-taking behaviours than non-trauma positive young people (see Table 2). Trauma positive young people were more likely to report offending behaviours (OR 1.16, 95% CI:1.04–1.29), injecting drug use (OR 1.41, 95% CI:1.27–1.55), violent or aggressive behaviours (OR 1.25, 95% CI:1.17–1.35) and unsafe sexual practices (OR 1.11, 95% CI:1.05–1.67). Of the total sample, 68% met criteria for hazardous drinking on the AUDIT-C, however, trauma positive young people were more likely to report hazardous drinking (OR 1.51 95% CI:1.13–2.02) than non-trauma positive young people.

**Table 2. AOD risk-taking behaviours for trauma positive, no trauma and total sample**

	Trauma positive	No trauma	Total	Adjusted odds ratio (95% CI)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Injecting drug use <sup>a</sup>	95 (84)	18 (16)	113 (12.5)	1.41 (1.27-1.55)
Violent/aggression	181 (79)	49 (21)	230 (25)	1.25 (1.17-1.35)
Unsafe sex	103 (77)	31 (23)	134 (15)	1.11 (1.05-1.67)
Offending behaviour	257 (68)	123 (32)	380 (42)	1.16 (1.04-1.29)
Hazardous drinking <sup>b</sup>	393 (67)	167 (33)	560 (68)	1.51 (1.13-2.02)

Note: CI = confidence interval. Model was controlled for gender, which was associated with trauma. Analysis at  $p < .05$ .

a Reported past or current injecting drug use.

b Met significance for hazardous drinking on the AUDIT-C scale, based on cut-off score of >5.

## Mental health and quality of life

Of the total sample, 81% (n=733) met Kessler 10 criteria for psychological distress and likely mental health diagnosis. Trauma positive young people reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress (M 28.14, SD 8.62) than non-trauma positive young people (M 22.98 SD 8.66);  $t(856)=8.55$ ,  $p=.001$ . Trauma positive young people reported a significantly lower rating on quality of life (M 4.39, SD 1.66) than non-trauma positive young people (M 5.12, SD 1.70);  $t(569)=3.49$ ,  $p=.001$ . See Table 3.

**Table 3. Psychological distress and quality of life according for trauma positive, no trauma and total sample**

	Trauma		No trauma		Total		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t
Psychological distress (K10) <sup>a</sup>	28.14	8.62	22.98	8.66	26.2	4.66	8.55**
Quality of Life <sup>b</sup>	4.39	1.66	5.12	1.70	4.66	1.71	3.49*

\*p=.001 \*\*p<.001

a Kessler 10 Screen of Psychological Distress using a cut-off score of 16 used as a reliable indicator of clinical distress.

b Single item from the Australian Treatment Outcome Profile, in which patients self-rate their overall quality of life on a 10-point scale of 0 (poor) to 10 (good).

## Discussion

The present study is among the first to examine the prevalence of trauma within an outpatient Australian youth AOD treatment service. This study is well placed to act as a foundational investigation into youth trauma and AOD use, while offering recommendations for service integration and treatment provision.

In this study, 77% of young people attending a youth AOD treatment service reported lifetime trauma exposure and 63% reported symptoms of trauma and possible PTSD, rates comparable to that found in Australian adult AOD treatment studies (e.g. Dore et al. 2012; Mills et al. 2005; Mills et al. 2007). This rate is markedly higher than the prevalence rate of 7.7% of PTSD found in population studies on Australian youth (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011). AOD services are therefore uniquely placed to provide interventions that may mediate the longer-term course of PTSD development and AOD misuse.

Trauma was more prevalent among females, same-sex attracted and Indigenous youth. Studies have found females are more likely to have experienced sexual and physical violence (Mouzos & Makkai 2004), same-sex attracted youth are more likely to have experienced sexual violence and heterosexism (Leonard et al. 2008) and engage in more AOD use (Kelly, Davis & Schlesinger 2015), and Indigenous Australians are likely to experience trauma effects from colonisation (Australian Government Department of Families,

Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2011; Atkinson 2013). Specifically screening for trauma symptoms and being aware of the likelihood of trauma exposure within these population groups attending AOD treatment services appears essential.

Young people in the study reported an average age of initiation to AOD use of 14.6 years, two years earlier than the average age seen in the general Australian youth population of 16.3 years (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014b). Furthermore, age of initiation to AOD use was significantly younger for young people who screened positive for trauma (14.2 years) than young people who did not have trauma symptoms (14.8 years). This earlier age of commencement of AOD use can be understood in multiple ways. These young people may be seeking relief associated with AOD intoxication to self-medicate distress resulting from childhood trauma experiences. Similarly, these findings support the shared susceptibility hypothesis, in which exposure to a traumatic event not only leads to a higher likelihood of experiencing PTSD symptoms, but also other disorders such as AOD dependence. Further research exploring young people's reasons for the use of AOD (e.g. for distress management) would be valuable to further clarify these associations. Earlier age of initiation to AOD use is a known risk factor for developing problematic AOD use (Spooner, Hall & Lynskey 2001; Loxley et al. 2004) and is associated with poorer clinical prognosis (Degenhardt et al. 2008). This may account for the higher levels of AOD dependence and complexity found within young people who screened positive for trauma.

In this study, young people who screened positive to trauma reported greater prevalence of cannabis, opiates, benzodiazepines and hazardous alcohol use than their counterparts. Although only a relatively small percentage of the overall sample reported opiates and benzodiazepines as their primary drug of concern (7%), young people with trauma symptoms were three times more likely to use these substances than young people who did not have trauma symptoms. Findings from adult studies of AOD users have identified that primary drugs of choice vary according to the desired psychotropic drug effects on depressive symptoms, aggression management and physiological responses to trauma (VanderKolk & Fisler 1994). Additionally, the use of opiates

(such as heroin) has been linked to the mediation of distress, emotional pain and hypervigilance associated with trauma symptoms (Mills et al. 2003). The findings in the current study appear to generalise earlier adult findings that primary drug of choice varies according to desired psychotropic effects on trauma symptomatology associated with young people's experience. Young people's engagement in opiate use and hazardous drinking may indicate an attempt to anaesthetise and sedate distressing symptoms associated with trauma. Trauma appears to be a risk factor for opiate and benzodiazepine use in addition to cannabis use and binge alcohol consumption.

Significantly higher levels of psychological distress and lower quality of life ratings were reported by young people who screened trauma positive. It is generally understood that lower psychological functioning can have multiple impacts on the developmental trajectory of a young person. Higher levels of distress and lower quality of life may impede a young person's ability to develop adaptive coping strategies to manage and resolve traumatic experiences. Additionally, it may impact on their ability to meet developmental milestones such as identity formation, forming quality relationships and higher order cognitive functioning, which may in turn serve to maintain AOD misuse and trauma symptoms.

Unique to this study was the exploration of AOD risk-taking behaviours and their relationship to trauma. Consistent with the high rates of risk-taking behaviours by young people in AOD treatment (Davis & Kelly 2012), trauma positive young people were significantly more likely to have engaged in injecting drug use, offending and violent behaviour, and to have engaged in unsafe sex than young people who did not have past trauma exposure. The relationship between risk-taking, AOD use and trauma is multifaceted. Young people engaging in AOD use may place themselves in high-risk situations while acutely intoxicated resulting in impaired decision-making, impulsivity and poor consequential thinking. Such instances may lead to trauma exposure and/or events that trigger past traumatic memories. This may account for the high percentage of young people reporting multiple traumatic experiences. Additionally, young people who screened positive for trauma may have a compromised ability to regulate their emotions. The heightened physiological

distress associated with traumatic experiences, may result in the development of maladaptive self-regulatory behaviours (VanderKolk 1994), such as injecting drug use, violence, aggression and unsafe sexual behaviour. The consequence of these risk-taking behaviours is of significant concern, placing trauma exposed youth at greater risk of both short-term harms (e.g. risk of accidents) and long-term harms (e.g. risk of Hepatitis C virus via injecting drug use) that necessitate specific interventions.

Regardless of which disorder is primary, the findings from the present study highlight how past trauma exposure and AOD misuse may serve to maintain or exacerbate the other. For example, AOD use may be employed to cope with trauma and PTSD symptoms especially if there is a lack of other coping strategies or compromised functioning. Trauma symptoms may maintain the repeated use of drugs to relieve these symptoms. Repeated AOD use may interfere with typical adolescent development, including the development of adaptive coping strategies to assist in the management of trauma experiences. It may also reinforce maladaptive coping styles while further exposing young people to traumatic events during periods of risk-taking behaviour.

## Implications for youth AOD treatment

Youth AOD use literature suggests that young people with trauma or PTSD do not do well in services that focus only on AOD use (Johnston et al. 2006). Adult studies have found that treatments focusing on PTSD management lead to improvements in AOD use; however, a reciprocal relationship has not been found (Brown, Stout & Gannon-Rowley 1998; Read, Brown & Kahler 2004; Back et al. 2006). Due to the limited research investigating links between youth trauma symptoms and AOD use, there is a paucity of evidence-based treatment options for this client population (Roseknranz, Muller & Henderson 2014). Despite this, it has been suggested that integrated treatment addressing both AOD use and PTSD may lead to improved treatment outcomes (Mills 2008; Brown, Stout & Gannon-Rowley 1998; Read, Brown & Kahler 2004). Furthermore, bicameral interventions that emphasise attachment, self-regulation and coping skills (Roseknranz, Muller & Henderson 2014, Hodgdon et al. 2013), while addressing emotional distress, hyper-arousal states and negative sequale resulting from trauma exposure, have also been found to



enhance relapse prevention interventions (Oshri, Tubman & Burnett 2012). The provision of such interventions is commensurate with longer-term therapies, which contrast with the briefer interventions and treatment episodes observed within current AOD treatment services. Promising outcomes have been found for the use of trauma-specific brief interventions for adults within AOD treatment service to help reduce symptoms and as a stepping stone into more intensive trauma treatments (Mills et al. 2014). Exploring these interventions within a youth population would be a valuable strategy.

Although a strength of the current study is the utilisation of a clinical sample of youth who access AOD treatment, the use of a brief clinical interview to screen for trauma instead of a more thorough PTSD assessment tool may have inflated the prevalence of reported trauma within the sample and limits diagnostic conclusions of PTSD. Conversely, as data collection occurred at point of first contact, youth may not have disclosed trauma symptoms or experiences due to limited initial rapport. The authors noted that some youth who reported having had trauma experiences did not wish, at that point in time, to disclose the type of trauma they had experienced, hence limiting associations between trauma types and AOD use. Future research using more structured tools may prove of benefit; however, how this change would impact on young people engaging with treatment, an issue frequently reported as very challenging for clinicians, would need to be considered.

As the study was conducted within a treatment-seeking clinical sample, the ability to generalise the results to the Australian youth population is limited; however, it is likely that the results are applicable to primary care and AOD services that provide treatment to young people with AOD concerns.

The high prevalence of trauma reported by young people within AOD treatment settings highlights the need for trauma-informed interventions and approaches to service provision. Mills (2008) suggested that treatment providers require an understanding of the impact that trauma has on AOD use, in addition to the influence that trauma has on a young person's engagement in treatment. In light of the prevalence of trauma found within this study, it is highly recommended that young people seeking help from youth AOD

treatment services, particularly females, same-sex attracted and Indigenous youth, be routinely screened for trauma experiences and possible PTSD symptoms.

This will assist in the development of services that are more responsive to patient needs and allow for greater individualised treatment planning. The role of allied health clinicians in providing interventions including psychoeducation, normalisation of trauma symptoms within AOD-using patients and exploring symptom management strategies is an important step in engaging youth patients within treatment and better supporting AOD treatment outcomes.

The findings from this study also strongly suggest that harm minimisation interventions are warranted to specifically address risk-taking behaviours, such as injecting drug use, unsafe sex, offending and aggressive behaviours, which were more prevalent among trauma exposed young people.

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# Musical diaries

## Examining the daily preferred music listening of Australian young people with mental illness

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CARMEN CHEONG-CLINCH AND KATRINA SKEWES MCFERRAN

**Music listening is a natural coping strategy for young people; however, the preferred music listening engagement of young people with mental illness is less known. This article draws on findings from a doctoral study where 12 young people, aged 13 to 17, participated in semi-structured interviews while admitted to an acute adolescent psychiatric inpatient facility. Grounded theory analysis revealed patterns in their everyday music-listening engagement in various contexts and conditions, including their participation in music therapy during a hospital admission, with corresponding consequences. The findings suggest that developmental ages and psychopathological symptoms may explain the varied nature and impact of the young people's music listening engagement to manage their mental and emotional difficulties.**

Engagement with music is a popular representation of being a young person (e.g. Bennett 1999; McFerran 2010a; McRobbie & Garber 1991; Tarrant, North & Hargreaves 2001). The mechanism by which young people identify with their preferred music is debatable. Some studies offer a binary view and correlate it with negative behaviours and emotional states (e.g. Baker & Bor 2008; Bushong 2002; Greitmeyer 2009). Other authors, however, suggest that young people

listen to music to reflect or mirror their emotions (McFerran-Skewes 2004), and to symbolise lifestyle choices (North, Hargreaves & Hargreaves 2004). Music listening has been suggested as a natural coping strategy for young people (Frydenberg 2008), and studies have investigated the regulatory health benefits of the preferred music of healthy young people (McFerran & Saarikallio 2014; Saarikallio & Erkkila 2007), but not that of young people with mental illness.

Contemporary music therapy practice emphasises a resource-oriented approach, and suggests a shared “way of being” (Aigen 2005, p.77) to build on “people’s experience of who they are and what they can do” (Rolvsjord 2006, p.96). Recent studies have examined the relevance of resource-oriented music therapy practice with young people and adults within school and mental health settings, and highlighted the use of music as a resource in recovery (Hense, McFerran & McGorry 2014; Solli & Rolvsjord 2015; Solli, Rolvsjord & Borg 2013).

Resource-oriented music therapy practice, which acknowledges the significance of the individual’s musical resources in the therapeutic interaction (Rolvsjord 2010), shares affinities with current youth mental health strategies. In particular, there is shared consideration of the strategies young people are intrinsically motivated to use in order to manage the challenges of their developmental changes and live with their mental health difficulties (Ryan 2007).

Despite the diversity in the existing literature, the preferred music engagement of young people with mental illness has not been contextually examined. The present investigation, therefore, sought to investigate young people’s preferred music engagement both in everyday life and during a hospital admission. The research question underlying the present study was: how do young people with mental illness engage with their preferred music in various contexts and conditions?

## Method

Grounded theory was chosen based on its criteria to develop theoretical understandings that are grounded in the data (Corbin & Strauss 2008). Theoretical sampling involving cycles of simultaneous processing of data



collection and analysis was used to gather pinpointed data (Charmaz 2006, p.110) to develop and build theory, rather than deduce testable hypotheses from existing theories (Charmaz 2006). In a grounded theory study, the aim is not to replicate or achieve statistical generalisability by the number of participants, but rather it is to verify and elaborate the emerging categories. This qualitative method of inquiry allowed the first author to “examine the breadth” (McFerran 2010b, p.14) of the study, ranging from how the participants viewed their situations to the extent and conditions under which the music engagement was embedded (Charmaz 2006). Finally, an “overarching explanatory concept” (Corbin & Strauss 2008, p.55) was developed to explain the studied phenomenon.

The study was conducted at an 11-bed adolescent psychiatric inpatient facility, located on the outskirts of Brisbane, Australia. This facility, where the first author is also the music therapist, provides acute mental health assessment, treatment and support to young people aged between 13 and 18 with mental health issues ranging from mood and eating disorders to psychosis. The music therapy program, as part of standard care, includes weekly group and individual sessions consisting of shared music listening and/or making, song analysis and creation.

Twelve young people, after attending music therapy, were theoretically sampled to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of nine females and three males, aged between 13 and 17, who were admitted to the inpatient psychiatric facility (presented in Table 1). A recruitment protocol ensured that the young person was first medically cleared by his/her case manager or psychiatrist, before a third party approached the young person to give their consent to participate in the study. Pseudonyms are used for the purpose of confidentiality.

**Table 1. Details of participants in the study**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Mental health conditions and diagnoses</b>
Annabelle	14	Medical investigation for pain in abdomen, and unexplained sadness for more than six months.
Bianca	15	Eating disorder
Cavan	16	Eating disorder
Danny	16	Eating disorder
Erryn	14	Eating disorder
Fern	15	Conduct disorder, attempted self-strangulation
Gerry	16	Conduct disorder, suicidal ideation
Harper	16	Depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, auditory hallucination, self-injury
Ira	16	Eating disorder
Jordan	14	Eating disorder
Kim	16	Depression, suicidal ideation, self-injury.
Logan	17	Depression, suicidal ideation, attempted self-drowning.

## Data collection and analysis

Aligning with the interpretivist-constructivist perspectives underpinning the study, the interview was chosen as a way for the young people to participate in the study. Early interviews remained open and exploratory, becoming more targeted in later interviews through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves recruiting a new participant or returning to specific young people for subsequent interviews to develop, verify or elaborate and “fine-tune” (Charmaz 2006, p.72) emerging categories, with a specific focus on the young people’s engagement with their preferred music in various contexts and conditions, and corresponding consequences.

The analytic process included different levels of coding and analyses – open, focused, theoretical and selective coding, although they were not applied in a particular sequence in the present study. Open coding helped to break the data apart (Strauss & Corbin 1998) in the early interviews to identify and delineate the condition, action and interaction and consequence of the young person’s music

listening engagement. The analysis of the first interview served as “points of departure” (Charmaz 2006, p.17) for the second interview. At each stage of the analysis, “repeated returns” to the data (McFerran 2010b, p.16), either to each young person’s own interview data, and/or comparisons with the others, enabled constant revision of the interpretation of the data to ensure the adequacy and direction of the emerging theoretical categories (Charmaz 2006). Corbin describes this as conceptual saturation (Corbin & Straus 2008) and refers to the boundaries of the category as the properties and dimensions that will describe and account for its variation. Finally, the core or central category (Corbin & Strauss 2008) integrates the categories and validates the relationships among the categories, culminating in a “grounded theory” of the everyday music engagement of the 12 young people with mental illness. Memo-writing provided a record of the analytic process of theoretical categorising and allowed comparison to ensure the concepts emerging from the interplay between the deductive interpretations were well grounded in inductive reasoning.

## Results

Through the various stages of the data collection and analyses, three major categories of the music-listening engagement of 12 young people with mental illness were constructed to reveal that they used music listening to identify and manage their emotions on a daily basis, and to engage with their emotions in music therapy during their hospital admission. Young people’s descriptions are used to illustrate that the formulation of the theoretical findings are “grounded” in the data. In grounded theory studies, the final result is encapsulated in the form of a theory.

### **Musical diary: identifying emotions with music**

Eight young people recalled that they were between the ages of 12 and 13 when music first “hit” them. Their preferred music could intrinsically reflect and express their emotions, and it could also define their personal space, and mediate their interpersonal connections. Similar to writing about emotions and experiences in a diary, their music preferences were a way to express and “talk” for them. In happier times, their music appeared to give form to and reflect their positive emotions. Fern said:

*When I'm in a happy mood, I listen to music. It means I'm free, I just feel like I want to get up and dance.*

Likewise, in more challenging times, it seemed that their preferred songs – more than words – were able to reflect and express their emotions. Younger teens, like Erryn, were more inclined to listen to songs that were based on how they made her feel:

*I don't really have a different music for a different mood. Most people would think you will listen to a sad song when you are sad but I don't do that because that would just make me more sad, like it'll just remind me that I'm sad or something. So I listen to something happy. It brings back that feeling of being free.*

Older teens appeared to be more aware of the emotional correspondence of their music selection. Cavan, an older teen, described selecting and listening to songs that had specific musical features corresponding to his emotions:

*If you're having a bad day, having a down day, you listen to softer acoustics, piano, lyrics where there's singing. And if you're really energetic, you listen to up-tempo motivating stuff.*

Song choice was a way for the young people to determine and negotiate their interpersonal interactions. For most of them, their music preferences were topics for discussion and sharing when “hanging out” with their friends. Bianca reported:

*All of those girls (in the friendship group) were listening to (type of music) and it was kind of expected that, if you were in the group, you kind of listened to it as well.*

Ten young people reported listening to music alone in their bedroom or with earphones. It appeared to be a way to separate from their families and have time “on my own”. When Annabelle returned home from school, she explained:

*Annabelle: I sit down and have afternoon tea, and listen to music on my iPod.*

*Interviewer: Who's at home?*

*Annabelle: My mum, my dad, if he's not working, my little sister. Because I get home after everyone else.*

*Interviewer: When you're listening to music with your headphones, do you talk to them?*

*Annabelle: Yes, I say hello to my mum; I will take them off when I'm talking to her and then put them back on. Or when she talks to me.*

When they were upset or angry, or having a “really hard time”, they would turn to music listening as a way to create “my own space”, or to transport them to “another place”.

### **Musical cocoon: managing emotions with music**

Ten young people reported that their preferred music personalised their environment and accompanied their routine activities, such as waking up in the morning and going to sleep at night, studying and relaxing. Their descriptions of instinctive music uses were interpreted as an interactive and transactional process to effect cognitive and physiological changes to actively adapt to the demands of their daily routine and tasks, as described by these young people:

*Harper: It helps me concentrate on school, it helps me to do my homework. A lot of it inspires me.*

*Gerry: When I listen to music before a game or halfway through a game I actually seem to play better out in the court. I got more strength in like my passes. It just feels like I can move quicker cos I've got a beat sort of stuck in my mind.*

In really hard times, it was not surprising that music was the “first thing” they turned to. Their musical cocoon represented a symbolic retreat, a “way of coping” with their increasingly unhappy and more challenging emotions. It appeared that music listening also had the ability to mitigate cognitive tensions. Some reported it helped to “free” their minds. They could “zone into” or focus on the music to re-direct their thoughts away from their troubles, as Cavan described:

*(My mind) gets more zoned into the music where you don't really think about what's happening outside – you might be listening to either the melody or the guitar riff or the lyrics, you're just listening to the song. You block everything else out, you just focus on the music.*

Music listening also had the ability to relax them physiologically as though a “weight” had been lifted. Harper described the process:

*Just after a little while of listening to music, I start to breathe and calm down and not want to punch anyone in the face. My body relaxes, thoughts slow down, heart rate slows down and voices quieten.*

Revisiting the data sets revealed that music listening was not “enough”. Fern described the fluctuating nature of the relief provided by her music listening:

*It takes all my anger out like I'm free like I can do stuff now. Other times it makes me more restless.*

The question of how the nature of their mental illness might shape the ways and the consequences of their music engagement directed the analytic stage of elaborating the dimensions of this category. It was pertinent to examine the duration and impact of the use of music to manage their emotional and mental health difficulties according to the types of mental illness diagnoses.

Harper, who experienced auditory hallucination, explained that music listening helped her to focus on the music rather than the “voices” she was hearing:

*It's like when you're having a conversation in a group of friends – there's one conversation over there, there's one conversation over there, but you're trying to focus on the person who is talking to you. You can listen to the others, you can hear what they're saying and take in the information, but you just put your focus on the person you're speaking to.*

When she experienced urges to self-harm, she reported that listening to a preferred song for “three extra minutes” would “get rid of the desire” to self-injure. Although for Kim, a mood-congruent song was likely to make her “fall through the cracks” and succumb to self-injurious behaviour.

In contrast, for those who had an eating disorder, some like Cavan and Danny found that music miraculously improved their emotions. Danny reported that a sad song took her sadness away, and she would “forget” all her troubles. Ira and Bianca, however, were not able to listen to music at all when distressed as music had the potential to evoke and exacerbate negative emotions.

In spite of the predominant perception that their music listening would turn “everything” around, the findings revealed a more realistic picture, suggesting that the young people’s experience of transformation from their music listening varied according to their awareness of the impact and symptoms of their mental illness.

### **Musical campfire: engaging with emotion in music therapy**

Analogous to a campfire, the findings revealed that sharing preferred music was a familiar way to directly engage with the young people in music therapy during their hospital admission. Kim’s explanation echoed many of the other young people’s descriptions:

*Yeah, music therapy is really good because it gives the kid like another way of expressing themselves. They can kind of play their emotion (preferred song and instrument playing), which is really good. And you can just sit there and play and you go, OK, this is how I’m feeling.*

Sharing their preferred music within a therapeutic context helped them to experience acceptance. Danny reported:

*(The music therapist) doesn’t judge our songs in this time, which is good, because most adults do. It makes me feel accepted, like (she) accepts that I like those songs. (The music therapist) doesn’t make a comment about it; if it is, it is usually a good one, yeah.*

Attending music therapy sessions also gave these young people an opportunity to “escape”. Logan aptly observed:

*I reckon everyone has a little bit of fun (in music therapy) while they are in hospital. Everyone forgets about being cooped up for an hour or so. Yeah, when everyone walked in (the music therapy session) they were*

*cranky and upset, and then when everyone left, they were laughing about.*

Shared songs and discussion enabled them to gain an intra- and inter-personal insight to themselves and to the others in the group. Many of them learned about their own engagement with music. It was particularly illuminating for Jordan, who discovered she engaged with music “more than you realise”. Bianca who had not listened to music during difficult times explained:

*I want to listen to music now and not hide from music just because of bad experiences. I'll use it as more of a friend rather than an enemy. Music therapy opened my eyes to music again.*

The musical campfire of shared music listening was described as “getting around listening to different types what people love, what people hate”. Some young people found that sharing music preferences had the ability to reveal and “see” the emotional circumstances of the other young people in the music therapy group. As Ira insightfully observed:

*When you gather around to watch YouTube (to listen to music) you really get to know them, you don't even have to talk to them.*

Seven young people reported that engaging in music therapy helped them to gain personal insight about their music listening. This in turn brought about a more conscious and intentional engagement with their music as a coping strategy, resulting in the experience of agency when listening to music in relation to managing their emotions. Erryn explained:

*Yeah, like just be more aware of how I use my music, and can use my music for when I get out of hospital, noting what kind of music I like that is good for me to listen to when I feel a certain way. It's like when I get anxious again I know what to do and what works for me.*



## 'I won't be able to live without my music'

One of the young people in the study said, "I won't be able to live without my music", which seemed a fitting title for the central category. It had the explanatory power to demonstrate the significant belief that many of these young people with mental illness had about the transformative power of their music engagement. Table 2 presents the central category and its relationship with the categories and their properties and dimensions that were used to construct the theoretical framework.

**Table 2. Major categories and properties relating to the central category**

<b>Central category: 'I won't be able to live without my music.'</b>		
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Dimension</b>
	<b>Category 1:</b> Musical diary – identifying emotions with music	
Intrinsic reflection with music	Emotional expression	Extrinsic communication through music
Personal space	Emotional experience	Inter-personal connection
	<b>Category 2:</b> Musical cocoon – managing emotions with music	
Stimulating	Emotion regulation	Calming
Everything turns around	Duration and impact of relief	Three minutes
	<b>Category 3:</b> Musical campfire – engaging emotions through music therapy	
Medium for experience	Emotional engagement	Means of expression
Acceptance	Emotional experience	Fun
Intra-personal awareness	Insight	Inter-personal appraisal
Intentionality	Coping strategy	Agency

The central category and its relationship with the major categories in this study have been shaped in order to lead towards the theory: Young people with mental illness listen to music to identify and manage their emotions on an everyday basis. The perception and degree of daily transformation from their music engagement vary according to their awareness of it and fluctuate in

relation to the complexity of their mental illness. In music therapy, preferred music was a way to engage and experience their emotions, raise awareness of their relationship with music as a pre-existing resource, and to promote intentionality and agency in their ongoing mental health management and recovery.

## Discussion

The present study sought to develop a theoretical understanding of the preferred music engagement of 12 young people with mental illness. The findings contribute to our understanding of the ways in which these young people described and attributed emotional meaning and significance to their preferred music listening in their everyday life and in music therapy during their hospital admission. It has provided a basis for the use of preferred music and music therapy to be an affect- and youth-centred engagement with the 12 young people during an acute psychiatric hospital admission.

### Music and emotions

Given the complex and severe nature of the emotional challenges that underpinned the 12 young people's hospital admission, the range of emotional words used to describe them were fairly limited and simple. Recent studies suggest that young people with severe mental illness lack the textual language to express and communicate their emotions (Cohen, Farnia & Im-Bolter 2013; Venta, Hart & Sharp 2012). It appeared the young people in the present study perceived that their music preferences enabled them to identify with and express their emotions. Especially in unhappier times, the sounds and/or words of music had the ability to reflect and express their emotions (McFerran-Skewes 2004). Similarly, individuals suffering from depression also used sad music to describe and express their emotions (Bodner et al. 2007).

### A musical cocoon

The metaphor of a cocoon used in the present study, similar to other metaphors like "sanctum" (Larson 1995), "soundtrack" (DeNora 2000) and "container" (Aigen 2005), describes the way solitary music listening defines a symbolic personal space for a young person. In their musical cocoon, it seems that the young people experienced the sense of "being held" (Eurich 2003), an

experience that offers them the feelings of acceptance and of being understood (Aigen 2005; Viegas 2008).

In their musical cocoon, the troubled young people in the study perceived that their preferred music had offered them a miraculous transformation from overwhelming emotional challenges. However, as Miranda and Claes (2009) suggest, a strategy does not automatically guarantee its effectiveness. The present findings revealed the varied and fluctuating nature and consequences of the young people's music listening in relation to their developmental ages and the symptoms of their mental illnesses.

According to Compas and colleagues (2001), coping responses and outcomes emerge differently over the course of development, ranging from involuntary (habitual and/or unconscious) in early adolescence, to volitional (conscious) responses later in adolescent life. This may explain younger teens' more natural affinity with mood-generative music preferences, such as happier music choices based on how it made them feel, reminiscent of happier childhood days. On the other hand, older teens were more likely to actively engage with mood-congruent music to relate more closely to the emotions they were experiencing at the time.

There is also a correlation between emotions and regulation (Silk, Steinberg & Morris 2003) where emotions may impair regulatory adaptations (Lazarus 2006). The present findings revealed that symptoms of the various types of mental illness conditions were likely to contribute to the young people's uses and consequences of their music listening engagement. For those with an eating disorder, where avoidance of negative emotion is symptomatic of the condition (Money et al. 2011), there was an unrealistic perception that music would either turn everything around or be a bad reminder of the past. Depressed older teens, on the other hand, were more likely to listen to mood-congruent songs, to "sit with (their) mood" and connect with their sadness.

Larson (1995) suggests music listening during an emotionally difficult time might be useful in helping young people to reappraise their current situation in a more positive light. It might not be useful, however, for those with an eating disorder to use music as a persistent form of distraction (or avoidance) if the

issues that need addressing were simply “forgotten” and/or repeatedly avoided by wishful thinking (Hutchinson, Baldwin & Oh 2006). Similarly, younger teens with depression found that their “happy” music did not always help them to feel “a bit better”. Instead, sometimes it made them feel “restless”, and eventually they had to turn it off, “get up and do something or cry”. Some studies (Garrido & Schubert 2012; Van den Tol & Edwards 2011) have found that depressed people were more likely to listen to sad music and were also less likely to dissociate from the negative emotions evoked by it; so mood congruent music had the potential to exacerbate the older teen’s already depressed state.

It seemed that the young people in this study were not always conscious and intentional about their music engagement. A number of studies reported that processing of the information relating to the responses and outcomes in the music engagement to “feel better” was largely intuitive and unconscious (Juslin & Laukka 2004; McFerran & Saarikallio 2014). This may explain that, at times, their music engagement was helpful and other times unhelpful, but in spite of the varying nature of this relief, most of the young people perceived the transformation to be powerful and much needed. To this end, McFerran and Saarikallio (2014) cautioned against young people’s fervent, yet unrealistic, expectation that music listening could “take away the pain”.

The ways that adolescents cope with stress and emotional distress is an important correlate of psychological adjustment and symptoms of psychopathology. The present findings contribute to our understanding of the ways young people with mental illness engage with music listening so that music can be used as a health resource to more effectively manage their daily emotional and mental health challenges.

## Implications for music therapy and adolescent mental health care

A growing body of literature encourages an affect-focused engagement (e.g. Diener, Hilsenroth & Weinberger 2007; Fonagy et al. 2002) in adolescent mental health care and recovery. Around the therapeutic musical campfire, preferred songs provided the bridge to connect with the young people’s

emotional experiences, enabling them to express and engage with their complex emotions. This gave them the opportunity to understand their intra- and inter-personal communication and relationships (Amir 2012). Sharing preferred songs also enabled them to perceive and interpret emotional and mental states in themselves and others. The ability to mentalise is a form of imaginative mental activity where the capacity to perceive and reflect on the emotional and mental states of self and others is central to emotion regulation (Fonagy et al. 2002). As a result, it helped them to gain a personal awareness and insight into their own emotional engagement with music.

Rather than the use of an introductory gesture or a hook in a therapeutic alliance, preferred music in music therapy may be a meaningful way to directly engage (McFerran 2010a) with the young people at a critically emotional time during a hospital admission. It has the potential to provide the intrinsic motivation (Ryan 2007) necessary for a young person to participate in his/her own ongoing mental health care and recovery during and beyond an admission in an acute inpatient facility. Indeed, current mental health strategies emphasise developmentally appropriate forms of engagement when working with young people (Bevington et al. 2012; McGorry 2010),

## Conclusion

Although a hospital admission is not an everyday experience, it has the potential to be a likely experience for a young person with severe mental illness. Hence the investigation in this particular setting reflected these young people's emotional and social reality. The research interviews through theoretical sampling provided snapshots (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p.78) of the 12 young people's music listening to portray and explain fully their daily music listening in various contexts and conditions, with corresponding consequences, including music therapy during their hospital admission.

The present findings propose the use of preferred music within music therapy as a significant way to work with the young people in this emotionally critical time. This research acknowledged and facilitated a meaningful and intentional engagement with their preferred music as a more constructive coping resource. According to Antonovsky (1996), the aim of recovery "must be to help people to ... use their own resources" (p.65).

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# The Skill Mill – Newcastle upon Tyne, England

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DAVIE PARKS & ROB WHITE

**The Skill Mill is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing employment opportunities for young people aged 16 to 18. Following two years of pilot work in the North East of England, The Skill Mill was established to provide high quality and cost effective outdoor work with high social impact. It is based primarily in Newcastle upon Tyne, England, but has 'branches' now and in the future in Leeds, Salford (near Manchester), Liverpool and Carlisle in England, and Tallinn in Estonia.**

The mission of The Skill Mill is to undertake water- and land-based management, thereby helping to reduce local flood risks and improve the local environment. The Skill Mill also brings social and environmental benefits to local communities by involving local people directly in the delivery of services. The aims of The Skill Mill are to:

1. improve the flow of watercourses and contribute to the reduction of flood risk;
2. increase engagement, participation, employability and educational levels of the young people and move them closer to long-term sustainable employment;

3. reduce re-offending and increase community safety through engagement of ex-offenders in employment; and
4. demonstrate to others the importance of innovative thinking and the benefits of moving away from existing high-cost contracting to resolve water- and land-based environment-related issues.

The project is part of a broader integrated options approach to dealing with young offenders that involves government and non-government agencies.

## An integrated options approach

### **Youth Offending Team (YOT)**

The YOT is a statutory body under the authority of the local authority (not county authority), although the employees involved may be employed by county as well as local authorities. Each YOT is comprised of multidisciplinary members – police, health and education, and social workers operating as case managers. The work of the YOT centres around court-ordered interventions including reparation or police-recommended interventions pre-court.

Offender progression begins with the police and courts, runs through a case manager, responsible for the assessment planning and intervention and also connects the young person with relevant external agencies and personnel.

The Newcastle YOT was approached by the Environment Agency regarding possibly “cleaning-up” local waterways. In response, the YOT organised sessions whereby young offenders would work for three hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon on watercourse tasks for between 12 and 20 weeks. To date, over 300 young offenders, almost all male, and between the ages of 16 and 18, have engaged in these reparation activities. They are provided with full safety and work equipment. For this cohort, recidivism (repeat offending) rates are lower than the national average of young offenders.

### **The Skill Mill**

The Skill Mill emerged from this reparation program in response to a lack of effective progression routes. It is a non-government “social enterprise” meaning that half of its operational money has to come from non-grant sources – such as contracts with local entities, including the Local Authority,

Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water. It is governed by a four-member Board of Directors, advised by a committee of supportive businesses, agencies and universities. It has one key operational supervisor, who oversees four candidates at a time, usually drawn from the YOT reparation pool. The young people are paid minimum wage rates and are selected on the basis of a combination of attitude, skills, punctuality and vulnerability (that is, those already “work ready” are not selected; those who need extra assistance to find work are). They are employed on a six-month contract. The young people undertake water-work and grounds maintenance tasks (such as cleaning drains), and are awarded Level 1 Certification (national qualification) for basic competencies. The combined pre-Skill Mill offending is in the order of 300+ offences. After the first 18 months of the program, there were only two further offences reported for 12 youths employed.

### **Selected agency jobs**

After completion of The Skill Mill contract, graduates have so far found jobs with the participating agencies of The Skill Mill. There have been three cohorts of four young people engaged in the program. To date, only one has not completed the program.

## **Practice issues**

### **Organisational**

The Skill Mill is essentially the same program as the YOT but involves the progression of the cohort of young people from YOT to The Skill Mill. The supervisor from YOT is in close contact with The Skill Mill, and the supervisor from The Skill Mill is on secondment from the YOT. The hosting of The Skill Mill is within the YOT premises, enhancing the transition from YOT to Skill Mill for the participants. Approval had to be sought for the Manager of the YOT to also be a Board Director of The Skill Mill, even though operationally and legally these are separate entities. A major concern has to do with workload and time allocations for staff across the agencies. The optimum Skill Mill team size is one supervisor to four young people.

The organisational logistics of The Skill Mill include:

- scheduling of work
- budget/payroll/invoices
- social media and website
- procurement/ordering (equipment, uniforms, vans)
- site reports and photos\*\*
- keep samples of what is found in streams\*\*
- social and cultural history
- art and heritage exhibitions

\*\* analysis of contents of water courses and 1) links to local/community level input into the originating problem (e.g. tossing of waste and bottles), and 2) environmental offences (e.g. illegal dumping of waste).

## **Social/cultural**

Personal relationships are at the heart of projects such as The Skill Mill, and it is the qualities and skills of supervisors that matter most in developing these. Supervisors need to be able to work with young people, have an interest in the environment, have the ability to undertake manual labour and have good organisational and people skills. It is essential to have a “driver” for the program and vision for the overall project. This means being able to view it both as a progression, and as having the interests of the young people (not the program as such) in mind. For example, a job for the young person is more important than completion of The Skill Mill contract. It builds upon a foundation of a longstanding and statutorily supported “multidisciplinary” environment, where different people work together under the same mandate to achieve common goals.

Particularly in regard to working with young offenders, there are inevitably going to be issues pertaining to compliance and breaching. The Skill Mill has adopted an “out-reach” model, where the agency goes out to the young person, and listens to what the young person has to say, before deciding what to do. It is acknowledged that measures have to be taken to ensure the allocation of the right case manager to suit the young person and to address their personal problems. Attention is also given to agency difficulties and the variety of

means/solutions/responsivity required or possible before breaching, as such, occurs. There is a tension between allowing multiple chances (e.g. lateness or missing days) versus real-life demands (e.g. punctuality and attendance at work), and in relation to the notion that the young people are being paid as an incentive to participate.

## **Capacity building**

The historical grounding in the YOT and associated legislation provides a platform for innovative offspring such as The Skill Mill. Issues include the importance and vulnerabilities of reliance upon key driver(s), and funding limits and shortfalls in terms of what could be done. There is need for the development of an environmental niche for the work undertaken and a need to develop alternative areas of work and skill development and job opportunities (beyond that of waterworks repairs, cleaning and rejuvenation). There is the threat that austerity funding will shrink government-provided contracts and jobs in the future.

More evaluation is needed with respect to several emerging trends and issues pertaining to the growth and continuity of The Skill Mill model. One area of interest is evaluation of the franchise process if and when the model starts up in other locations such as Leeds, Carlisle, Liverpool and Tallinn. Scrutiny is needed of the concept of “transfer”, of how policies and procedures can be adopted in different locations, and what structures and processes are available in each locale. In part, some of the questions raised here relate to the nature of “private company” versus “social enterprise”. In technical legal terms, franchise agreements depend upon the status of The Skill Mill as a Limited Guarantee Company (which would provide greater autonomy, a hub role and registered intellectual property such as a trademark, ‘The Skill Mill’) or as a social enterprise and thereby constituted as a Community Interest Company (thereby subject to the CIC Regulator and having to provide an annual report). Issues as to whether or not the Environment Agency is moving toward a community engagement and social responsibility contracting model, and how to obtain preferred provider status, are also relevant here.

Attention has also focused on the use of “recidivism” as a measure of success.

Typically, recidivism is defined as conviction for offending behaviour within two years of initial criminal justice intervention. However, the “desistance” and “restorative justice” literature refers to more holistic measures that might also be utilised in evaluation:

- better relationships
- re-connecting with family and institutions
- engagements
- networks
- job ready/enjoying work
- social role modelling
- life changes

Evaluation techniques, methodologies and conclusions differ greatly depending upon what is being measured and for what purpose.

The Skill Mill attempts to transform the lives of communities and individuals with sustainable, low-cost environmental benefits. As part of its mandate, it undertakes general construction (walkways, access ramps), waterway construction (digging channels), waterway clearance (general litter, plant litter), waste clearance (household, industrial, commercial), mapping of invasive species (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam), mapping of protective species (water vole, otters, birds), habitat vegetation management (habitat building) and flood defence work (sandbag wall construction).

In undertaking substantial projects for communal objectives, the participants – young people, supervisors and engaged local residents and businesses – all gain a better appreciation of the other and the positives that result from giving something back to the community.

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The importance of social media to the *JAYS* demographic gives activist usage of this technology a particular importance to the youth studies field. This article, the first *JAYS SPOTLIGHT* feature, is an edited extract from an October 2015 report by the **Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC)** in Jakarta, and presents a comprehensive description of social media in the context of current extremist activism.

# Online activism and social media usage among Indonesian extremists

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INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT (IPAC)

Indonesian extremists have a long history of online activism, but links to the Islamic State (still better known in Indonesia by its former acronym ISIS) have raised questions about whether social media usage is significantly changing patterns of radicalisation and recruitment. The answer seems to be a qualified no, but ISIS propaganda seems nevertheless to be having an impact, persuading some Indonesians that the 'caliphate' in Syria and Iraq is a well-run state where devout Muslim families can find fulfilment. Where social media has made a difference is in its ability to turn anyone with a Twitter account into a potential propagandist, meaning that the ISIS message may start with friends and family linked into online networks but quickly reaches a much broader public.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the heavy reliance of Indonesian extremists at home and abroad on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp and similar services, “self-radicalisation” and “lone wolf” actions have been extremely rare. Personal contacts and direct face-to-face engagement in religious discussion groups (*pengajian*) remain important, with friendships reinforced through Internet messaging and mobile phone communication. As one analyst notes, individuals do not become supporters of ISIS simply by being exposed to propaganda, but the propaganda can help transform them from passive supporters into active members.<sup>2</sup>

Social media may play a more important role in recruitment in countries like Malaysia with a very strict legal regime, where police monitoring of suspected extremists is so strict that the only relatively “safe” means of interaction is online – and then only with some form of encryption. In Indonesia, however, it is easy for extremists to hold meetings and discussions, and this is where recruitment generally begins. The very few Indonesian groups that have identified potential members through Facebook have been among the least competent, in part because they have not been able to vet potential members properly.

The Indonesians who have joined ISIS frequently have been involved in sustained and systematic efforts via WhatsApp and other forms of phone communication to persuade friends and family to migrate (*berhijrah*) to Syria. As the attraction of ISIS has reached into various diaspora groups, including Indonesian workers abroad, communications networks over Telegram and Zello have helped Indonesians living in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia and the Gulf countries find transit routes to Syria, accommodation, contacts for crossing borders, and occasionally, funding. Even these groups, however, started out as *pengajian* in the individual countries concerned.

Over time, the use of Facebook and similar media among ISIS supporters has changed. As Indonesians and many other nationals began joining militias in Syria in 2013, they posted detailed accounts on Facebook of living conditions, training regimens, battle news and travel experiences, and communicated regularly with family and friends, usually through WhatsApp but also through Instagram and YouTube. The ISIS leadership seems to have realised the



security problems of this information flow and seem to be trying to exert more control: by 2015, the posts on Facebook and other social media had become much less interesting. They are now used more to disseminate ISIS-approved videos and news bulletins than for personal news.

Google, Facebook and Twitter, under pressure from governments, have reacted to the ISIS propaganda campaign by suspending accounts. ISIS supporters, including in Indonesia, have turned this into a game to see how many times they can reopen suspended accounts under slightly different names, with newly re-established accounts sending out the word with messages such as “I’m back!” and requests that readers “shout out” the new name. Some accounts have been reestablished 20 or more times with a single different digit or letter in each new name. One Twitter account that began as @SEAMujahid, was suspended and re-opened as @SEAsianMujahid.

Thus far, ISIS supporters in Indonesia do not seem to have used the Internet very creatively. In the past, extremists engaged in online fund-raising, through hacking and credit card fraud, with one major success. They attempted sabotage of government websites, without causing serious damage. Even less successful were efforts at virtual training in skills such as bomb construction; not a single bomb made by individuals who taught themselves through Internet instructions worked as intended, although one, the 2011 bombing of a police mosque in Cirebon, came close. None of these skills seem to be much in evidence today. This may reflect the fact that terrorist activity in general is down, as the extremist community seems to be spending more of its time and resources trying to get to Syria, rather than to plan operations at home. [JAYS Ed.: Since this was written, there was one attack in downtown Jakarta on 14 January 2016 with eight deaths.]

One other use of social media has taken off in the past two years: marriage by mobile phone. Both fighters with ISIS and extremists prisoners in Indonesian jails have used WhatsApp and the video functions on their phones to marry, sometimes for the first time, occasionally for the second or third. The “ceremony” is held with the bride in her hometown and the groom in prison or overseas, with a designated proxy standing in when the actual marriage is

legalised under Islamic law. These marriages are used for a variety of purposes: to cement alliances, reinforce social hierarchies, satisfy the “biological needs” of prisoners, or bring women out to the Middle East for unmarried fighters.

The Indonesian government has not been effective in countering extremism online in general or ISIS propaganda in particular, but neither have many other governments. It is hard enough to counter the multiple messages of ISIS, let alone the crowd-sourcing methods used to disseminate them. At the moment, though, the top priority of Indonesian agencies involved in counter-terrorism work probably should be focused as much on getting more and better-trained personnel with the skills to analyse social media content as on developing counter-narratives. The urgent need is for a more informed understanding of how, where and why ISIS support develops, since that knowledge should underlie prevention programs.

This report places the current use of Internet and social media by Indonesian ISIS supporters in historical perspective to examine patterns of radicalisation and recruitment. The big difference from earlier periods in the age of ISIS is not so much the method of recruitment but the number of individuals being reached.

## Internet usage in Indonesia

Indonesian extremists do not lack access to the Internet. Indonesia was ranked eighth in the world in 2015 among global Internet users (behind China, India, the US, Brazil, Japan, Russia and Nigeria), although its level of penetration (percentage of users per total population) is only 28.3% – just a little higher than Bangladesh or Mongolia.<sup>3</sup> Internet usage is expanding dramatically, however, with an increase of 3,550% between 2000 and 2015.

Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter are among the most popular services. Over 96% of Indonesian internet users had a Facebook account, making Indonesia the fourth leading Facebook user in the world in 2014, behind the US, India and Brazil. Over 84% of Indonesians active who were active online in 2014 used Twitter.<sup>4</sup> Some 33% of Indonesians used their mobile phones to get access to the Internet, and of these, 52% used WhatsApp.

The growth of the Internet in Indonesia roughly parallels the evolution of the jihadi movement in Indonesia. The first commercial Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Indonesia started operations in 1994 and usage began spreading rapidly in 1997–98, as the New Order was coming to an end.<sup>5</sup> Jemaah Islamiyah began a series of attacks in Indonesia in 1999–2000 as a response to the eruption of conflict in Ambon and Poso, just as groups on all sides of those conflicts began to make use of the Internet for news, propaganda and communication. Four clear periods emerge in which technological advancements paralleled ideological and organisational change:

- From 1999 to 2003, the movement was dominated by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), culminating in the Bali bombings of 2002. A JI member, Imam Samudra, who was also the field coordinator of the Bali bombs, championed the use of the Internet before and after his arrest as a mechanism for outreach, communication, fund-raising and warfare through hacking. (Underscoring the theme of continuity, Imam Samudra's son was reported killed in Syria fighting for ISIS on 14 October 2015.) Jihadis, like other interest groups, relied on list-serves to reinforce group identity and disseminate material. They also, like most other Indonesians, relied on internet cafes (*warung internet*, *warnet*) for access. Communication within the group was largely through text-messaging.
- The period 2004–2009 was dominated by the al-Qaeda-style bombings of Noordin Top, the former JI member from Malaysia who broke with JI to form a splinter group that consciously sought to emulate the style and goals of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of the Islamic State of Iraq, the progenitor of ISIS. Separately, JI built up its base in Poso, Central Sulawesi, only to have it crushed by police – temporarily, as it turned out – in early 2007. Arrests and ideological differences spurred the fragmentation of the jihadi community with the emergence of Jamaah Ansharul Tauhid (JAT) in 2008. In this period, list-serves gave way first to chatting over an internet relay service (MIRC) and then to various other chat forums and messaging services. Jihadi blogs tied into websites and print media took off; and a tiny handful of Indonesian extremists tried to link up to the global jihad through establishing communication with al-Qaeda's Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF). Computer skills were in much demand but were still used overwhelmingly in the service of indoctrination

rather than recruitment. Jihadis continued to rely on *warnets* to send emails, and their overreliance on texting and mobile phone communication facilitated efforts by police to track them down.

- The period 2010–2013 began with the breakup of a terrorist training camp in Aceh with over 100 jihadis arrested and some two dozen killed in the police operations that followed. It exacerbated the fragmentation of the jihadi community and the rise of autonomous cells, with members who were generally poorly trained and inept. One spectacular case of hacking to raise money only underscored how rarely such incidents occurred. It was clear that a few relatively skilled computer specialists could not compensate for the movement's absence of strong leadership, skills or organisational strategy. The Aceh debacle also led to the rise of a small, armed group in Poso, built on the ashes of the former JI structure, which became the symbolic heart of the jihadi movement. Social media usage skyrocketed in this period, especially Facebook and Twitter, as did the use of smart phones, making use of *warnets* less critical. The eruption of the Syrian conflict, with its echoes of Islamic prophecies, generated a new thirst for international news that jihadi websites tried to slake.
- The rise of ISIS in 2013, the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014 and the desire of many Indonesians to join gave a new purpose to online media. Indonesian nationals, like others in Syria, saw it as their responsibility to urge others to do the same. This was also in line with the ISIS leadership's "call to *hijrah*". The increasing availability of smart phones enabled those in Syria to transmit photos and videos and urge others to come, in a way that clearly convinced some of the recipients. The relatively low numbers, however, suggest that even today, with social media usage at unprecedented levels, interest in ISIS does not automatically translate into recruitment.

Advances in communication technology and increasing penetration of the Internet and social media in Indonesia have meant that it is possible to follow developments in Syria and elsewhere in close to real time. They have also made jihadi communications far harder to track. Instead of one list-serve or chat forum, there are hundreds of thousands of private Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as cross-regional and international conversations taking place

over WhatsApp and other services. It thus becomes much harder to assess trends or know for sure that what seems apparent on the surface – for example, that departures for Syria are still largely controlled by existing radical groups – is still the case.

## ISIS takes off in Indonesia: 2014–2015

The emergence of ISIS, its declaration of a caliphate in June 2014 and the departure of hundreds of Indonesians took place just as smart phones were coming down in price and mobile phone apps were taking off. The penetration of social media was already extensive within the jihadi community, and smart phones meant that one no longer had to go to *warnets* to access them.

Many people were excited by the idea of going to Syria but despite the buzz on social media, relatively few have actually gone, given Indonesia's population and its small but resilient jihadi community. At least until very recently, it seems that social media, like chatting and list-serves of earlier eras, have been used far more for propaganda and ideology than for actual recruitment. Recruitment in Indonesia was always far more personalised, through direct face-to-face interaction, and it was friends and family one recruited, not strangers.

For a while, it looked as though the descriptions of life in a “pure” Islamic state by newly arrived Indonesians and Malaysians might lead to an increase in departures, with Facebook postings of those who had made the *hijrah* attracting a huge number of readers who wanted to go too. But the routes to Syria were tightly controlled by those with links to existing radical organisations.<sup>6</sup> Even if someone was attracted by ISIS propaganda, it was not just a matter of getting a ticket and flying out. ISIS required a recommendation from someone already in Syria, and only with that endorsement could one obtain the necessary contacts to get across the Turkish border. The use of social media has increased the chances of finding those contacts. One example is a policeman, Syahputra alias Abu Azzayn, from Jambi, Sumatra, who left for Syria in March 2015. He seems to have been radicalised through a *pengajian* but then became active in a closed discussion group on Telegram, Junud Daulah Khilafah, with more than 100 members. It was through Telegram that he

established contact with Abu Jandal, the Indonesian ISIS member in Syria, and made arrangements to go.<sup>7</sup> He was killed in battle in June 2015.

The control that radical organisations have exerted over contacts, and the fact that by and large people have to raise their own funds to go, means that social media have not played as big a role in mobilising Indonesians to *hijrah* as many analysts feared, even though the few hundred that have gone may cause problems enough. It is much more difficult to know how many sympathisers have been created at home, but there are some independent countervailing forces at work.

### **A. Jihad via social media**

Just as ISIS central became skilled at using social media for propaganda, its Indonesian supporters followed suit. They particularly took to Facebook Fan Pages to support ISIS, with pages in the name of Khabar Dunia Islam, Khilafah Dawla Islamyah, Para Pendukung Khilafah, We Are All Islamic State and others. Because they openly advocated violence, many were closed down by Facebook, only to open again under a slightly different name. Few lasted long enough to attract many followers.

Most of these fan pages were managed by the administrators of Kabar Dunia Islam (KDI), a media wing of ISIS support in Indonesia. Most were disciples of Aman Abdurrahman and also managed the site [kdiofficial.blogspot.com](http://kdiofficial.blogspot.com). The Facebook pages took news from the KDI website and added material from [waislam](http://waislam.com), [Shoutssalam.com](http://Shoutssalam.com) (an ISIS mirror site) and [al-Mustaqbal](http://al-Mustaqbal.com). The administrators were in Syria as well as Indonesia. One was Siti Khadijah alias Ummu Sabrina who left with her husband, Abu Qaqa, in March 2014 and settled in Harariyah, Aleppo province. She and her husband were able to manage the KDI website because the amir of Harariyah, Abu Muhammad Al Amriky, later killed in Kobani, gave them a house with an internet connection.

Siti Khadijah became known after she posted an account of her travel to Syria with her husband and four children in a post entitled 'Perjalanan Hijrah Ummu Sabrina', published in June 2014.<sup>8</sup> In September 2014, she published a second account, 'Kisah Ummu Sabrina di Bumi Khilafah', where she described her furnished apartment, monthly stipend, free schooling and healthcare. She also

described how she and her husband had been in a motorcycle accident when he was driving. ISIS forces had taken them to a doctor, brought them home and then arranged for the motorcycle to be repaired, at no cost to them. Her Facebook page was flooded with questions from Indonesians wanting to know how they too could go to Syria.

One of these was a man who used the Facebook name of Shabran Yaa Nafsi, a sandal-seller in a night market, who despite being poor was determined to bring his entire family to Syria. Inspired by Siti Khadijah's story, he first contacted her in July 2014 and they began a correspondence. He eventually made it to Syria in early 2015 – apparently on his own – only to be killed in a battle on Mt. Sinjar around 26 March 2015. Siti Khadijah helped increase support for KDI's Facebook page; the number of visitors to the site [kdiofficial.com](http://kdiofficial.com) (since closed) also shot up.<sup>9</sup> By 2015, however, she had reportedly been given a new assignment running a safehouse, Madhafa Anisa Al-Arkhabily, for Indonesian women who had just arrived or whose husbands were in training, at war or dead.

## **B. Resistance and decline of some social media**

Use of Facebook and other media like Google Plus by pro-ISIS supporters, and activity on pro-ISIS websites in Indonesia seemed to decline in 2015, and there were several possible reasons: resistance to ISIS propaganda; stricter policing by social media services; loss of personnel; stricter control from ISIS central; and the rise of alternative services.<sup>10</sup>

Reporting on ISIS in the mainstream media in Indonesia was strongly negative anyway, but challenges to the ISIS narrative came from two sources in particular: supporters of Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and strict salafis. The first was represented by Facebook and Twitter accounts of Arrahmah.com and Muqawamah.net, a site run by several JI prisoners in Cipinang.<sup>11</sup> The second was led by Fathi Yazid Attamimi of the Syrian Medical Mission (Misi Medis Suriah, MMS). MMS began a fund-raising campaign on Facebook to raise money for Syria in August 2013 and in three months was able to attract donations of some Rp.1.5 billion. By September 2015, this had risen to Rp.22 billion (about \$1.6 million). The funds were used to send doctors, humanitarian volunteers, repair

roads, build a bread factory and provide other forms of humanitarian aid. The recipient of most of their aid was the militia Ahrar al-Sham. Attamimi's antipathy toward ISIS stemmed from an incident in January 2014 when an MMS team was nearly killed by ISIS forces while delivering aid in Latakia, Syria. The MMS site has been a strong critic of ISIS and at the same time far exceeds any pro-ISIS website in popularity, with 14,535 "likes" in October 2015. ISIS supporters tried to counter MMS criticism by setting up anti-MMS Facebook pages and circulating postings about the hypocrisy of Attamimi but they made little dent in his popularity.

Facebook, Google, Twitter and YouTube became much more assiduous about policing pro-ISIS sites that advocated violence. ISIS supporters had a difficult time maintaining fan pages on Facebook given the speed with which they were shut down. One still active as of October 2015 was Manjanik.com, which had just over 1,700 "likes". It was affiliated to a website that had only appeared in August 2015, and a Twitter account, both with the same name. KDI also had trouble keeping its website updated and had to repeatedly change names and spellings.<sup>12</sup>

Pro-ISIS sites were also repeatedly hacked by the group Ghostsec whose mission, according to its website is:

to eliminate the online presence of Islamic extremist groups such as Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in an effort to stymie their recruitment and limit their ability to organize international terrorist efforts.<sup>13</sup>

Loss of personnel was also a factor. Some of the more than 50 Indonesians killed since March 2015 in Syria and Iraq were active Facebook users. Many of the pro-ISIS sites were maintained by one or two individuals, so as with Forum Jihad al Busyro, the loss of key people through death, arrest or *hijrah* to Syria could cause it to fold.

There is some evidence that ISIS central was trying to exert more control over messaging. One Indonesian leader in Syria, Abu Jandal, came under criticism for posting a video in December 2014 challenging the Indonesian military to a fight, because the posting was unauthorised. A Malaysian woman doctor, whose story of her marriage to a Moroccan ISIS fighter went viral, was apparently



criticised for tweeting about the high death toll of Indonesians and Malaysians in battle in April 2015.<sup>14</sup>

### **C. Azzam Media**

Azzammedia.com, the Indonesian/Malay language propaganda arm of ISIS, came into being on 3 March 2015, with regular news accounts of each “province” or *wilayat* of Islamic state, news of martyrdoms, videos (including of Indonesian and Malaysian children training with rifles), and translations of the ISIS magazine, *Dabiq*. The editor was Arkan al-Fadil, a former activist with the JAT-linked Movement of Students for Islamic Law (Gerakan Mahasiswa untuk Syariat Islam, Gema Salam). He became the editor of the extremist site Shoutussalam until he left for Syria with his wife and child in 2014. On his Twitter account he identifies himself as ‘Journalist and Translator, Islamic Sharia Activist, Observer at World History, Global Jihad and Islamic Revolution’.

Ghostsec attacked Azzammedia in May 2015, but it reappeared immediately, accessible through azzammedia.net and azzammedia.org as well as azzammedia.com.

In some ways, the emergence of Azzammedia obviated the need for separately maintained ISIS sites. Local jihadi news was still available on sites like Vvoa-islam.com and Ppanjimas.com, for example, stories on raids by Detachment 88 on suspected terrorists or Indonesian developments that were considered haram or appeals to aid needy members of the jihadi community. But for news from ISIS, supporters could simply use their individual social media accounts to send links to particularly compelling stories or videos directly from Syria. In the words of one analyst:

The most important aspect of Islamic State’s evolved use of the media and the internet concerns its initial methods of distribution and the role of non-affiliated supporters who further disseminate content, rather than the content itself.<sup>15</sup>

This involvement of individual social media users as propagandists means that even with the decline of sites and fan pages, the overall availability of ISIS propaganda in Indonesia has almost certainly risen.

## D. Mobile phone apps and prison-based chatting

The most important factor in the apparent decline in the use of Facebook, Google Plus and Twitter was the rise in the use of mobile telephone apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Zello, all of which were considered much safer, especially for communication between the Middle East and Indonesia but also among ISIS supporters in Indonesia.

In mid-2015, for example, a group of Indonesians who had already sworn an oath of loyalty to IS and al-Baghdadi decided to form an umbrella organisation called Partisans of the Islamic State (Ansharud Daulah Islamiyah). Among other things, they were intent on building a Southeast Asia *wilayat*. For security reasons, they formed a chat group on WhatsApp called Junud Daulah Islamiyah with about 100 members, moderated by Slamet Pilih Utomo, a convicted terrorist serving a six-year sentence in Cirebon prison, West Java. A former JI member from Solo, he crossed over to a more militant group and was arrested in May 2013 for giving bomb-making instruction to its members.<sup>16</sup>

Telegram has become another favourite service because it is encrypted and because it allows for twice as many members in the group as does WhatsApp (200 as opposed to 100). One Indonesian group, 'Wa Aiddu', is devoted to preparing people who intend to join ISIS forces. There are at least ten identified but many more unidentified Indonesian Telegram groups that serve various purposes: news sharing, religious study groups, personal chats, *hijrah* tips, and even on-line business opportunities. Some women avoid mixed-gender groups and hence the emergence of women-only groups. Some, especially those that contain sensitive information about *hijrah* contacts and tips for preparation (*i'dad*), are more exclusive than others and require new members to be vouched for by at least one existing member.

For audio communications, some ISIS supporters have turned to Zello, an application that acts like a walky-talky over international radio bands. It works reasonably well when strong mobile phone signals are not available. ISIS supporters use Zello for religious discussions as well as for teleconferencing. In Aceh, ISIS supporters reportedly held a discussion sometime in August or September 2015 about the pros and cons of trying once again to establish a secure base in Aceh.

The belief that communication via these apps is secure has led to at least one instance of planning a terrorist attack, although police arrested the plotters before they could do anything.<sup>17</sup> In June 2015, a Solo-based activist named Ibadurrahman, alias Ibad, received a Facebook message from Bahrūn Naim, an Indonesian who left for Syria in January 2015. The two were close friends, having grown up in the same village, and before Bahrūn's departure, attended pro-ISIS discussions together in the Solo area. In the message, Bahrūn gave his Telegram account number and the two began to communicate the encrypted service. Bahrūn asked Ibad to recruit a few friends and train them to make bombs; he would cover all costs. He also promised to help Ibad get to Syria, though Ibad was more interested in going to Mosul, to study at an ISIS-run university there.

Ibad agreed. He had worked with the same group as the prisoner Slamet Pilih Utomo, above, but also had ties to other extremists. He managed to recruit five men, partly on the strength of Bahrūn's promise that he would help them all get to Syria. Bahrūn then transferred Rp.3.5 million (about US \$250) to buy explosives and other incidental costs. He also provided instructions via Telegram on how to mix saltpetre, since Ibad's limited expertise in bomb-making was on the electronic circuitry aspects. The idea was that once the bombs were made, the team would carry out three attacks: one on a church, as revenge for the burning of a mosque in Tolikara, Papua in July 2015; one on a Buddhist temple, as revenge for Buddhist attacks on Muslims in Myanmar; and one on the police, as revenge for arrests of ISIS supporters. All were to take place on Indonesia's national day, 17 August. Police got wind of the plot, however, almost certainly through the standard mobile phone conversations of some of those involved, and Ibad and two others were arrested.

The use of Telegram, Zello and other apps has helped reinforce group solidarity, and members have been able to assist each other with information, for example, about how to get to Syria. But by and large, individuals only come into the circle if they have already been radicalised outside. It is not as though the mobile apps are used deliberately to recruit people for ISIS.

## The government response

The Indonesian government's response to online and social media activities of pro-ISIS extremists has not been particularly effective, in part because there is no clear legal ban on joining, supporting or training with ISIS.<sup>18</sup> Some of its efforts have also faced pushback from human rights groups rightly concerned about broader attempts to control the Internet.

On 27 March 2015, the Indonesian National Anti-Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT) asked the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to block nineteen websites that it believed were spreading extremist ideology. It appeared to be aimed at ISIS, but the list included several avowedly anti-ISIS sites, such as Arrahmah.com and Muqawamah.com (now Muqawamah.net), as well as several sites that, while conservative, also reached well into the Muslim mainstream, such as Hidayatullah.com and Eramuslim.com. The blockage took place in the context of BNPT's largely unsuccessful efforts to get the information minister under the previous government to take its requests for blocking seriously. The new minister, appointed in late 2014, was eager to help but relied on BNPT to make an accurate judgment of what constituted a security threat. The list was not well prepared.<sup>19</sup>

Protests over the blocking came from all quarters. Hidayatullah said if the government or BNPT had a problem with the content, they should block the URL in question, not the domain, especially because BNPT could only come up with two problematic postings on the site.<sup>20</sup> After a week, 12, including Hidayatullah.com, were unblocked after being reviewed by a team in the information ministry's office called Forum for the Handling of Websites with Negative Content (Panel Forum Penanganan Situs Internet Bermuatan Negatif). Even those that remained blocked, like daulahislam.com, remained easily accessible through proxy free sites or through slightly altered names that returned online.

Potentially more effective was the effort to charge M. Fachry of al-Mustaqbal.net under a controversial 2008 law on Information and Electronic Transfers (ITE). It contains provisions banning the distribution of information

designed to spread hatred or hostility toward individuals or groups based on ethnicity, religious, race or group identity, or containing threats of violence or fear-mongering.<sup>21</sup> Human rights organisations repeatedly expressed concern about the law's overly broad language, and their fears have been borne out by several prosecutions related to the law's defamation provisions, not extremism, that should never have come to trial. Indonesian prosecutors have few legal tools at their disposal, however, to prosecute online ISIS propagandists, and Fachry's case could set a precedent. [JAYS Ed.: He has since been sentenced to five years for recruiting Islamic State members at a mosque in West Jakarta and for running a pro-Islamic State, pro-violent website, the first time Indonesians – others were also sentenced – have been sent to prison for links to Islamic State.<sup>22</sup>]

BNPT is working with some NGOs to try and get crowd-sourced rejoinders to ISIS tweets, but the pro-ISIS twitter sources are so many and appear in so many new guises that it remains unclear what impact the initiative will have. Moreover, this kind of response needs to be based on analysis of what aspects of the ISIS message resonate most strongly with Indonesians. One study of ISIS propaganda notes that its six themes are brutality, mercy, victimhood, war, belonging and utopianism, and the latter two may be the most powerful.<sup>23</sup> The images in photos and videos of the camaraderie of Indonesian ISIS fighters and of the normalcy of this "pure" Islamic state combine to exert a potent pull, so it may be these messages that need a response, more than the images of violence.

As noted above, the government has made no headway in preventing convicted prisoners from gaining access to the Internet and social media through mobile phones, although in some cases, it may be encouraging JN supporters to get their anti-ISIS tracts online.

The biggest task for the government, however, is probably intelligence collection through analysis of pro-ISIS social media traffic, and this is where the government lacks skills, training and resources. One member of the counter-terrorism police unit, Detachment 88, acknowledged that it had access to the right technology but lacked sufficient skilled analysts to keep up with the volume.

## Conclusion and recommendations

An overview of how extremists have used the Internet and social media since the Bali bombs suggests that even with the sophisticated propaganda outreach of ISIS via social media, the fundamental pattern of recruitment in Indonesia has not radically changed. Direct face-to-face interaction is still crucial. If there had been a dramatic change through social media, the numbers of Indonesians going to ISIS would be much higher. The number of foreign fighters from Indonesia, even if one uses BNPT's figure of 800, which is almost certainly too high, is still far below the ratio of foreign fighters per million population from Belgium, France, the UK or Denmark.<sup>24</sup>

But some changes are worth noting. One is the appeal to women and families, which makes it different from the generation of *mujahidin* who went to train on the Afghan-Pakistan border in the period 1985–94. Those fighters also went with the explicit intention of returning home to wage jihad. Families leaving to join ISIS have no intention of coming back, and often sell all their worldly possessions to raise funds for the trip.

Second is the role of individual propagandists, meaning the ISIS message is reaching a far greater number of people and giving them a sense that they too can take part in this extraordinary re-establishment of a caliphate, even if they stay home and re-tweet. Any increased support for ISIS in Indonesia also increases the potential for violence, although several analysts point out that it is not ISIS violence that exerts the strongest pull on supporters but its message of the pure Islamic life.

Understanding how ISIS propaganda is affecting communities inside Indonesia is an essential prerequisite to effective prevention attempts. Among policies that the Indonesian government could consider are the following:

1. Strengthen the capacity to analyse social media communications by adding qualified personnel with advanced computer skills to Detachment 88 and BNPT. The focus should be as much on analytical as technical skills. Some in the police are advocating the establishment of a new National Cyber Center, but without enhanced analytical skills of the personnel recruited to it, it could become another government body with a bloated budget and no clear strategy.

2. End the access of convicted terrorists and other high-risk offenders to cell phones and other electronic media. Effective monitoring of the Internet and social media is not possible without better prison supervision. If Indonesia is not able to control the access of prisoners to the Internet, then it suggests a lack of capacity to carry out any other preventive measure effectively.
3. Support research in Indonesian academic institutions aimed at understanding the use of social media and the impact of ISIS messaging.
4. Using knowledge gained from 1 and 3, undertake a public interest campaign to counter ISIS messaging that is more sophisticated than the early “Reject ISIS” (*Tolak ISIS*) message. Advanced techniques of crowd-sourcing are probably essential, and here Google, Twitter and Facebook computer analysts and other parts of the private sector could help – but so can disillusioned returnees who have come back from Syria with stories of corruption, false promises and discrimination by Arabs who treat Southeast Asians as second-class citizens.

## Authors

### **About the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC)**

IPAC was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. The IPAC mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict – why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits – and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change.

In areas wracked by violence, accurate analysis of conflict is essential not only to peaceful settlement but also to formulating effective policies on everything from good governance to poverty alleviation. IPAC looks at six kinds of conflict: communal, land and resource, electoral, vigilante, extremist and insurgent, understanding that one dispute can take several forms or progress from one form to another. They send experienced analysts with long-established contacts in the area to the site to meet with all parties, review primary written documentation where available, check secondary sources and produce in-depth reports, with policy recommendations or examples of best practices where appropriate.

IPAC is registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jakarta as the Foundation for Preventing International Crises (Yayasan Penanggulangan Krisis Internasional).

The full report is available at [www.understandingconflict.org](http://www.understandingconflict.org). The research for this report was conducted with support from the Danish embassy in Jakarta.

Sidney Jones, Director, IPAC

## Notes

- 1 This phenomenon is well-documented in Charlie Winter, 'The Virtual "Caliphate": Understanding Islamic State's Propaganda Strategy', Quilliam Foundation, (London, 2015) and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, 'Paradigmatic Shifts in Jihadism in Cyberspace: The Emerging Role of Unaffiliated Sympathizers in the Islamic State's Social Media Strategy,' draft paper for the European Consortium for Political Research General Conference, 26-29 August 2015, available at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)
- 2 Charlie Winter, 'The Virtual "Caliphate" ', op.cit., pp.7-8.
- 3 For world rankings, see [www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm); for Asia rankings see [www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm)
- 4 In the fourth quarter 2014, Indonesia was ranked No.1 in Asia for Facebook penetration but Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, India, Hong Kong and Taiwan were all close behind. On Twitter, Indonesia with 84% penetration was far ahead of the No.2, India, with 67%. See [www.statista.com/statistics/254803/twitter-penetration-in-selected-apac-countries/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/254803/twitter-penetration-in-selected-apac-countries/) and [www.statista.com/statistics/238516/facebook-penetration-apac-countries](http://www.statista.com/statistics/238516/facebook-penetration-apac-countries)
- 5 Jennifer Yang Hui, 'The Internet in Indonesia: Development and impact of radical websites', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, v.33, 2010, p.173.
- 6 As of mid-2015 there were about five "selection committees" in different parts of Indonesia controlled by pro-ISIS groups. See IPAC, 'Indonesia's Lamongan Network: How East Java, Poso and Syria are linked', Report No.18, 15 April 2015, p.12.
- 7 Private communication with Telegram member, June 2015.
- 8 The full text can be found on a number of pro-ISIS blogs. See [fursansyahadah.blogspot.co.id/2014/09/perjalanan-hi-jrah-ummu-sabrina-full.html](http://fursansyahadah.blogspot.co.id/2014/09/perjalanan-hi-jrah-ummu-sabrina-full.html); [jalanallah.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/perjalanan-hijrah-ummu-sabrina-bagian-3/](http://jalanallah.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/perjalanan-hijrah-ummu-sabrina-bagian-3/); and [weareallislamicstate.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/kisah-ummu-sabrina-salah-satu-keluarga-dari-indonesia-yg-berhijrah-menjalani-kehidupan-di-bumi-khilafah-lengkap/](http://weareallislamicstate.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/kisah-ummu-sabrina-salah-satu-keluarga-dari-indonesia-yg-berhijrah-menjalani-kehidupan-di-bumi-khilafah-lengkap/)
- 9 According to Alexa, the global ranking of [kdiofficial.com](http://kdiofficial.com) was 11.8 millionth in June 2014; it increased to 1.1 millionth in September 2014, after Siti Khadijah's accounts were published.
- 10 The impression of a decline in Facebook and Google Plus is confirmed by some members of Telegram groups who stopped using these services. IPAC has not itself conducted quantitative research on pro-ISIS Indonesians' use of social media over time, nor has it seen any in-depth studies conducted elsewhere.



- 11 Among the prisoners linked to this site are Abu Dujana (released in October 2015) and Lutfi Haedaroh alias Ubeid. While it might have seemed as though it was in the government's interest to have an anti-ISIS site, there is no indication that Muqawamah.net was endorsed by prison authorities or anyone else in government, since it was one of those blocked by BNPT in March 2015.
- 12 Earlier versions were [kdiofficial.blogspot.com](http://kdiofficial.blogspot.com) from 1/2014 to 10/2014; [khilafahdawalislamiah.wordpress.com](http://khilafahdawalislamiah.wordpress.com) from 10/2014 to about 5/2015; [khilafahdawalislamiah.wordpress.com](http://khilafahdawalislamiah.wordpress.com) (with the addition of an extra "y") from 5/2015 to 8/2015.
- 13 See [www.ghostsec.org](http://www.ghostsec.org). Its homepage further says, "This site provides a means for people to report known islamic extremist content including websites, blogs, videos and social media accounts. Once verified by our Intel team, our operations teams set to work on removing the content".
- 14 For more on the doctor, who used the Twitter name @birdofjannah, see 'An ISIS love story', [Buzzfeed.com](http://Buzzfeed.com), 18 September 2014.
- 15 Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, 'Paradigmatic shifts', op. cit, p.1.
- 16 Born 27 April 1977, Pilih joined al-Qaida Indonesia led by Badri Hartono and helped recruit men to send to Poso for training with Santoso. He received a six-year sentence in March 2014.
- 17 The information about the plot comes from confidential documents made available to IPAC in October 2015.
- 18 In August 2014, the Yudhoyono government declared ISIS a banned organisation but this was more a policy directive than an instruction or regulation with the force of law. See 'Evolution of ISIS', op.cit, p.21.
- 19 The 19 sites were [arrahmah.com](http://arrahmah.com); [voa-islam.com](http://voa-islam.com); [ghur4ba.blogspot.com](http://ghur4ba.blogspot.com); [panjimas.com](http://panjimas.com); [thoriquana.com](http://thoriquana.com); [dakwatuna.com](http://dakwatuna.com); [kafilahmujahid.com](http://kafilahmujahid.com); [an-najah.net](http://an-najah.net); [muslimdaily.net](http://muslimdaily.net); [hidayatullah.com](http://hidayatullah.com); [salam-online.com](http://salam-online.com); [aqlislamiccenter.com](http://aqlislamiccenter.com); [ki-blat.net](http://ki-blat.net); [dakwahmedia.com](http://dakwahmedia.com); [muqawomah.com](http://muqawomah.com); [lasdipo.com](http://lasdipo.com); [gemaislam.com](http://gemaislam.com); [eramuslim.com](http://eramuslim.com); and [daulahislam.com](http://daulahislam.com)
- 20 'Hidayatullah.com Minta Kemenkominfo Hanya Blokir Konten, Bukan Situs', *Harian Terbit*, 5 April 2015.
- 21 Articles 28 and 29 of Law No.11/2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions, available at [kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/UU1108.pdf](http://kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/UU1108.pdf)
- 22 <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2015/s4403577.htm>
- 23 'The Virtual "Caliphate"', op.cit, pp.22-30.
- 24 As of October 2015, BNPT was suggesting that 800 Indonesians had joined ISIS, of whom 284 had been identified by name and 516 needed "further clarification". (Notes from a government Powerpoint presentation, 17 October 2015.) It should not be considered a reliable figure. The cases requiring "further clarification" are in some cases based on unverified rumours, in some cases individuals who have gone on short-term visits, and in some cases individuals who may have gone to Syria but not to ISIS. Even the 284 figure includes women and children (a high proportion of Indonesians with ISIS have gone as families). It is also not clear that fighters killed in battle are regularly deducted from the total.

# Toward a vision for vulnerable youth

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TRUDI COOPER

***Interrogating conceptions of 'vulnerable youth' in theory, policy and practice***

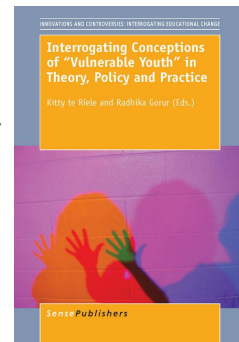
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The central thesis of this book is that the concept of vulnerability (and similar language, such as at-risk, marginalised, or excluded) is complex. Although this complexity is usually acknowledged by policymakers and practitioners, they frequently respond in ways that ignore the complexity. A consequence is fragmented services, and simplistic, sometimes counter-productive interventions that ignore both what is reliably known and the perspectives of young people.

The book contains four sections and 14 chapters by different authors. The first section, consists of three chapters that “set the scene”, and examine concepts of vulnerability and implications for policy and practice. There is good

discussion of the importance of discourse, and the need to situate understanding within a framework of justice and fairness.

The second section consists of four chapters that examine policy approaches to vulnerability and young people. The first two chapters in this section deconstruct some key concepts around vulnerability. Wyn questions the way education is presented as the universal key to employability, and suggests that belonging, rather than transition to employment, may be a more appropriate goal for policymakers. White critiques the application of the concept of vulnerability in the juvenile justice system, drawing attention to the problematic nature of the discourse about risk and vulnerability, especially in the context of dominant neo-liberal political discourses. The other two chapters describe policy and strategy in health/education contexts.

The third section is entitled “practice narratives” and consists of five chapters. The predominant focus of this section is upon educational practices with young people who are defined as vulnerable. The research described consists almost exclusively of examples from the Victorian context and the empirical studies reported are mostly school-based research. Some authors problematise the concept of vulnerability, others do not.

The final section is entitled “young people’s voice” and consists of two chapters. The first chapter discusses the importance of including young people’s perspectives in research on young people, but also raises dilemmas about how researchers present young people’s voices. In particular, Baker and Plows discuss tensions that arise for researchers when selecting, interpreting and presenting young people’s perspectives, and how these perspectives are curated. They discuss the problem that occurs when young people internalise the dominant discourse that constructs them in a negative way, and warn about need for criticality when reporting young people’s voices that support deficit images. Their recommended approach is to suggest that researchers seek counter narratives from young people, which question dominant constructions of issues or of people.

The final chapter presents the voices of four young people who were part of a panel convened in Melbourne and who respond to set questions about their

lives. The young people were asked to describe their personal experiences and responses to aspects of vulnerability and exclusion, including their interactions with government agencies. Some alluded to a range of experiences, some discussed only schooling. It is unclear how the young people were selected, beyond that they met at least one of the criteria for “vulnerability” and were available. Each panel member was articulate, and able to describe their experiences reflectively. Each had also overcome the adversities they faced to make a success of their lives. Their responses were edited but presented without narrative.

The inclusion of this chapter illustrates the discussion about the problematic nature of decisions about how to include young people’s voice in youth research, as discussed in the previous chapter. These complexities include: sample selection, context (panel discussion), decisions about commentary and presentation, and the problem of missing voices. The lack of commentary seems to be a deliberate attempt to minimise the curation of young people’s input, however it comes at a price. The counter-narrative is unclear. The reader is left with questions that these short excerpts cannot answer. There is a tacit invitation to view these contributions by young people as in some way “representative”, but the perceptive reader is also aware that the young people selected speak only for themselves, and different young people would have different stories.

This book has a number of strengths. It commences with a theoretical analysis of the concept of vulnerability and brings together a variety of perspectives and contributions that discuss links between concepts of vulnerability, and policy and practice. There are some strong chapters especially in the policy section, in the section setting the scene, and the chapter on research with young people.

There are a number of omissions from this book. In the selection of authors and research, Victorian contributions are very over-represented. The focus is further narrowed because the chapters on practice focus primarily on the (Victorian) education system and its alternatives. As a consequence of these choices, only weak connections have been made between the discourses of vulnerability and young people in other contexts, and this omits some

significant areas of concern. Educational “vulnerability” is part of the picture, but the more thorny issues about young people’s vulnerability exist in juvenile justice, child protection and refugee policy and practice. For example, in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, discourse about vulnerability of children and young people has been used punitively especially against Indigenous people to revoke self-determination, close communities, override race discrimination legislation and selectively remove rights. For young refugees, vulnerability also has a highly selective application. More focus on these issues in the practice section, and on Indigenous voices, would have been welcome additions. Finally, the application of theory developed in the first section is inconsistent, and some chapters treated the concept of vulnerability entirely uncritically.

When I received the book I was hoping for a strong theoretical analysis, which linked to possibilities for critical policy and radical practice, and transcended dominant neo-liberal constructions of young people. This book goes some way towards that vision and provides many of the theoretical building blocks. To realise this vision would require a consistent critical approach in all sections, and greater diversity of topic, population and geography.

## Reviewer

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The mission and purpose of the Centre for Applied Youth Research (CAYR) is to: promote and support the development of applied youth studies research, policy and practice; assist people and services who work with young people to support the social, moral, cultural, emotional, spiritual and physical development of young people; and encourage young people to prepare for the responsibilities of adulthood and citizenship.

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