Reflective Bibliography

Class discussions. (2020).

We frequently discussed what it means to 'learn' in education and what 'education' means to us personally. Week by week, I found myself referring to how I view education through a grade-oriented lens.

De la Tour (2020) engaged in discussion with me and mentioned the process of internalising identities as a student. For example, we may internalise comments such as 'You are good at maths', as we build our identities.

I resonated with this idea strongly, which began the process of much reflection regarding what grades really mean to me. Thus, when considering project ideas, I knew that I wanted this to be my focus. I wanted to tell my story.

The question that arose from this discussion: *Why have I never been aware that my identity was being shaped around my academic success?*

Burke, C., & Grosvenor, I. (2003). *The School I'd like.* **London: RoutledgeFalmer.**

Since being introduced to this book in class, I have been fascinated by the ideas put forward by young children. The idea of hoping for a better future by reflecting what is wrong with the current system has been foundational to my project.

Q: *What would a better, perhaps utopian education look like?*

Quora. (2017). *How do I stop basing my self-worth on grades?.* **Retrieved from** https://www.quora.com/How-do-I-stop-basing-my-self-worth-on-grades

HuffPost. (2013). *Don't Let Grades Define Self-Worth.* **Retrieved from** https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dont-let-grades-define-se_b_2777416

I started casually reading around the concept of grades being linked to my self-worth and found these articles. Exploring the identities we immerse ourselves in as students allowed for much reflection on what I considered my own identity to be like. Is my identity ranged and purposeful? Do I have many elements to my own identity, or do grades dominate?

Q: How have grades become so deeply engrained in who I feel I am?

Conversations with friends. (2020).

When discussing grades and identity, my friend mentioned the television series *Black Mirror*. There is an episode in which people are rated and given a score that is on display for others to see. This began the thinking process behind how we as humans are rated. I considered how I view myself to be rated and reflected on how I view my 'rating' to be through grades. This encouraged largely dystopian thinking.

Q: How can I highlight my experience through a dystopian lens?

Saint-Exupery, A. (2018)*. The Little Prince***. [e-book]. Delhi: General Press. Retrieved from** https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=mTxbDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+little+prince+book&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjM3cf0i73pAhXfUhUIHQfKBLwQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=consequence&f=false

I stumbled across this book, and it highlighted a very important concept. Some of the characters that this prince meet do not dream, and rather, worry about the outcomes of their actions. If I link my grades closely to my identity, surely this is because I constantly desire a positive academic outcome.

Q: How much of my educational thinking is consequentialist in nature?

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.* **London: Routledge. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fhIiAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=hooks+teaching+to+transgress&ots=-GHh2OHXUh&sig=lv-R1JTi3_4Z5GEgu5AdR0caRpU#v=onepage&q=hooks%20teaching%20to%20transgress&f=false

Reading Hook's experience of witnessing a change in education from one that was enjoyable, to one that was meaningless, as opposed to "learning" (p.3). , made me reflect on what learning should be like, and what it currently is like.

Berliner, W. (2020)*. 'Schools are killing curiosity': why we need to stop telling children to shut up and learn.* ***The Guardian.*** **[online]. Retrieved from** https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jan/28/schools-killing-curiosity-learn

This article engaged me with the concept of being "curious" in students, something I have not considered until now. It enabled reflection on why as we grow older, we may care less about new knowledge and having fun while learning. I reflected on whether I view myself as a curious student.

Q: Do I consider myself to have ever been curious in education?

Lorde, A. (1977). *The transformation of silence into language and action*. **In Ryan, B. (ed). (2001).** *Identity politics in the women's movement*. **[e-book]. New York: New York University Press. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=v6kUCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA81&dq=lourde+your+silence+will+not&ots=SbkzliMYXb&sig=Eie7Xob-u024TyJQ8ZfiVB2lqkw#v=onepage&q=lourde%20your%20silence%20will%20not&f=false

The realisation that gaining good grades had consumed my entire academic life made me aware that I wanted the form of my piece to be powerful, to use "language" in a way that expresses my raw emotions. This reading encouraged me to consider a creative poem as expressing thought through language.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *The Medium is the Message.* **In Durham, M. G., & Kellner, D. M. (eds.). (2012).** *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks*. **[e-book]. Second ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from**

https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=zNqMDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA100&dq=the+medium+is+the+message&ots=SirzSKAbrU&sig=rnQNNlY51ZD0_Dnqt3ixuVM6deM&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20medium%20is%20the%20message&f=false

McLuhan's theory underpins this assignment. By creating a poem, or dialogue, I am choosing to convey my feelings in a particular way. Through a different medium, such as a short story, my ideas would be presented differently.

Q: How can the "medium" of my piece reflect what I truly want to say?

Zoom meetings. (2020).

When engaging in discussions on zoom, a fellow student brought forward the idea of self-identification in terms of psychological theory.

I then engaged in literature related to concepts of the self.

Cohen, J. R., Spiegler, K. M., Young, J. F., Hankin, B. L., & Abela, J. R. (2014). Self-structures, negative events, and adolescent depression: Clarifying the role of self-complexity in a prospective, multiwave study. *The Journal of early adolescence*, *34*(6), 736-759. Retrieved from
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0272431613503217

Joshi, S., & Srivastava, R. (2009). Self-esteem and academic achievement of adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, *35*(1), 33-39. Retrieved from
http://medind.nic.in/jak/t09/s1/jakt09s1p33.pdf

Booth, M. Z., & Gerard, J. M. (2011). Self-esteem and academic achievement: a comparative study of adolescent students in England and the United States. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *41*(5), 629-648. Retrieved from
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057925.2011.566688

Redmond, B. (2016). Self-Efficacy and Social Cognitive Theories. *Confluence.* Retrieved from
https://wikispaces.psu.edu/display/PSYCH484/7.+Self-Efficacy+and+Social+Cognitive+Theories

This literature brought forward the idea that not only am I relating aspects of my self to my grades, but rather, that this is having a negative impact on my sense of self - how I feel as a person. This suggested to me that I was allowing my academic achievement to transcend into other areas of my life outside of education.

Many emotions arose from this, and I spent time considering how this reflection made me feel. Emotions that arose included anger, sadness, but most importantly, a desire for change.

Q: To what extent has the importance of gaining good academic results impacted my wellbeing?

James, A., & Brookfield, S. (2014). *Engaging Imagination: Helping Students Become Creative and Reflective Thinkers*. **[e-book]. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=PR3nAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=jamees+brookfield+engaging+imagination&ots=f4dWgJN1NF&sig=N59F8xk3sY6ZPdP-JMJ6TshCdSM#v=onepage&q=jamees%20brookfield%20engaging%20imagination&f=false

When considering the emotions that had become apparent related to the concept of grades and self-identification, I realised that while my piece needed to reflect these very real feelings, it also needed to create a need for change. Through reading *engaging imagination*, it became clear that only through envisioning different ways of life, can things change. I thus decided that my piece, though it may appear dismal, would be a motivation for a better educational life. A life in which grades do not dictate me.

Q: In what ways can my project use "imagination" to consider an alternative educational life?

Papastephanou, M. (2008). Dystopian reality, utopian thought and educational practice. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *27*(2-3), 89-102. **Retrieved from**
https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11217-007-9092-9.pdf

British Library. (2020) Utopia. *Learning: Dreamers and Dissenters.* **Retrieved from**
https://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/utopia/utopia.html

I then began grappling with dystopian and utopian ideas. If my project focused on the negative emotions I associate with education, as expressed in the dialogue, I believed my project to be heavily dystopian. However, remembering *Engaging Imagination*, if I was presenting this piece to aspire change, then a utopian foundation surely comes through.

Q: Is my project in fact more of a utopia than a dystopia?

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.*[e-book]. **London: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=r6nOYYtxzUoC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=metaphors+we+live+by+lakoff+language+thought+and+culture&ots=Lnycgk7s62&sig=Zioud2eSBTZMHeJexp-WHdA3sVU#v=onepage&q=metaphors%20we%20live%20by%20lakoff%20language%20thought%20and%20culture&f=false

I only engaged with this piece later on in my project, which is surprising, considering its value. Through reading this, I realised my entire conceptualisation of education is a metaphor.

Q: Which metaphors are my ideas surrounding education framed around?

The School I'd like brought many theorists forward, who I then explored the work of…

Lemke, J. L. (2002). *Becoming the Village: Education Across Lives.* **In Wells, G., & Claxton, G. (eds).** *Learning for Life in the 21st Century: Sociocultural Perspectives on the Future of Education*. **[e-book]. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. Retrieved from**
https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/ssostart?redirectUri=/doi/pdf/10.1002/9780470753545.ch3

I found Lemke through *The School I'd like* and was fascinated by the "village" concept. This made me reflect on how as students, our identities are all part of a wider concept. Lemke critiques how we are not taught how to become people in the world, and consequently leave school quite unprepared for the future (p.35).

Q: Have I been conditioned to believe that my grades will determine my future path, when in reality, I am missing the bigger picture?

Kohn, A. (2011). *Feel-bad education: And other contrarian essays on children and schooling*. **[e-book].**
Boston: Beacon Press. Retrieved from
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DadjgCy36ucC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=kohn+education&ot
s=vfDk6IzMYw&sig=eOaUPrXgy7L3kdtyHRXdNTk-1eI#v=onepage&q=kohn%20education&f=false

This reading brought my attention to the fact that going to school and sitting exams is actually only one
aspect of educational life. The reason so little of us think of education in this way, is because our attention
is not drawn to things that are not seen as academic. (p.8.)

Q: Have I only been exposed to one area of education: sitting exams to get grades?

U.S Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. (1999). *The Condition of*
Education. **Washington: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=vH2wvyIWw2cC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=The+condition+of+
education+1999&ots=YZqcCTmG6P&sig=lU5jss-
z5R8t83Z23j9FK4XRK5o&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20condition%20of%20education%201999&f=fals
e

Reading this report, in which individual pupils were reduced and combined into statistics just to be
described as a pattern that had improved or become worse, showed the larger scale, top down approach of
the education system.

Q: How do I feel about being no more than a statistic?

James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing childhood*. **In Jenks, C. (ed). (2005).** *Childhood: Critical*
Concepts in Sociology. **[e-book]. London: Routledge.**

Retrieved from
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=CbproApQsCAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA138&dq=James,+A.,+Jenks
,+C.,+%26+Prout,+A.+(1998).+Theorizing+childhood.+New+York.&ots=ruPNfphK6z&sig=3OqOB1o2LtTntMaf
q8xrjYX9kgE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=James%2C%20A.%2C%20Jenks%2C%20C.%2C%20%26%20Prout%
2C%20A.%20(1998).%20Theorizing%20childhood.%20New%20York.&f=false

Before engaging with this piece, I had rarely thought about my status, my position as a young child in
school. This piece enabled me to reflect on how gaining an identity at such a young age, when we are
influenced by everyone else and do not develop our own opinions, has set me up for a life immersed in this
identity.

Q: Why did my childhood set me up for an education geared towards exams and nothing else?

Woods, P., & Pollard, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Sociology and teaching: A New Challenge for The Sociology of Education*. **[e-book]. London: Routledge. Retrieved from**
https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qHXCDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=Woods,+P.,+%26+Pollard,+A.+(Eds.).+(2017).+Sociology+and+teaching:+a+new+challenge+for+the+sociology+of+education+(Vol.+61).+Routledge.&ots=kSYtl6Qgcs&sig=mxJ7IQpj0oX6Peb5uy4P0Tqt0_U&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

When reading this, I stumbled across a quote that described how I felt perfectly, when discussing a research project: "artificial, … a means to an end, a piece of paper awarded … to prove that he/she have satisfied the examiners" (May & Rudduck, 1983) in (Woods & Pollard, 2017:2)

Q: If this sums up work we do in education, is there any real meaning to it?

Naomi, I would like to explain how I have found this process

Upon entering this module, I knew that throughout my educational life, I have cared immensely about the grades I attain. The thought of the termly school report frightened me, not because I wanted to impress my parents, but because I wanted desperately to not let myself down. Naturally, I put this panic, this anxiety related to academic success down to being a hard worker and a perfectionist. However, in class, it was you who introduced the notion that it might be deeper than this, that my identity might be involved. This, as mentioned above in *Class discussions* really was the start of much self-reflection, reflection that has allowed me to produce this work. Reflection that has stemmed from each *question* introduced above, from the sources I engaged with to help me find my voice.

After much conversation with my friends, I was really set on an educational dystopia. My frustration that resulted from my initial period of reflection had fuelled me up for producing something dark, something bitter – something that screamed at the system: 'THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO US!'. The dystopian idea was initially, that if more and more children think like me, are scared, no - terrified, of the results attained from school, then school showed no hope of being a place of happiness and enjoyment. This dystopian mindset geared me up for a short story. I wanted a story that categorised students into what they were: grades and nothing else. I thought of an evil sorting hat similar to the likes of *Harry Potter* that assigned students to a 'clever' or 'dumb' house, or darker

still, a concentration camp type story, in which people wore their grades on their arms, and were punished for their status.

The story did not feel personal enough. Stories can be broad and general, I wanted mine specific to my own experience. I wanted something more complex than the storyline of 'Children go to school, get assigned as clever or not clever and then consequentially live their life in misery'. Still in the very much dystopian mindset, I decided on a poem. I struggled, though. The irony is, in a module in which we are supposed to not worry about constructing the 'right' piece, the structure of my poem caused much stress. I also found myself determined to chart my unhappy emotions throughout school - year by year, which caused the poem to sound repetitive. It also did not sound realistic, because I can't remember each detail from every school year, and I certainly didn't want to make anything up. I wanted my experience to come through.

It was you who allowed my project to become so much more personal, Naomi. You firstly suggested I change the idea from a poem to a dialogue. This way, structural concerns were disregarded, and I could just say what I wanted. Secondly, you encouraged me to envision one moment in my educational life that I can remember, and to focus my poem around this. And so, my GCSE results day related dialogue was created.

This dialogue took the form of a stream of thought, from before opening the results to after. And this was exactly my thinking process on the day. Had I chosen a short story instead of a poem, the thoughts would be there, but hidden, taken on by other characters. This poem is my own thought process containing my own thoughts. This makes this project so much more meaningful to me.

Concerns arose over the choice of this medium. This project was centralised to my own views, based on my own experience of school. I wondered if this would hinder how relatable my piece would be. After all, I wanted this to appeal not just to anxious students like myself, but anyone. I want this piece to allow discussions to arise surrounding people's own experiences.

I feel that if this project was not personal, however, I would have completely missed the point of Reinventing Education. It is essential that we discuss our own educational journey because this can allow for discussion about everyone else's. Even if someone was to read my project and think the complete opposite about their own time in school, this itself opens up space for discussion. We all have such different ideas about education because we have all walked different paths.

The dialogue itself is miserable. And this is fine, because how I felt was exactly this. But, after completing the dialogue, I asked questions, shown in italics. These short questions might not appear to be much, but they completely changed my project from one that was dystopian in content, to utopian in thought. I truly believe this occurred because I changed "the medium" (McLuhan, 1964) of my piece from a story to a poem. These questions have enabled my view of education to shift throughout the process. I do not believe that a story would have as much space for engaging in questions such as this, as I would focus solely on making the piece dystopian. Yes, I am still angry that my educational life seems so wasted. But I know why, now. I know that it is not my fault that I have spent my life desperate for success, and I forgive myself for the opportunities I missed through only worrying about my school work and in some cases, little else.

As a result of, within the letter to myself, unpacking the emotions expressed in the dialogue, now I see education as not what has been happening in schools, but everything else. Yes, school is one part of my education, but so is the rest of my life experience. I suppose now, my idea of what education is, is not so centralised. It was important to write a letter to myself, not an essay, to explain elements of my dialogue. I was determined to not fall into the trap of an essay, I did not want to worry about how formal I sounded. I wanted to sound like me, to converse, not simply list information. This project is meaningful to me and deserves my attention. I want to be able to re-read this letter, if I am ever doubting my worth as a human because of grades.

I am still concerned about the mark I will gain from this. Envisioning a better life does not mean that this will be enacted straight away. I have spent 12 years building this identity. But now, now I feel I

have allowed myself to be vulnerable, and in this vulnerability, be accepting of ways in which I can think differently about education.

I am proud of this work, and I hope you have enjoyed reading.

Abi

A final thought…

I have hope.

I have hope that someday

The thought of a grade

Will not send my heart into a flurry

My heart won't pound, ready to come

Out of my chest

My body won't freeze

I have hope that one day

I will open the envelope to see the

Grades

For what they are

Numerical, statistical, quantifiable

Measurements of

My effort, my time, my work

But not my education, not my

Learning process.

For this is richer

This cannot simply be reduced to a grade

Learning is living

Learning is not a test

Learning is experiencing the world

Watching it and changing with it

So I hope that someday, Abi

You'll ask me again, what I have learned

Because then

Then I'll be ready

For a discussion worth having.

I may not be ready yet,

If you asked me now

Sitting in front of this work

I would be lying if I told you I wasn't concerned about the grade I'd get

But I have hope.