



**TROUBLING NORMATIVE SCRIPTS OF ADULTHOOD**  
**AN ANTI-NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE OF**  
**INTERGENERATIONAL COHABITATION**

**A thesis submitted by**

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## **Abstract**

Two intersecting social phenomena - the Western world's aging population and affordable housing shortage - have led to a rise in intergenerational cohabitation over the past three decades. Compounded by the neo-liberal retrenchment of the welfare state, a privatised family care economy has emerged. In consideration of such a climate, this research examines the place and dynamics of the intergenerational, cohabiting family and problematises societal narratives that cast cohabiting adult children as 'failure to launch' and 'boomerang.' Accordingly, a central concern of this research is the identity formation of *emerging adults* (Arnett, 2000) and what I term *re-emerging adults*. Seeking to build on the seminal works of (dis)ability and queer theorists, Amy Kilgard (2009), Kathryn Bond Stockton (2009), Elizabeth Freeman (2010), Jack (Judith) Halberstam (2005; 2011; 2014), and Judith Butler (1990; 1993), I bring (dis)ability and queer theory into dialogue with two key evolving sociological concepts: Arnett's (2000) *emerging adulthood*; and the hegemonic neo-liberal construct of the *grand narrative of upwards growth*. In so doing, I reframe (chrono)normative, linear, accumulative and gendered discourses surrounding the liminal period of young adult identity development at macro (structural), meso (family) and micro (individual) levels (Connidis, 2015). I reveal ambivalences (Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998) that are generated and experienced by cohabiting parent/adult child families, and discuss the strategies used to negotiate them. To achieve these aims, this research deploys an anti-narrative approach; a relatively new approach that holds significant utility for studies of this type.

## **Certification of Thesis**

I Sherree Dawn Halliwell declare that the PhD Thesis entitled Troubling Normative Scripts of Adulthood. An Anti-narrative Performance of Intergenerational Cohabitation is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

Endorsed by:

Professor Andrew Hickey

Principal Supervisor

Dr Annette Brömdal

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Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

## Acknowledgements

**Mum:** *“Why are you writing a ‘traditional’ thesis? I’m surprised you’re not doing one of those creative ones.”*

**Me:** *“I’m arfiad if I do it my way tyhe’ll think I’m weird. Tehy wno’t unredstnad it. Waht if tehy dno’t “get it”?”*

**Mum:** *“I think you should be yourself, love. Do it your way”*

I dedicate this project to my mother, Shirley, whose fierce advocacy and unconditional love and support in all aspects of my life has given me the courage to take this leap of faith. I also acknowledge the wisdom and pragmatism of my father, Harold (Hal), to whom I turn for brutal honesty (“If you need reassurance, go to your mother. If you want the truth, come to me.”) My father’s tough love and unbridled pride in my achievements have spurred me on during the many moments of doubt and uncertainty during this project.

My experience co-residing with my parents for a year in my late thirties prompted my return to academia after an 18-year hiatus. It also ignited my interest in intergenerational cohabitation as an area of burgeoning scholarly focus. This thesis is the fulfilment of hopes and aspirations that germinated during a time of significant disruption for our family, and exemplifies our family motto of searching for opportunity in every setback.

I want to thank my partner, Simon, for enduring my nocturnality, moments of near-hysteria, and total abdication of domestic duties. I am deeply indebted to him for his care and diligence in proof-reading this document for unintended numerical and typographical errors. The love, gratitude, and awe I feel for this man transcend time, sanity, and clean dishes.

I thank my friends and creative collaborators at Toowoomba Repertory Theatre for bearing with my erratic directing, producing, and acting during the last frantic weeks before my thesis submission as I simultaneously toiled to bring my adaptation of Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* to the stage.

I recognise the collegiality of Associate Professor Janet McDonald and Travis Dowling of the School of Creative Arts, University of Southern Queensland. I am indebted to them for their important theoretical contribution to this performative thesis.

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## **Prologue**

### ***Scene 1: The Method Actor***

As a long-time aspiring actor and director, I have dedicated much of my childhood and adulthood to studying performance craft. Being a devotee of the Lee Strasberg Method (Strasberg, 1989), my modus of performing calls the character into being by way of performative embodiment, or what Strasberg terms “substitution.” In this way, I attempt to “become” the character rather than “acting as” the character. Professionally I have appeared in several screen formats - TV commercials, television series, movies, and social ‘virals’ – however, my native mode of performance is live theatre. Here, I repeat my performance of a character hundreds of times across a rehearsal/performance period. And in so doing, I call the character into being as a real live human being who thinks, breathes, senses, feels, moves, speaks, acts, and experiences on the stage” (McAllister, 2018). Per Strasberg’s (1989) “method of work” (Strasberg, 1989, p.4), the “work” of the performance consists first of analysing the script and connecting my experiences to those experienced by the character; and second though the repetition of performance, thereby coming to embody and experience the life of the circumstances on stage via mobilisation of affective memory to motivate feelings and movements. To bring characters to life, Strasberg (1941, p.146) advanced a bipartite model of “method acting” that focuses on 1. the “actor’s work on the self”, that is, training of the actor’s sensory imagination to access and recall affective, emotional memories; and 2. the “actor’s work on the role” focusing on the specific scenic material that they must mobilise to give a coherent performance of character. Strasberg’s sessions at the Actors’ Studio involved reflexive repetition of these two fundamental skills. His intention was to train the actor to “live organically

on stage with the same reality as in life” (McAllister, 2018, p.107). As elaborated by Hethmon:

On the stage, it takes the peculiar mentality of the actor to give himself to imaginary things with the same kind of fullness that we ordinarily evince only in giving ourselves to real things. The actor has to evoke that reality on the stage to live fully in it and with it ... In life, the reality exists with or without the participant's awareness. On the stage, it has to be created. (1966, p.p. 198–199).

Hethmon’s (1966) elucidation of the actor’s reflexive and evocative ‘work’ required to make real the character on stage highlights the ontological difference between performed reality and realism. Only through extensive training and repetition of these skills can the actor learn to evoke reality and truly ‘live’ on stage (McAllister, 2018). Indeed, Strasberg reportedly quizzed his students after every presentation with “What were you working for?” (Hull, 1985) to make visible the work of the actor in applying affective memory to the scenic material, thereby manifesting the emotional, sensory experience that precipitates physical action (Strasberg, 1989).

Dad owns himself lost at this point: “I thought you were doing a PhD about adult kids moving back home to live with their parents, not acting?” (Harold Halliwell, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022). I have invited my parents to read the Prologue and Introduction to my thesis to ensure their comfort with my level of divulgation about our family circumstances. However, despite bearing witness to a lifetime of my cognitive tangents, eddies, regressions, and disorientation, Dad cannot comprehend the relevance of this reflection and bids me hurry up and get to the point. He has always been a fellow obsessed with time, never putting off until tomorrow what can be fixed today, always early for appointments, frequently impatient with the

bureaucratic machinery of public institutions, and utterly uncompromising in his dismissal of time-wasting. Which at this point, in his friendly, non-academic lay opinion, I have indulged in for quite long enough. And so, in deference to Dad, I now proceed to ‘lift the curtain’ to show the scholarly intention of my opening monologue and declare the method in my musings.

Theoretically, this *performative thesis*<sup>1</sup> is committed to unsettling what is held as the normative knowledge production in doctoral projects. I utilise an anti-narrative research approach (Riach, Rumens & Tyler, 2014), drawing on Judith Butler’s (1988) performative ontology. In choosing to follow this approach, I acknowledge the role of performativity in creating self-identity, and I seek to ‘undo’ both the normative conditions upon which performances depend and the consequences that follow. Revisiting my opening monologue to illustrate the theoretical potential of this approach, I seek to make visible the ‘work’ involved in identity (character) creation. In the same way that I analyse a character’s beliefs, values, motivations, aspirations and relations to others, society, and self before engaging in performance, this project will examine the ‘work’ that comprises emerging adults’ performances, per Butler’s (1988) conception of performativity<sup>2</sup>. In offering this thesis as a creative performance of personal autoethnographic monologues, societal scripts, and collaborative performances, I aim to create a space of possibilities where oppressive normative constructs are challenged, new understandings of adulthood, time, success, and

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<sup>1</sup> I use this terminology throughout this thesis, invoking the notion of ‘performative writing’ espoused by performance scholars such as Julie Cosenza (2014a, 2014b, 2014c), Deborah Newton (2014), and Amy Kilgard (2009).

<sup>2</sup> As I elucidate in my Literature and Methodology Acts, Butler’s (1988) conception of performativity informs this analysis, which in turn draws on older traditions of inquiry including the works of Irving Goffman and Mikhail Bakhtin. Although I use the language of ‘performance’, ‘performance culture’ and ‘performativity’ throughout this thesis, I do not conflate these concepts. As I elucidate in the Literature Act, Butler’s (1988) performativity as set out in *Gender Trouble*, is distinct from performance theories in that it contests the notion of an a priori ‘subject’/actor that does the performing. Accordingly, and consistent with the Butlerian ontology that informs this work, when I refer to this thesis as performative, I particularly refer to the *work* of *doing* performance.

personal growth are explored, and innovative strategies for performing emerging adulthood emerge.

To further set the stage, I now highlight the central premises upon which this performative thesis is constructed. First, as Carlson (2004) explains, a condition of any performance is the bifurcate symbiosis of the performer/audience relationship<sup>3</sup>, whereby performer and audience are dependent on each other. In a post-modern frame, performance cannot be generated in binary opposition (Fischer-Lichte, 2008). The act of performing destabilises these binary identity and power relations, shifting performance from a work of art for a receptive audience to admire to an event for a constitutive audience to experience and co-create (Román, 1998). I refer to this process as ‘symbiotic performativity.’ As a performer of this work, I invite my audience to join me in this creative endeavour. We are, in this way, co-creators of whatever experiences and meaning this performance generates. Here I am invoking Carlson (2004) and Fischer-Lichte’s (2008, 2014) postmodernist conception of performative culture, which deconstructs the relations of power between performer, audience, and societal context; it highlights the instability of cultural performance as a site of complex, contested liminality where “aesthetic experience and liminal experience coincide” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.177). By presenting this work as a performative thesis I am declaring an intent to provoke and question, without proposing all the answers. I invite my readers to find meaning in the ‘gaps’ and engage me in an Epilogue after the curtain has fallen.

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<sup>3</sup> This notion of performer/audience duality was first elucidated in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and developed by Merleau-Ponty (1945, translated 1996) in his seminal work *Phenomenology of Perception*. In this research project I adopt a pragmatic theoretical perspective that first seeks to understand and make meaning via Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology. I expand on this perspectivisation and theory in my methodology.

Second, framed within Hans Georg Gadamer's (2000) 'historical consciousness' whereby performances are always situated in context and are enactments of a particular reality, I acknowledge the criticality of considering the situational processes, structural requirements and cultural performative conditions of the doctoral degree. My performative style draws inspiration from the artistic tradition of impressionism and its project to develop into an art form its *subjectivity* in the conception and creative expression of *reality*. I am not a creative agitator, activist or avant-garde radical; I hope this performance is provocative, but it is not primarily politically motivated. I invite my readers to join me in this performative space, where I present not only the production in its polished and practised form but also the rehearsals where the subjectivities of emerging adulthood are explored, and the real 'work' of identity creation is done.

Third, as Newton (2014) posits, there is "a close relationship between performance and post-modernism in that it is considered to be a primary unifying mode of the post-modern in respect of its instabilities as a complex, contested, ubiquitous and ephemeral phenomenon" (p.5). Fischer-Lichte (2008, p.177) further elaborates that in "performance, aesthetic experience and liminal experience coincide." Performance has the potential to create liminal experiences (Turner, 1969), which emancipate the audience from conformity to normative thinking and reproduction of terminal binaries. These liminal encounters "stimulate physical, intellectual, social and emotional interactions between all participants, even if their occurrences are not evidently observable" (Newton, 2014, p.p. 5-6). As Watzlawick et al. (1967) argue, you *cannot not* communicate with others, and you *cannot not* react to them. Epistemologically, this thesis seeks to create a liminal space of possibilities

where I and the audience produce a meaning-making system that structures and forms the socio-cultural setting in which it takes place.

### ***Scene 2: Autoethnographic Reflection***

A life-changing event ignited my interest in intergenerational relationships, specifically the cohabiting relationship between parent-child adults. After 15 years of independence, I found myself once again living in the familial home as a full-time caregiver to my father. This outside ‘disruption’ to my life and career plans also prompted such a profound re-evaluation of my notions of success, happiness and fulfilment that I abandoned an auspicious corporate career to pursue personal and professional enlightenment in academia. My academic ‘career’, and more specifically this project, has afforded me remarkable opportunities to reflect on my values, experiences and aspirations. I decided on utilising an anti-narrative approach, in which autoethnographic reflections of my own experiences were to be shared with my research participants as a prompt for inquiry and the construction of shared narrative.

This project explores the significance of cultural, social and economic capital, and in particular, the attainment of financial and residential independence in defining ‘adulthood’; it questions society’s acquisitive and accumulative archetype for a generation of emerging adults whose career and residential opportunities may no longer be linear, thereby ‘undoing’ Western society’s ‘progress’ narrative by exploring what it means to live a ‘successful’ life. Accordingly, this research is prefaced by my reflections on my own life’s trajectory, confronting prevailing narratives of success and the privileging of status, power and wealth accumulation.

As an only child of two British ‘working-class’ parents, I was expected to forge a life and career in my hometown, likely following in the family ‘trade’ of skilled

aircraft engineering. I broke that mould at 16, choosing to forego an engineering apprenticeship to continue my schooling beyond the statutory requirement and, in so doing, becoming the first of my 32 cousins to gain A' Level qualifications. My parents were immeasurably proud when I received my acceptance letter, inviting me to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University. Still, this unexpected honour landed me in frighteningly uncharted territory. Never having travelled further south than Birmingham or spent more than a couple of nights away from my parents, I was now to live over 400 miles away from home. As a young woman from a low socio-economic first-in-family background attending an elite university, I was cognizant that I would find students such as myself vastly under-represented<sup>4</sup> (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009).

That first night alone in my draughty 'Margaret Gray Allen Building' room, I cried myself into a fitful sleep fearing the unknown. At 18, I was chronologically an 'adult', but I had not yet learned how to live independently. My mother had kept the house, and my father had been the sole breadwinner; once I'd demonstrated some surprising academic ability, they'd sheltered me from the responsibilities of adulthood, wanting me to focus entirely on my studies to open up professional opportunities they'd never even dreamt of for themselves. My time at Oxford University marked my emergence as an adult; I worked weekends and throughout the holidays to pay my 'battels'<sup>5</sup>, pedalled myself around the city on my bike, budgeted and shopped for myself, cooked all my (mostly edible) meals and organised my time to achieve my academic and extra-curricular goals. I had learned the mechanics of adult independence, and the fearful 'child' that matriculated in 1998 graduated three years

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<sup>4</sup> Reay et al. (2009) have also argued that working-class students entering elite universities often experience ambivalence, disorientation and marginalisation.

<sup>5</sup> The term used by Oxford University colleges to refer to expenses charged for in-college accommodations.

later as a capable young adult with a degree passport to a myriad of opportunities. However, throughout my university experience and after that in my early career, I struggled to find my fit, or as Reay (2005) coins it, a ‘psychic economy of class’ harmoniously blending original and educationally acquired ‘habitus’ and ‘capital’ (Bourdieu, 1977). Over the next two decades, my career would take me to London, Dallas, Singapore and Sydney. Still, I never quite shook the ‘imposter syndrome’ that accompanied a deficit of emotional capital, or more specifically, the “family emotional assets of confidence, security and entitlement” that are hallmarks of the British middle- and upper classes (Reay, 2005, p. 923).

I also harboured a secret that I have assiduously guarded throughout my academic and corporate careers – I have dyslexia. I was diagnosed with visual dyslexia aged 14, after my mathematics teacher in high school observed an unusual pattern in my mathematics assignments – I could show my workings flawlessly but often produced an incorrect answer. Diagnosis of dyslexia is commonly prompted by a propensity to muddle or misread verbal and/or numerical text (Granger, 2010). Neuropsychologists have identified five different ‘types’ of dyslexia - phonological, rapid naming, double deficit, surface and visual (Neurohealth AH, 2019). Folk like myself with the visual typology of dyslexia tend to find it challenging to remember what they read on a page, even more so if it lacks context. Visual dyslexia affects visual processing such that the brain does not retain a complete picture of what the eyes see. Sequences of letters and numbers might ‘jump about’ or blur on the page, making it difficult to track across lines of text or tables of numbers. Typically, folk with visual dyslexia also suffer headaches and eyestrain associated with reading. Still, like me, they may present at the optician to fix this problem with spectacles, only to find that they have 20:20 vision. Amongst folk with very high intelligence (IQ), vision

dyslexia is often misdiagnosed as dyscalculia, as the symptoms are generally only discernible in (random) number processing (Neurohealth AH, 2019). I process and contextualise text to experience no issues with reading comprehension or sentence formation, albeit I ‘get there’ more slowly than other comparably bright students. Lists of random words or letters such as car number plates often ‘jump about’ and rearrange themselves into new patterns. However, as these are rare banana skins, I typically focus my attention on my comprehension and reproduction of numerical data by double or triple checking my numbers and requesting that others proof my figures before important budget presentations. Upon diagnosis of my dyslexia, I was invited to register for academic ‘special consideration’ (additional time in examinations and ‘allowances’ for correct logic steps incorrectly proven). However, upon the ardent advice of my headmistress, I decided not to pursue this option. Her counsel still rings loudly in my ears whenever I fear exposure of this or any of my other perceived ‘weaknesses’, *don’t give them a reason to say “no.”* Therefore, with intentionality, I describe myself as a scholar “with dyslexia” rather than a “dyslexic scholar.” This critical distinction between claims of *experience* and *identity* is one to which I return in my Methodology Act.

I believe that I inherited my cognitive impairment from my mum (a category of dyslexia referred to as primary developmental dyslexia, which is present from birth and genetically reproduced). She is a savvy, well-read lady who excels in *Chuedo* and chess but put a *Scrabble* board in front of her, and she is discombobulated (25 points). She frequently writes in her daily emails that she has nothing “planed” for the following day, substitutes words with a tilt of the head or flap of the hand when conversing, and recently professed her excitement for the upcoming “squirrel” to Top Gun. Her ‘rapid naming’ type of dyslexia is typified by folk who find difficulty

retrieving the correct word, substituting, or leaving words out altogether, making up nonsense words in place of real words and using gestures in place of words (Neurohealth AH, 2019). Despite 52 years of marriage, my dad is often bewildered in conversations with mum, whereas she and I converse with complete fluency, often incomprehensibly to others. I hardly notice now when she substitutes words and phrases of similar phonetic composition. I have always regarded our special way of communicating as a gift that is uniquely ours and viewed her semantic idiosyncrasies with deep affection. I perhaps inherited my cognitive impairment from my mum, but I did not inherit shame—the affectation of shame I acquired through the academic institutions of my childhood.

For people like myself with non-visible cognitive impairments the onus is on us to declare our non-normative ways of thinking if we require support or allowances to be made. However, beyond simply owning the fact, people with ‘disability’/impairment<sup>6</sup> often feel compelled to explain the origin and impact of their impairment on their daily lives (Kilgard, 2009). Evoking Butler’s “performativity”, McRuler (2006) explains that able-bodiedness is produced by repetition in a compulsory, normative system, rendering disabled bodies non-productive and non-normative. I ponder now whether my reluctance to declare myself as dyslexic in my academic and professional careers has been motivated by an unconscious fear that I might be rendered ‘unintelligible’ as an academic or businesswoman by the regulating, stigmatising narrative of able-bodiedness. Performance of this thesis is the first occasion on which I have publicly acknowledged the cognitive impairment that I have lived with for 42 years; however, per those 42 years, I brook no concessions nor

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<sup>6</sup> Note that I use the term ‘impairment’ in relation to my dyslexia. Having dyslexia impairs my ability to write academically by slowing my reading and imposing additional proofing of my syntax. Still, I am nevertheless ‘able’ to write cohesively and compelling (as I hope this thesis demonstrates).

‘allowances’ in presenting this thesis for my readers’ consideration; I have chosen not to submit myself to the dominant pathologising dyslexia discourse that is framed in the language of deficiency. I choose to internalise my slow reading, writing, and double processing of complex linguistic and numerical ideas as thoughtfulness, rigour, and fastidiousness. Evoking Butler (2004), I acknowledge and allow for my corporeal vulnerability and precariousness. However, the point is not to accept a truth imposed on me by the normalising structures of the academy but to be willing to undergo an experience (Vlieghe, 2014), which, as Butler explains, “has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (Butler, 2004b, p.21, original emphasis).

I immigrated to Australia in 2006, rising to the position of Managing Director of two international businesses. My parents remained in the family home in Anglesey, UK. In early 2016 I was unexpectedly called back to the UK to care for my 73-year-old father as he prepared for a series of life-saving surgeries. In so doing, I returned to live in the family home after 18 years of living independently. Upon returning home, I observed a shift in the familial roles assumed by my parents and myself. My new status as a caregiver was, to a large extent, a reversal of our previous parent/child relationship, conveying to me the power of a decision-maker in most aspects of day-to-day life. Our telephone conversations over the past two decades had been mainly superficial. My return to the family home led to deeper conversations about our hopes and fears for the future and reflections on our shared family history.

In light of our family’s positive experience of intergenerational cohabitation, I constructed a Master’s Degree Research Proposal juxtaposing intergenerational cohabitation as a potential solution to the UK’s affordable housing and graduate

unemployment crises. During that research project, I found conflicts and tensions in my respondents' family relations that contrasted with my overwhelmingly positive experience of returning to the familial home. This led me to investigate norms surrounding emerging adulthood, formation of identity, and intergenerational ambivalences. I was surprised to encounter significant gaps in the theoretical and empirical understanding of these phenomena in the context of intergenerational cohabitation. I also made a further discovery; that although emerging adults' failure to attain residential and financial independence was primarily a result of structural factors rather than a deficit of motivation on their part, they were overwhelmingly labelled 'failures' by society, their families, and even in their own estimation. Their 'failure' to acquire significant financial assets or make progress in their career in the years proceeding school or university stood in opposition to Western Society's success paradigm.

Reflecting on my career to date, I am both a paragon of progress and productivity and a capitalist's conundrum. My linear corporate career progression culminated in my heading up a 150-million-dollar turnover international franchise network at 35 years of age, the youngest Managing Director that Retail Food Group had employed. I am accustomed to being ahead of my time; I squawked into the world a month early, competed against athletes a year older than myself at the Junior British National Athletics Championships, and generally prefer to arrive half an hour early than 5 minutes late for a meeting. At 38, I slid down a metaphorical snake from the very top to the bottom of life's playing board, landing back at square one with an unfamiliar career ladder ahead. For the first time in my life, I felt a sense of being very, very 'late.' This was both a personal orientation and a normative truth, with the median age of female PhD candidates profiled in 2005 being recorded at 31 years of age (Pearson,

Cumming, Evans, MacCauley, & Ryland, 2011). I intentionally contrast myself against a gendered peer group, reflecting on several conversations with ex-colleagues, friends, family and new academic colleagues over the past two years. Innumerable times I have been asked whether I have returned to academia at this ‘late’ stage in life after taking a career break to raise a family. As a never-married, childless, corporate career woman turned academic, my return to academia poses a challenge to structural narratives around fulfilment, happiness and the pursuit of a ‘successful’ life. Family formation, it seems, is the only acceptable reason to deviate from the neo-liberal progress path for women in their late thirties. Reflecting upon this personal experience, I began to speculate whether, from the outset, career expectations are different for today’s young men and women and if the ‘failure’ to achieve normative statuses of adulthood is therefore experienced differently.

This project has afforded me the opportunity to reflect on my own notions of progress, success, and happiness and my ‘performances’ as a first-in-family scholar with dyslexia, corporate businesswoman, and finally as a *semi-retired* (the socially acceptable term that I have assumed) academic. In so doing, I have ‘undone’ my own identity, arriving at a deeper insight and reconciliation of the personal, familial, and social constructs that have influenced my sense of self.

### ***Scene 3: Staging the Performance***

This *performative thesis* employs a style of ‘performative writing’ espoused by performance scholars such as Julie Cosenza (2014a, 2014b, 2014c), Deborah Newton (2014), and Amy Kilgard (2009). Philosophically, theoretically, and methodologically this thesis applies Judith Butler’s (1988, 1990, 1993, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) theory of *performativity*. In common with Conquergood’s conceptualisation (1991), I utilise

performance as a “metaphor, means, and method for thinking about and sharing what is lost and left out of our fieldwork and our texts as well as thinking about how performance complements, alters, supplements, and critiques those texts” (p.191). Intersecting with a queer/dyslexic epistemology, this theoretical approach facilitates a co-constructive meaning-making process between performer and audience. I intentionally leave ‘gaps’ for interpretation that provide for multiple possible readings and multiple possible meanings; and use multi-vocal modes of knowledge creation and expression. As will be expanded in the latter sections, the theoretical perspective that informs the analysis was derived from a pragmatic philosophical orientation that draws on Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology and that works to understand and interrogate the socially constructed norms surrounding intergenerational cohabitation.

Stylistically, I honour this theoretical frame by adopting a performative metaphor throughout this thesis, styling chapters as ‘Acts’ and main chapter sections as ‘Scenes.’ In common with theatrical productions, the staging of this thesis requires significant ‘work’ prior to the performance itself. The Introduction Act sets the scene, painting the director’s vision for the performance, establishing the background and context, and scaffolding and constructing the research questions that inform this research. The stage thus constructed; the Literature Review Act next outlines the scripts that inform the story. Themes are rehearsed, discussed and subjected to critical examination. In the Methodology Act the actors are cast, their character roles clearly defined, and the ‘method’ of rehearsals developed and planned. The three Performance Acts constitute the main performance; I spotlight my actors (research participants), creatively collaborating with them to bring to life their stories.

In the first of my Performance Acts I present a co-creative ‘collage.’<sup>7</sup> Evoking Brockelman’s (2001) description of collage as “an art of crisis—an art in perpetual crisis” (p.35), this performance disrupts normative structures of academic writing. As Kilgard (2009) elucidates, the collage presentation mode produces a “contested space” of “possibilities for critical intervention in... the social world” (p.3). This “contested space” is otherwise conceptualised by Perloff (1983) as “mise en question” (p.10), which translates as being open to question. This reflexive challenge is extended to both collage-makers and the audience.

The second Performance Act takes the form of a documentary script highlighting a case study of James Schilling<sup>8</sup>, a 39-year-old-man who originally fit the category of ‘boomeranger.’ During the course of my research project, James re-established his residential independence and invited me to follow his story as he re-established himself in a new home, new employment and new relationship. I invoke Lather’s (1991) and McMullin’s (2018) scholarship on the epistemological orientation of *tales* to support my choice to make visible the work done by James to account for himself, honouring his wish for his “voice to be heard, unfiltered, untwisted and unobscured.” I reproduce James’ interview excerpts alongside a juxtaposed ‘commentary’ of the contextual analysis of James’ first two interviews during his period of intergenerational cohabitation, analysis from email correspondence between myself and James, and my reflections on James’ present state of *becoming*. This is articulated in ‘lay’ terms per documentary convention, extending my commitment to “decolonising knowledge production, pedagogy and praxis” from the position of “betweenner” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 19).

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<sup>7</sup> The ‘Collage’ method is comprehensively outlined in the Methodology Act.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudonym.

In the third of my Performance Acts I collaborate with Stewart Limpus<sup>9</sup> to produce an essay intended to be developed for future scholarly publication. We present this Performance Act as a collaborative autoethnography (CAE)<sup>10</sup> in the form of a collage. Our essay is rendered as an assemblage of co-constructed autoethnographic reflections, pieced together with poems, illustrations and multivocal analyses that draw on Butlerian performativity, queer temporalities and interpretive disability studies. We identify and explore how our respective cognitive impairments and shared situatedness as mature-aged, ex-professional, non-economically productive “students” have informed our identity development within academe.

Directorial notes are supplied throughout the thesis (as per an official production programme) in the form of autoethnographic reflections and interpretive turns. These are intended to provoke, question and clarify the ‘direction’ of my thinking. In the Concluding Thoughts Act that follows, the primary performance is subject to critique and meaning-making in the hope of strengthening the production and perhaps creating an enduring creative legacy. A brief Epilogue concludes the production by suggesting possible ways for the show to run on. So, with the stage now set, the curtain raised, spotlights shining, and the actors in the wings, let the show commence.

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<sup>9</sup> Real name supplied per the participant’s request, as elaborated in the Methodology.

<sup>10</sup> As this collage is intended for development into a standalone paper for publication, I discuss the specific methodological and ethical implications of the Collaborative Autoethnographic (CAE) method in this Performance Act rather than in the Methodology Act (to avoid repetition).

## **Act 1 Introduction – Setting the Scene**

### ***Scene 1: The Rise of Intergenerational Cohabitation***

Two intersecting social phenomena - the Western world's aging population and affordable housing shortage<sup>11</sup> - have led to a rise in intergenerational cohabitation over the past three decades. Compounded by the neo-liberal retrenchment of the welfare state, a privatised family care economy has emerged (Harvey, 2005; Niggle, 2003; Bauman, 2007). This has triggered new debate surrounding evolving social interactions within family networks, with particular emphasis on financial, physical and social care exchanges inherent to these networks. In such a climate, 'old' social networks and expressions of *communitas* give way to marketised logics that "saps the social foundations of social solidarity" (Bauman, 2007, p.2); a situation that Niggle (2003) argues emerges when "society is seen as the collectivity of ... atomistic, self-seeking individuals, competing for survival, power, wealth and prestige" (p.60).

With consideration of such a climate and changing domestic sphere, this project will examine the place and dynamics of the intergenerational, cohabiting family. In the situation of intergenerational cohabitation, these conditions are keenly felt in terms of broader societal expectations for the cohabiting adult-child to 'leave' the home, fulfil aspirations of adult independence and become a 'contributing' member of society. In this thesis, I seek to reframe normative, linear and gendered discourses surrounding emerging adulthood at macro (structural), meso (family) and micro (individual) levels (Connidis, 2015) to reassess current discussions on the place of

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<sup>11</sup> See: The Australian Population Research Institute, Research Report, July 2018 'Immigration and the Housing Affordability Crisis in Sydney and Melbourne' Birrell & Healy.

intergenerational cohabitation and assumptions surrounding existing family structures.

Two general conditions typical of late-capitalist ‘neo-liberal’ (Harvey 2005) society contextualise intergenerational cohabitation. First, the burgeoning number of dependent elderly people in Western society represents a demographic ‘ticking time bomb’ for the welfare state compounded by a scaling-back of aged-care resources (Kendig & Bridge, 2007), wherein increased levels of interdependence between family members as carers are required to provide this care (Huber & Skidmore, 2003). The second corresponds with systemic forces propelling younger generations<sup>12</sup> towards intergenerational cohabitation. Rugg, Rhodes and Wilcox (2011) observe that social welfare provisions for young people have been declining over the past three decades, with most housing and unemployment benefits now restrictive for young single adults<sup>13</sup>. Arundel and Ronald (2016) explain that across varied European contexts, levels of residential independence and semi-dependence (shared living arrangements) amongst emerging adults are explained in part by welfare regime contexts and availability of affordable rental accommodations. In this context, Berrington and Stone (2014, p.211) argue that residential independence for young people has emerged as ‘nonlinear’, a phenomenon also referred to as ‘non-chrononormative’ (Freeman, 2010), wherein broader socio-economic conditions, including the lack of affordable housing, loss of employment or marriage dissolution necessitate a return to the parental home, and by virtue, a deferral from expected life-courses.

Although the causes of intergenerational cohabitation have been studied in depth since the 1980s, the prevailing views of scholarship in this field through the 1980s and

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<sup>12</sup> Definitions of terminology are included in Appendix A.

<sup>13</sup> Extant literature examines the socio-economic/class implications of the lack of affordable housing and declining welfare provisions, particularly as it relates to the intergenerational cohabitation phenomenon. See for example Rugg, Rhodes and Wilcox, 2011; Burn & Szoek, 2016.

1990s suggested that intergenerational cohabitation tended to be prompted by the elderly generation's failing health, as was the case with my own return to the family home (Mickus, Stommel & Given, 1997). Research has positioned this caring support within a framework of reciprocal solidarity over the familial lifecycle (Bucx, van Wei, Knijn & Hagendoorn, 2008), wherein the support required by an elderly family member corresponds with the economic amenity of shared housing for the caring younger generations. Recent studies in Europe, Australasia, and the US (Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013) have also considered the financial, social, and psychological impacts of these arrangements, typically from the older generation's perspective.

More recent studies have, however, identified a further implication; the increasing incidence of young adults remaining in the familial home or returning after a period of independence (Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder & Jang, 2015; Schwarts & Ayalon, 2015; Burn & Szoek, 2016; Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019). In these cases, adult children are the catalyst for intergenerational cohabitation, with the principal rationale for cohabitation deriving from economic and employment-based factors; that is, the young person requires the family home as a domestic base (Kahn, Goldscheider, & García, 2013). Much of the recent literature on what is popularly referred to as 'boomeranging' (Hill & Bosick, 2017) and 'failure to launch'<sup>14</sup> (Kins & Beyers, 2010) details the nature of this phenomenon, with concerns regarding the non-chrononormative progression of young people towards adulthood, economic independence, housing attainment and a general nature of socio-economic

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<sup>14</sup> This study uses the terms 'failure to launch' and 'boomerang'/'boomeranger' in the Introduction, Methodology and Literature Review Acts due to the prevalence of these terms in scholarship and popular culture. However, in 'Directorial Note (2) Emergence of Affirming Language' I propose an alternative terminology that removes the infantilising inference of 'children' as meaning pre-adulthood and the pejorative connotations of 'failure.'

independence in developed nations contextualising these arguments (see also Burn & Szoeki, 2016; Merten et al., 2018).

At the micro (personal) level, phenomena including the ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang child’ indicate the ways that intergenerational cohabitation are conceptualised in widespread usage, with the adult child remaining in or returning to the familial home generally presented as a deviation from the desired norms associated with a successful trajectory towards adulthood. Only a handful of studies have challenged these assumptions (see Burn & Szoeki 2016), despite the increasingly common incidence of intergenerational cohabitation between parents and young adults aged 18-29. The 2019 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) reported a systemic increase in the incidence of intergenerational cohabitation over the past 16 years: “In 2001, 47.2% of men aged 18 to 29 and 36.5% of women aged 18 to 29 were living with their parents, while in 2017, 56.4% of men and 53.9% of women in this age range were living with their parents” (p.112). A Finder.com.au survey conducted in May 2020<sup>15</sup> found that one in four households in Queensland now has adult children living at home, over a third of them “returning to the nest” (reported in *The Chronicle realestate*, Tilley, 2020, p. 39) due to changed economic circumstances under COVID-19. Finder’s personal finance expert commented:

From young professionals who have lost their jobs, to expatriates returning from overseas, COVID-19 has had a negative financial impact on many Aussies. Some have no choice but to move back in with mum and dad. Others may have also moved back home to help their older parents during

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<sup>15</sup> Finder.com.au survey found that close to 330,000 adult children moved back in with their parents due to the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

lockdown. There are some very vulnerable people in the community, so having the option to move in with family and help out around the house is a good thing. Many adult kids are returning to their childhood bedrooms, setting up workstations in the dining room and asking, ‘what’s for dinner?.’ While some parents will be delighted to have kids move back in, whether they can handle an increase in the energy, water and food bill remains to be seen. (Tilley, 2020, p.p. 38-39)

Australia Bureau of Statistics data shows that nearly 11 per cent of workers in their twenties lost work between 14 March and 2 May 2020, compared to six per cent of those in their thirties and four per cent of workers in their forties. Without the economic resources to support themselves through this period of unemployment, many younger adults have been forced to return to live with their parents. This highlights a significant ‘lag’ between the real and perceived norms pertaining to the experience of intergenerational cohabitation.

Under chrononormative temporality, a successful life course is always ‘progressing’ and productive. Individuals who are out of step with productivity norms are expected to ‘recalibrate’ and try to keep up by synchronising to the ideals of neoliberalism, namely, the undertaking of a career and formation of one’s own distinct nuclear family (Sharma, 2011, p.442). In turn, neoliberalism invests in the most ‘productive’ members of society, whose efficient utilisation of cultural capital, habitus and time most positively enhance the economy and modes of consumption. Literature concerning the circumstances in which adult children have remained or returned to the familial home is generally couched negatively (Burn & Szoeké, 2016). Factors commonly cited include the decreasing availability of jobs and affordable housing, the breakdown of traditional family structures and values (single-parenthood and ease of

divorce), attitudes towards social benefit entitlements, and the declining preparedness to deal with life's challenges (Burn & Szoeki, 2016; Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2019.) The stigma and dependency surrounding the circumstances in which adult children find themselves residing with their parents are important influences on the intergenerational relationship (e.g., Hartley, 1994; Kolko, 2002).

In 2016 Burn and Szoeki published a literature review of 15 years' worth of academic studies<sup>16</sup> of 'boomerang' and 'failure to launch' children and their parents. Their review identified the key factors contributing to adult children remaining or returning to the familial home. Economic pressure was a key factor driving the phenomenon, with costs associated with higher education, renting or buying property, relationship breakdown, unemployment or low salaries providing the rationale for adult children returning to the family home. However, the review also highlights a fundamental difference in 'failure to launch' versus 'boomerang' children, namely, the higher stakes associated with the circumstances surrounding *returning*. Adult children who chose to stay in the family home typically did so because it offered security during a period of their life that was changing and uncertain. Children returning to the family home were usually prompted to do so by a traumatic life event, such as retrenchment from employment, divorce or ill health.

Parents of 'boomerang' and 'failure to launch' children often experience their own feelings of deep disappointment. Burn and Szoeki comment: "The return of a child to the family home can herald a decline in wellbeing for parents, as poorly defined roles and the desire for independence fuels conflict" (2016, p.2). The urge to nurture and guide can rewind an adult/adult relationship to one of parent/child babying. In many of the studies referenced by Burn and Szoeki (2016), the

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<sup>16</sup> Review involved 20 million people worldwide.

unintentional slippage back into a parent/child babying relationship causes significant friction, conflict and resentment. The inherent inequality of parent/child relationships encourages further manifestations of child dependency, such as requiring ‘pocket money’ for everyday expenses. This dependency, in turn, fuels the child’s sense of failing and leads to frustration and anxiety. Studies focused on ‘boomerang’ and ‘failure to launch’ families have examined intergenerational cohabitation's socio-economic causes and effects. However, despite its increasing prevalence, no studies have explored and challenged the underlying chrononormative, neo-liberal trajectories that produce societal norms about the ‘right time’ for emerging adults to attain statuses such as financial independence employment, and family formation. Neither have there been intergenerational ambivalence studies of ‘boomerang’ and ‘failure to launch’ family relationships in Australia. This project seeks to address these gaps.

Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) first introduced the idea of intergenerational ambivalence to acknowledge the coexistence of contradictory sentiments, perceptions and forces in *family* relationships. These contradictions may be experienced on an *individual* level between family members, family level concerning the family’s interactions with their wider community, or *structural* level, whereby social forces exert competing pressures on family life (Connidis & McMullin, 2002). Lüscher and Hoff (2013) note that during the late 2000s intergenerational ambivalence has increasingly been applied in intergenerational studies (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman et al., 2008). These studies have focused on either the cohabiting parent/child relationship, or adult/adult non-cohabiting relationships. Few studies have focused on the cohabiting intergenerational relationship in which adult children care for aging parents (Jacobs, 2003; Wilson, Shuey & Elder, 2003; Obradovic & Cudina-Obradovic, 2004; Pridalova, 2007; Duner & Nordstrom, 2007).

Whilst ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ intergenerational cohabitation have been overlooked within the ambivalence literature, recent research has consistently implicated the failure of children to attain normative adult statuses in creating ambivalent family ties (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2006; Pillemer et al., 2007). Dissimilarities in generational values, as one prominent factor in this dynamic, have contributed to ambivalence in both generations (Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman et al., 2008). Indeed, factors such as the inter-personal level dynamic at work in the intergenerational home setting highlight how ambivalence corresponds across domains to influence economic, social and interpersonal values.

An important theme in the contemporary literature as it pertains to this study highlights the tension between expectations and ‘disappointment’ as a key correlate of ambivalence. For example, Descartes (2006) found that when adult children require support from parents beyond the expected stage of independence, ambivalence is experienced by both generations. In their *Decade Review of Aging and Family Life* (2010), Silverstein and Giarrusso acknowledge research (e.g. Pillemer et al., 2007) that identifies parents’ unmet expectations as a source of parental ambivalence toward adult children. This is characterised as disappointment at the lack of independence achieved by adult children who have failed to ‘thrive.’ Lendon, Silverstein and Giarrusso (2014, p.274) state that: “The most theoretically interesting individual characteristics associated with ambivalence in intergenerational relations are those that imply need, impairment, or dependence.” Issues that place adult children at the dependency on their parents, such as career difficulties, divorce and poor health choices, have been found to correlate strongly with feelings of parental ambivalence (Fingerman et al., 2008; Wilson, Shuey & Elder, 2003). This literature is significant to this study. It points to a prevailing, dominant conceptual construct around the

intergenerational cohabiting family, which regulates, stigmatises and shames the adult-child and casts normative aspirational traits geared directly to ‘consumption’ and ideals of independence. This project seeks to explicate these concepts to explain the complexity of intergenerational cohabitation.

This study responds to prominent calls for further research to investigate how ambivalence connects the “internal dynamics, mixed emotions, and contradictory behaviour of family members and relationships to the contradictions of social, cultural, political, and economic arrangements and dynamics: the interactive micro–meso–macro connection” (Connidis, 2015, p.78.). A central concern of this study is to explore how societal norms govern how intergenerational cohabitation, as popularly understood in the form of ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ families, renegotiate normative family ties and the social network of domestic habitation in Australia.

Scholars of intergenerational cohabitation have overlooked norms around gender performativity (Butler, 1988, 1993). Non-chrononormative development is framed differently by gender in many popular representations, and in framing the discourse at a structural level, which this study seeks to address, the ways that gender formulates the respective experience of female and male adult offspring may provide a clue for understanding prevailing assumptions surrounding adult success and progression. For this study, gender performativity relates to Judith Butler’s articulation of gender identity formation (Butler, 1988, 1993, 2000, 2004), whereby individuals ‘perform’ their identities against normative paradigms. This study further extrapolates the concept of performativity to understand how ‘boomerang’ and ‘failure to launch’ offspring craft their performances in response to norms relating to the idea of a ‘successful’ transition to adulthood.

This research project deploys an innovative anti-narrative approach that holds significant utility for a study of this type (Riach, Rumens & Tyler, 2014). Anti-narrative takes as its focus the performative re-telling of the ‘lived experience’ of participants and deriving an ethnographic concern for the contextualisation of personal experience in everyday routines and lifeways, provides capacity for capturing ‘rich’ accounts. Butler’s *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) is the foundation for Riach et al.’s (2016) anti-narrative research approach, which provides the most fully developed conceptualisation of how narrative operationalises self: “I come into being as a reflexive subject only in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself” (Butler, 2005, p.15). As Riach et al. (2016, p.2076) explain: “narrative is framed as a process of organisation through which the desire for recognition of oneself as a viable, coherent self is both compelled and constrained.”

By narrating ourselves in a way that conforms to the constraining societal norms, we win recognition, coherence, and intelligibility for ourselves. However, as Riach et al. (2016) elucidate, the capability of a subject to produce a coherent narrative and thus give an account of an ethically viable Self becomes conflated in the construction of Self as a performative narration. Their anti-narrative approach emphasises how narrative by Butler’s account is an ontological premise rather than an epistemic position or theoretical perspective. The methodological implication for anti-narrative interviewing is that narratives are regarded as guises of coherence that research participants are compelled to performatively narrate, rather than mechanisms by which participants construct or impose meaning on organisational subjectivities. As McDonald (2017) explains, “participants’ narratives are not seen as stories about themselves, but rather stories about how they account for themselves and the constitution of their subjectivities” (p.142). Therefore, a crucial function of anti-

narrative interviewing is to ‘undo’ the performative coherence of the participants’ narratives and by extension, challenge the normative conceptions of living that they had come to assume as ‘failure to launch’ or ‘boomerang’ individuals, opening up a modality of interviewing that anticipates alternatives and extends conceptions of Self. This anti-narrative approach, as applied in this project, is detailed further in the Methodology and Discussion Acts of this thesis.

### *Scene 2: Research Questions*

The key research questions that will drive the inquiry outlined here include:

1. What discourses inform a successful ‘adulthood’ in contemporary Australia?
  - a. How do chrononormative subjectivities shape the experience of emerging adults?
  - b. How are ideas of personal success informed by neo-liberal progress, growth and status trajectories?
  - c. How are intergenerational ambivalences generated, experienced and negotiated in ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ families?
2. In what ways can an anti-narrative mode of enquiry contribute to the field of intergenerational studies?

Mobilised by an anti-narrative ethnography, these questions are informed by the conceptualisation of chrononormative intergenerational cohabitation outlined above, in conjunction with the extant literature on the socio-economic structures of family networks as these predominantly appear in developed, ‘Western’ contexts. This study’s findings offer a contribution to knowledge in the following ways:

*Empirically:* First, this study will provide critical new data on cohabiting intergenerational relationships, focusing on ‘boomerang’ and ‘failure to launch’ households. Second, this study will determine how the experiences, values, and expectations of the older generation, whose politics greatly inform societal norms, have influenced and continue to influence their children's identities.

*Theoretically:* This project will present an alternative interpretation of *emerging adulthood* by challenging linear norms of progression and productivity through a ‘queer’ reading of this increasingly liminal period in young adults’ lives. This research will also extend the theoretical understanding of intergenerational ambivalence by responding to Connidis’ (2015) call for research examining multiple ambivalences at the macro, meso and micro levels.

*Methodologically:* This study adopts an anti-narrative approach that holds significant utility for studies such as this and which seek to understand the ‘subjectivities’ that influence people’s beliefs and behaviours. Anti-narrative focuses on re-telling the ‘lived experience’ of participants and deriving an ethnographic concern for the contextualisation of personal experience in everyday routines and lifeways, providing capacity for capturing ‘rich’ accounts.

*Social Policy and Narratives:* This study has implications for social policymakers currently grappling with a significant shortage of affordable housing and the increasing burden of aged care. Insights from this research will be critical in formulating policies that support intergenerational cohabitation to manage these intersecting social crises. This study will also call for new narratives which challenge linear trajectories associated with young people’s transition to adulthood and normalise intergenerational cohabitation as a pragmatic step towards independence.

## **Act 2 Literature Review - Scripts on *Emerging Adulthood*, Personal Growth, and (Re)negotiation of Adult Intergenerational Relationships in the Age of Insecurity**

This Act examines the social theory that explores the liminal period of early adulthood. First, I describe the theoretical move from traditional markers of adulthood to more conceptually fluid understandings of this life stage. And second, I leverage queer theory to trouble normative neo-liberal constructs of a ‘successful’ transition to, and performance of ‘adulthood’, thereby expanding notions of queer growth, queer time, and performativity beyond gender and sexual orientation. In so doing, I seek to build on the seminal works of Eve Sedgwick (1994), Kathryn Stockton (2009), Elizabeth Freeman (2010), Jack (Judith) Halberstam (2005; 2011; 2014) and Judith Butler (1990; 1993), bringing queer theory into dialogue with two key evolving sociological concepts: Arnett’s (2000) *emerging adulthood*; and the hegemonic neo-liberal construct of the *grand narrative of upwards growth*.

### ***Scene 1: Emerging Adulthood***

Over the past several decades, significant social and economic changes in many Western countries have delayed young people’s transition to adulthood (see Arnett, 2000, 2015; Pace et al., 2016; Piotrowski et al., 2018; Crocetti et al., 2015). However, as argued by Mitchell and Lennox (2020), “there is a paucity of research critically examining how macro-level discourses of adulthood inform and reflect young peoples’ subjective understandings of themselves as adults” (p.214). In Australia, where this research is sited, the age at which a person is legally classified as an adult is 18. Legally, a person transitions from childhood to adulthood upon reaching this chronological milestone, regardless of their mental or physical facility, relationship

status, economic capital, or accommodations. However, despite this categorical legal distinction, it is widely accepted that there exists between the two states of being a liminal period that straddles these boundaries, which in common parlance is referred to as adolescence. As Waller (2009) has demonstrated, adolescence, which exists “as ‘other’ to adulthood, but also ‘other’ to childhood” (p.6), is a transitory time where markers of both childhood and adulthood may be present and where normative expectations are suspended and transgressions accepted (Waller, 2009; Trites, 2014). The acceptability of such transgressions as normative characteristics of ‘growing up’ marks this period as distinct from and precipitate to adulthood.

For this reason, adolescence is not a primary concern of this research project. I seek to reveal precisely the intergenerational cohabiting young adult’s negotiation of societal normative expectations (and conditions) of ‘adulthood.’ In following the chronological convention of classifying persons as ‘adults’ 18 years and above, I am cognizant that I may encounter individuals whose oscillation between markers of childhood and adulthood tends more toward a sociological classification of ‘adolescence.’ Therefore, participant self-identification as “an adult” is a fundamental tenet of my analysis, as elucidated in the Methodology section of this thesis. My utility of Arnett’s (2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2018, 2019) terminology, *emerging adulthood*, is used purely as an analytical frame; one which I did not share with my participants, but that nevertheless remained central to this research. Arnett’s conception of emerging adulthood usefully crystallises a phenomenon that has seen the boundaries between childhood and adulthood increasingly blurred over the past 50 years, as I now elucidate.

Jones (2000) defines ‘adulthood’ as the culmination of three inter-related social transitions - from education to employment, independent living, and family

formation. Indeed, public discourses on adulthood in Westernised culture have remained consistent for decades, despite a broad scholarly agreement that adulthood is a social construct predicated on time and place (see, for example, Mitchell, 2007; Mary, 2014; Arnett, 2015; Panagakis, 2015). As Mitchell and Lennox (2020) argue, the academic literature pertaining to childhood to adulthood transitions increasingly paints a picture of a more ambiguous, unpredictable, and extended period in a young adult's life (Flynn, 2020; Mitchell, Wister, Li, and Wu, 2020). Furlong and Cartmel (2006) agree that the traditional conception of adulthood no longer holds in 21<sup>st</sup> century Westernised societies; and they present a compelling metaphor for child to adult transitions of the past, likening them to train journeys where the public embark and disembark collectively at fixed points in time and place. In this universalised model of child to adult transition, passengers are herded on and off the train to change track or alight at regulated and routine points, always running to schedule and with a pre-ordained destination. In contrast with the universal 'train journey' markers of youth transition, Furlong and Cartmel (2006) used the 'car travel' metaphor to describe the increasingly individualised youth transitions of the 1990s, where the route and schedule could be entirely different personalised.

Taking up this metaphorical frame of travel, sociologists such as Ingold (2007), Jeffrey (2010), Leccardi (2018), Karlin (2019), Berlant (2011) and Cuzzocrea (2020) have variously employed travel or space metaphors to characterise twenty-first-century youth transitions as delayed, stuck, off track, broken down, or disrupted. Karlin (2019) uses the metaphor 'wayfaring' to describe the experiences of new graduates tentatively making their way in the world, whereas Berlant (2011) and Cuzzocrea (2020) trouble the notion of youth *transition* entirely. Berlant's "doggy-paddling around in a space whose contours remain obscure" (p. 199) contains the same

urgency, reactivity, and immediacy as Cuzzocrea's (2020) metaphor of a pinball to describe early adulthood in the twenty-first century, where ideas of progression and achievement are eschewed by young adults who are consumed by the immediacy and urgency of merely keeping the ball in motion regardless of direction. It is clear from these characterisations of twenty-first-century youth transition that chronological age boundaries have continued to blur between childhood and adulthood, and traditional markers of adulthood such as financial independence, own family formation and homeownership have begun to lose their discriminatory power.

In their review of Berlant's (2011) writings about capitalist America, Thomson and Østergaard (2021) note that in Western societies, including Northern Europe, where they site their young adult research project, it is time to put the skewer to "upward social mobility, job security, equality and durable intimacy as so many 'fraying fantasies' increasingly unavailable to the majority of the population irrespective of self-belief and determination" (p. 435). Berlant (2011) encourages ethnographers to consider that young adults in contemporary times chart a "life without guarantees" (p.192) developing and transitioning in conditions that are no longer complicit with the grand narrative of upwards, compulsory progress. Beck's (1992) 'age of insecurity' thesis contrasts the 'job for life' era of the Baby Boomers' early to mid-adulthood with the more transient, temporary, and temperamental working conditions faced by today's young adults. Kahn, Goldscheider and Garcia (2013) suggest that, although adult-offspring are responsabilised for intergenerational cohabitation and portrayed by society as fecklessly enjoying the financial benefits of living at home, cohabitation has increased because of the long-term decline in social welfare that has produced very restrictive housing and unemployment benefits. O'Higgins (2012) similarly attributes the growth of this type of cohabitation to

structural factors and argue that this is part of a neo-liberal retrenchment of the welfare state. This retrenchment has resulted in the provision for family social care being transferred back from the state to the family, with family members increasingly having to shoulder this residential burden. Newman argues that “the generations that have been lucky enough to buy into an affordable housing market, that enjoyed stable jobs for decades, find they must open their arms (and houses) to receive these economic refugees back into the fold” (2012, para 20).

Burn and Szoeki (2016) suggest that the portrayal of adult-offspring as personally failing to achieve independence has seldom been challenged. This contributes to parents of ‘boomerang’ and ‘failure to launch’ offspring experiencing feelings of deep disappointment. Mitchell and Lennox (2020) note that despite the changing structural conditions that limit young adults’ ability to attain the traditional markers of adulthood, public discourses remain “dominantly informed by a linear benchmark perspective” (p.216). As Mitchell and Lennox (2020) explain, this is epitomised in popular culture by the self-help genre of publications, such as Furman’s (2005) *Boomerang Nation: How to Survive Living with Your Parents...the Second Time Around*, Isay’s (2008) *Walking on Eggshells: Navigating the Delicate Relationship Between Adult Children and Parents*, Carrick’s (2012) *How Not to Move Back in with Your Parents: The Young Person’s Guide to Complete Financial Empowerment*, and McConville’s (2020) *Failure to Launch: Why Your Twentysomething Hasn't Grown Up...and What to Do about It*. Similarly, there has been a marked focus on main characters in Hollywood movies who live with their parents or grandparents long after attaining chronological adulthood. Social media commentator ‘yerblues’ (2015) presents a list of 39 such American movies theatrically released between 1995 and 2015, including the blockbusters, *The Royal Tenenbaums*

(2001), *Failure to Launch* (2006), *Step Brothers* (2008) and *Jeff, Who Lives at Home* (2011). Mitchell and Lennox (2020) explain that although such discourses may take a sympathetic tone, they nevertheless reinforce and idealise the traditional markers of adulthood and frame the societal and economic conditions faced by cohabiting young adults and problems to be overcome with hard work. Indeed, the centrality of ‘work’ within these discourses is, as Bauman (1998) argues, “the main orientation point, in reference to which all other life pursuits could be planned and ordered” (p. 7)

Halliwell and Ackers (2021) contextualise this dominant structural discourse by highlighting its neo-liberal ideological underpinnings, which privilege economic productivity and responsibility. As Foucault (2008, 2012) explains, neo-liberalism is a political ideology that merges the social and economic spheres to reduce state investment in state provisions, shifting the responsibility for economic and financial viability onto the individual subject body “in the sense that subjects are increasingly conceived and conceive themselves as entrepreneurs of the self, who attempt to maximise their human capital” (Oksala, 2015, para. 17). It is a “philosophy and ideology that affects every dimension of social life” (Giroux, 2004, p.70), and as Bourdieu contests, is “so strong and so hard to combat only because it has on its side all of the forces of a world of relations of forces, a world that it contributes to making what it is” (Bourdieu, 1998, para. 4). Bauman (1998) explains that work ethic within this context is not an individualised concept but rather a social value conferring dignity and status within one’s community. Extrapolated to the individual level of agency, neo-liberalism also functions as what Rose and Miller conceptualise as “a mentality of government” (Rose, 1992, p.145) which entails a “reorganisation of programmes of personal lives” (Rose and Miller, 1992, p.198). Rose (1992) explains that this philosophy of individualisation produces a form of governance that we see in Western

democracies, which “have always been concerned with internalising their authority in citizens through inspiring, encouraging and inaugurating programmes and techniques that will simultaneously ‘autonomise’ and ‘responsibilise’ subjects” (p.162). Individualising the relationship between the state and its citizens privileges independence and responsibility, putting it beyond the reach of many young adults who remain dependent on and responsible to their parents. Per Barry, Osbourne and Rose (1996), neo-liberal government “does not seek to govern through ‘society’, but through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualisation and self-fulfilment” (p.41). As I demonstrate later in this Act, whilst the period of *emerging adulthood* is synonymous for many young adults with the pursuit of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment, it is not through the accumulation of financial resources and economic productivity that these ‘choices’ are enacted. Neither are these choices made economically independently of parental and state support as prescribed by the neo-liberal success paradigm.

In her study of the enactment of feminist principles within American universities, Misra (1997) observes that students increasingly reject ideologies that mobilise collectives because they “have difficulty seeing beyond the individualistic explanations of ‘success’ and ‘failure’” (p.279). Similarly, Weingarten and Wellershoff (1999) argue that young adults regard structural inequalities as individual problems to be overcome. Rich (2005) presents a similar finding from an empirical research project in the UK, where students emphasised that personal achievement and responsibility must be sufficient to overcome structural barriers to success. These dominant individualistic ideologies of success are, as Bauman (2000) argues, endemic of a broader societal process of individualisation. Seen through this lens, the increasing

phenomenon of intergenerational cohabitation is counter-cultural to the prevailing neo-liberal paradigm. Mitchell and Lennox (2020) concur that Canadian news media has framed intergenerational cohabitation as an acceptable choice only when pursued as part of a strategy of attaining or building toward financial independence. They present an excerpt from the Toronto Star (2017) to exemplify this discourse:

Nobody...who lives with mom and dad is especially proud of this fact, but there's a shared understanding among a lot of millennial Torontonians that desperate times call for desperate measures. And choosing to live under your parents' roof well into your 20s is, for many people, their only shot at saving aggressively and one day owning a property of their own. In other words, it's the least lazy, loser-ish thing a person can do (Mitchell and Lennox, 2020, p.227).

Highlighting the judgemental tone of "loser-ish" characterisations of young adults in dominant societal discourses, Halliwell and Ackers (2021) and Mitchell and Lennox (2020) further show that there exists a more pervasive and insidious discourse, mainly directed by the 'Baby Boomer'<sup>17</sup> generation towards their cohabiting offspring, which "masks structural barriers blocking young peoples' transitions to adulthood and portrays them as thoughtless, self-obsessed generations who lack the grit and drive to make it in the way previous generations did" (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020, p.216).

### *Defining 'Emerging Adulthood'*

In his seminal paper, Arnett (2000) conceptualises the period of early adulthood spanning late teens through to the twenties, as one of *emerging adulthood*. Arnett's conceptualisation was the first to focus on empirical research in Western

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<sup>17</sup> The generation born between 1945 and 1965.

societies amongst 18–29-year-olds experiencing the transition between adolescence and adulthood at the turn of the twenty-first century (Arnett, 2000). Characterised by five key psychological themes - financial, residential and relationship instability, feelings of in-between-ness, self-focus, identity exploration, and a sense of possibility - this period of instability, variability, and vulnerability extends many of the traits associated with adolescence (Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2018, 2019). Although the key tenets of Arnett's *emerging adulthood* are conceptualised experientially, they are nevertheless mediated by a neoliberal societal context that frames adults very differently to adolescents. As Arnett argues, the legal age of adulthood is a chronological marker that signifies a change in personal, family and societal *expectations*.

However, compared to the early to mid-twentieth century, the past 50 years have seen the declining hegemony of traditional socio-economic discriminators. Prolonged educational opportunities have become accessible across the social strata, career trajectories have transcended social class boundaries diverging from assumed 'family trades', and milestones such as marriage, family formation and home-ownership have increasingly been delayed (Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2018, 2019; Pace et al., 2016, Piotrowski et al., 2018, Crocetti et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2007). Notably, in Westernised societies where leaving the family home was traditionally considered a key marker of adulthood, emerging adults increasingly remain or return to their home of origin well into their twenties and thirties (Mitchell, 2007; Burn & Szoeki, 2016).

As Arnett (2000) expounds, the confluence of prolonged educational opportunities, flexible residential arrangements and fluid career options in Western cultures produces the unique parameters for *emerging adulthood*, which can only exist

“in cultures that postpone the entry into adult roles and responsibilities until well past the late teens” (p.478). As I have elucidated, the neo-liberal success paradigm also produces normative ways of being that influence societal power dynamics and structures, which may shape and constrain *emerging adulthood* (Halliwell and Ackers, 2021; Mitchell and Lennox, 2020). Arnett (2006) acknowledges the importance of structural factors in influencing emerging adulthood but cautions:

The question of interest is ‘just how important are they?’ The question of the importance of structural factors in the lives of emerging adults should be a hypothesis to be investigated rather than being assumed. We may find that they are more important in some areas of life than others and more important for some individuals than others (Arnett, 2006, p. 115).

I turn now to expand on Arnett’s themes.

### *Instability*

Instability and feelings of in-between-ness in *emerging adulthood* typically create challenges and anxieties in an emerging adult’s life, often experienced at the personal, family, and societal (structural) levels (Arnett, 2000, 2001). Changes in living circumstances may be temporary or permanent and vary between individuals. Emerging adults may reside with parents, in share houses, educational dormitories, and rental properties alone or with romantic partners. Over the period of *emerging adulthood*, multiple changes in residence are commonplace. Similarly, emerging adults may experience a variety of occupational pursuits, such as educational opportunities, early-career employment, transient employment or being unemployed. Instability in accommodations, occupation and relationship status may also result in variable dependencies and independencies, whereby emerging adults find themselves

more or less financially dependent on parents or partners and more or less able to make independent decisions about how to deploy their resources and time. Tanner (2006) describes this process of navigating (in)dependence as *recentering*, whereby emerging adults negotiate the transition from a protected minor in society to a contributor to society.

Tanner (2006) explains that the process of *recentering* is primarily shaped by a renegotiation of relations at the family level via the shift from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship. The mechanism by which this transition is realised is via the passage of emerging adults into independent accommodations where they become financially responsible for their living expenses and no longer dependent on their parents. In taking this step, the transition from childhood dependence to adult independence within the family is mirrored in the emerging adult's economic position in society; they progress from being a net consumer of social resources (for example, education, youth community enrichment programmes, family support payments), to a net contributor primarily via taxation and consumerism (Tanner, 2006). The mobilising role of financial equity (or financial 'potential' in the case of securing personal loans and mortgages) in the process of *recentering* is of critical import to this research project. I am interested in exploring whether the process of *recentering*, alternatively characterised as the renegotiation of family relationships from child/parent to adult/adult terms, can occur in cohabiting circumstances where the adult offspring remains financially and residentially dependent on their parents. If the adult offspring cannot contribute to their financial and residential maintenance due to financial poverty, is it still possible for a hierarchically bi-directional relationship (Aquilino, 2006) to develop, and how might ambivalences generated by unequal

financial statuses be reconciled? I revisit this theme in greater depth in my discussion of the central concept of *intergenerational ambivalence* later in this Act.

*In-betweenness, moratorium, waithood and liminality*

Arnett's (2000) conception of the period of *emerging adulthood* is one of in-betweenness, positioned between adolescence and adulthood; it is necessarily transitional and finite. It must be left behind at some point, in the same way, that adolescence is left behind. In describing *emerging adulthood* as "a period" of "delayed" adult commitments (2000, p. 470), Arnett compares his concept to Erikson's (1970) youth developmental stage *moratorium*, which Erikson describes as a period where young people "experiment with patterns of behaviour which are both – or neither quite – infantile and adult" (1970, p. 157). Both *moratorium* and *emerging adulthood* exist as discrete and finite periods in a young person's life, which inevitably must be transitioned for a person to achieve successful adulthood; for in-betweenness to exist, there must be fixed temporal boundaries within which it is contained. Erikson's *moratorium* implies a "selective permissiveness on the part of society" that permits emerging adults to occupy an experimental, unproductive, playful "niche" (Erikson, 1968, p. 156).

However, as Mørch (1995) describes, *moratorium* also marks a period of 'financial in-betweenness' in which young adults are held in an economically unproductive *stasis* by individualistic and market dynamics such as continued education, travel, lack of affordable housing and scarcity of graduate employment opportunities. Seen through a financial lens, in-betweenness exists for emerging adults as a time where they have legal responsibility for their financial concerns but often depend primarily on their parents, partner, or social welfare for financial

resources (Mørch, 1995). As Valentina Cuzzocrea (2019) elaborates, this period in young people's lives is one of pre-employment during which they are expected to 'accelerate' their employability via the proactive appropriation of cultural capital. Cuzzocrea (2019) notes that in contemporary society "an increased personal responsibility is closely connected to social acceleration, as it becomes necessary to collect qualifications, 'marketable' experience, and more generally, titles" (p. 573.) Evoking Mørch's (1995) conceptualisation of 'financial in-betweenness', Cuzzocrea (2019) advances the notion of *waitthood*. Cuzzocrea (2019) explains how waitthood develops Erickson's concept of *moratorium*, positing 'waitthood' as distinct from 'classic moratorium' in that it is a form of leave taking without productive appropriation, that is, "periods during which one just waits for something to happen without filling the time with activities intended to further equip oneself for the future" (p.569.) She questions the validity of such periods, pondering whether waiters' paralysis in the face of overwhelming possibilities disadvantages them versus more productive and proactive young people (Cuzzocrea, 2019.) This is a theme to which I return in my Findings Acts, as I explore the implications of failure to launch, verses a precipitate launch to fail.

The experiential dimensions of in-betweenness have been most comprehensively developed in twentieth-century scholarship via the concept of *liminality*. The original concept of liminality, as conceptualised by Arnold van Gennep in his seminal work, *The Rites of Passage* (1909), relies on the ritual performance of rites of passage to mark the boundaries of separation and incorporation. Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather (1999) elaborates that in a postmodernist society where such rituals in the form conceived by van Gennep are obsolete, we must invoke different rites of passage that relate to the neoliberal conceptualisation of a progressing adult.

Liminality is by definition transitory and experienced ‘in time’ as subjects undergo the rites that confer upon them the characteristics ascribed to their emerging identity.

In his seminal work, *The Ritual Process* (1969), Victor Turner coined the term ‘liminoid’ to describe this capricious quality of performativity, emphasising that in the ‘in-betweenness’ of any performance, a subject’s existence is held in a state of becoming that is situated *between* places rather than *at* a place. Carlson suggests that these sites of liminal performance may have emancipatory potential as sites “for social and cultural resistance and the exploration of alternative possibilities” (Carlson, 2004, p.20). Newton develops this argument in her essay, *Performativity and the Performer-Audience Relationship: Shifting Perspectives and Collapsing Binaries* (2014), describing liminality as a “state of metacommunicative performativity” (Newton, 2014, p.7) which troubles terminal binaries, including that of subject versus subjectivity. Newton goes on to explain that it does this by unsettling the ‘boundaries’ between bodies, minds and environments, framed in the Merleau-Pontyan tradition as constructing meaning in the world through corporeal interaction.

#### *Self-focus, Identity Exploration, and Possibilities*

Arnett (2000) explains that in comparison to much of the twentieth century, emerging adults have the “opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work, and worldviews” (p. 472). Arnett paints a picture of emerging adults as becoming increasingly independent, without the constraints of responsibilities traditionally associated with adulthood. Mörch (1995) explains that the liminality of *emerging adulthood* produces two diametrically opposed societal implications: the marginalisation of young adults as “outsiders” of the housing and labour markets; and the idealisation of boundless ideals such as freedom, unlimited possibilities, and

untapped potential. Whilst the latter was originally conceived by Arnett (2000) as an optimistic and experimental time for young people, recent schools of thought have problematised this period as one of uncertainty about the *right way* to live to achieve self-actualisation and meaning in life (Murphy et al., 2010; Hill et al., 2016; Rudolf et al., 2017.). Moreover, young adults leaving full-time education face unprecedented challenges in associated support structures, services, and networks, such as career support, student housing, counselling and health services, financial grants, loans and student discounts, and peer connections (Murphy et al., 2010).

Tanner (2006) explains that no other period in a person's life produces as many shifts in social connections as the early years of *emerging adulthood*, resulting in constantly changing influences on one's evolving self-identity project and self-relation to family and society (Arnett, Žukauskienė & Sugimura, 2014). This "prolonged identity moratorium" (Christiaens et al. 2021, p. 253) may lead to less stability and less clarified values, as Arnett (2018) has acknowledged, extending the search for meaning in life by up to a decade (Kohútová, Špajdel & Dědova, 2021). As Samman (2007) and Park (2010) elucidate, the search for meaning in one's life is an indicator of eudaimonic well-being (i.e., the happiness that is realised through self-actualisation and having clear goals and meaningful purpose). In their study of the effects of the liminalities of *emerging adulthood* on satisfaction with life and meaning in life amongst Slovak university students, Kohútová, Špajdel and Dědova (2021, p.316) conclude that the unfettered possibilities and freedoms experienced in *emerging adulthood* "bring instability and uncertainty, raising questions which life direction is the best, what is important for individuals, and what they should do in their lives." They further suggest that "postponing these important tasks until almost the age of 30 could have negative consequences for the presence of meaning and satisfaction with

life for a longer time.” (Kohútová, Špajdel & Dědova, 2021, p.316). Taking up their call for further exploration of these factors, I hypothesise that the freedoms, possibilities, instabilities, and liminalities associated with *emerging adulthood* may contribute significantly to ambivalence at the personal level amongst emerging adults, a theme upon which I elaborate later in this Act.

### ***Scene 2: Grand Narrative of Upwards Growth***

The idea that personal growth is a desirable, upwardly progressing, cumulative realisation of productive endeavours (Trites, 2014) is allied closely to the neo-liberal success paradigm. Described by Jenks as “the single most compelling metaphor of contemporary culture” (2005, p.6), the notion of ‘growth’ as the yardstick by which any human endeavour is measured is compelling and pervasive (Malewski, 2019). This grand narrative of growth establishes the *right way* for children to transition to adulthood and, from thereon, progress in their pursuit and fulfilment of a successful (adult) life. It is spatially and temporally motivated, representing an upward, accumulative growth trajectory that progresses in time.

The spatially embodied concept, *growing up*, provides a metaphor for aetnormative progression that must invariably strive towards a goal or target (Lee, 2001; Brooks, 2006; Trites, 2014). *Growing up* describes children’s growth into adults, as they literally grow upwards in space; it also implies growth in maturity, progression of skills and experience, and an increase in material wealth (Lee, 2001; Trites, 2014). Using Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) metaphorical system for structural metaphor, Trites (2014) argues that two interlinked structural metaphors can be applied to *growing up*, these being “GROWTH IS INEVITABLE” and “UP IS GOOD” (p.125), which together imply a childhood to adult binary whereby to be

considered a successful adult, one must have, and continue to be, *growing up*. Added to these structural metaphors, I would suggest a third, GROWTH IS UP, which locates growth spatially and orientationally. *Growing up* literally implies growing in space, as children grow in height and mass on the progression to adulthood. Spatial boundaries also regulate bodies' freedoms by containing, detaining, and restraining those whose deviances from societal norms fall outside the bounds of acceptance.

By regulating spatial and orientational boundaries, the grand narrative of upwards growth imposes aetnormative power structures upon emerging adults, penalising those who resist and rewarding those who progress. In this way, upwards growth may also be considered *accumulative*, increasing one's wealth of *cultural capital*, *social capital*, and *habitus* as set out in Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice* (1990)<sup>18</sup>. Work by Adams (2006) and Thomson (2011) is indicative and applies the idea of *cultural capital* relating to the 'acquired' skills sets, or lack thereof, that 'failure to launch' and 'boomerang' adult offspring have acquired to make leaving the family home possible. In these accounts, the *habitus* of the family home is such that an 'obstruction' to this development has been attendant, which in turn has denied the possibility for adult-children to progress beyond the home, and thus assume the required cultural and social capital to lead an independent, adult life.

Malewski (2019) notes that *growing up* has structural implications, a process Trites (2014) describes as replicating "scripts of growth to organise our own experiences of growth, to organise our understanding of other people's growth, and to help organise our society" (p. 147). Thomson and Østergaard (2021) propose the use of queer theories to develop "approaches that might help us understand the lives of those who have not done things in the 'correct order' and whose inability or

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<sup>18</sup> Definitions of terminology are included in Appendix A.

unwillingness to deliver reproductive futurism renders them as outsiders, failures or rebels (p. 436). Lee (2001) explains that conceptualising childhood as ‘less than’ adulthood reinforces heteronormative power structures that privilege and reward adulthood, and position childhood as a temporary and unattractive state. So compelling is the grand narrative of upwards growth, and the pressure to grow up so pervasive that Rose (1992) describes “the *trauma* of growth” as “a crescendo of insistence and anxiety: ‘grow up’, ‘will grow up’, ‘must grow up’” (p. 68, original emphasis).

Revisiting the notion that deviance from a vertically progressive growth trajectory innervates punitive effects, it follows that a grand narrative of upwards growth that reinforces the childhood-adulthood binary must invalidate or devalue adults who persist in childlike behaviours, characteristics, or attributes that are ‘unproductive.’ Hollindale (2001) notes that the admonishment of an adult as “childish” implies that they are “selfish, petulant, frivolous, irrational and emotionally immature” (p. 51). Halberstam (2014) further argues that neo-liberal societies “contain rebellion by casting it as childish” (5 September. 07:06) because childishness can be easily dismissed as being of no ‘value.’ Social commentators such as Webster and Williams have criticised the obtrusion of childlike behaviours in adulthood in Westernised culture, arguing that young adults’ reluctance or refusal to take “responsibility for shaping the world” (Webster, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014) has created a generation that has not entirely grown-up upon reaching adulthood. Similarly, Williams (2005) laments the “debased environment of gossip, inflated rhetoric, non-participation, celebrity obsession, and vacuous aspiration” (p.380), which, amongst other factors, he argues, has produced a society of “grown-up infants” (p. 286). In an article published in *The Guardian*, Webster (2014) takes up this mantle, suggesting

that the profusion of emoji usage in adult-to-adult communications is illustrative of a “cultural trend that is at the very least annoying: a refusal of adults to act like grown-ups” and that “no amount of winking smileys can make up for, say, a refusal to fight injustice, or face up to climate change” (18<sup>th</sup> June 2014). Webster’s conflation of emoji usage with childish immaturity is illustrative of a highly loaded socio-cultural narrative that implies that there is a right and wrong way to “do” adulthood (Trites, 2014). These commentaries share a sense of foreboding and disapproval at a generation of young adults who are not perceived to be *growing up* in the right way or at the right time. The intersection of upwards growth and time is a ‘loco-motion’ to which I return in greater depth later in this Act.

### ***Scene 3: Alternative Expressions of Growth – Queering of the Grand Narrative***

As I noted at the outset of this literature review, my research project seeks to trouble normative neo-liberal constructs of successful adulthood by illuminating, exploring, and validating non-normative experiences of *emerging adulthood*. According to the grand narrative of upwards growth, the *right way* to transition to and achieve successful adulthood is by striving to follow aetnormative, heteronormative, gendered trajectories of growth and becoming. Normative growth – characterised as inevitable, desirable, vertical, accumulative, and unrelenting – is, I argue, beyond the immediate experience of emerging adults. In looking at *emerging adulthood* through the lens of queer modalities, I seek to discover alternative ways of growing and doing adulthood. These queer alternatives are those that question the normativity ascribed to the status quo, or as Sedgwick (1993/1994) elucidates: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the

constituent elements... aren't made (or *can't* be made) to signify monolithically" (p.8, original emphasis).

Per Sedgwick's observation that "a lot of the most exciting recent workarounds 'queer' spins the term outward", I extend the use of queer theory beyond discussions of sexuality and gender into "other identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses" (p.p. 8-9). I employ an ontologically nebulous conception of queer, invoking Halperin's (1995) position that "queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*" (115, p.62, original emphasis). I adopt "an attitude of unceasing disruptiveness" (Parker, 2002, p.158), exploring queer alternatives as a mode of unsettling ontological assumptions about the right way to do adulthood or be an adult.

This disruptive project is mindful of Edelman's counsel that "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (2004, p.17). I neither seek to define nor offer alternative identity categories in my discussion of emerging adults, whom I characterise broadly as those whose experiences of growth and adulthood are other than the normative neo-liberal discourse. Instead, I pose a "philosophical challenge to normatively prescriptive ways of being and doing characterised by a politics of parodic critique and an analytical orientation towards a perpetual process of 'undoing'" (Rumens & Tyler, 2015, p.234.) Specifically, I explore queer growth trajectories in terms of alternative conceptions of space and time, which in turn unsettle the grand narrative of upwards growth, representing growth alternatively as avoidable, undesirable, static, multi-directional, diminishing and erratic.

## *Stasis*

As previously elucidated, Erikson's (1970) youth developmental stage, *moratorium*, whereby emerging adults arrest their progress to full adulthood to dwell in exploratory, experimental in-betweenness, is a concept that has garnered significant interest in youth studies. However, as Mørch (1995) and Cuzzocrea (2019) note, where this period is experienced as unproductive stasis, the time 'wasted' can disadvantage those who 'fall behind' their more productive peers.

The fantasy of *stasis* in the form of never growing older, seeking eternal youth, or revelling in immaturity in perpetuity, are themes explored in such works as Barrie's (1904) *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, Wilde's (1890) *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Updike's (1960) *Rabbit, Run*, Harkness' (2011, 2012, 2014) *All Souls Trilogy*, and the vampire genre of modern teen literature (see, for example, Stephenie Meyer's 2005-2008 *Twilight* trilogy; Anne Rice's 1976-2018 *The Vampire Chronicles* series; Richelle Mead's 2007-2010 *Vampire Academy* series). Such literature opposes the grand narrative of growth, albeit via a lens of unattainable fantasy. In a series of articles published in the early 2000s, Furedi commentates on "the infantilisation of our culture", whereby it is "difficult to draw a line between adulthood and childhood" (24<sup>th</sup> August 2006). He decries the "Peter Pan-demonium" that has resulted in a "society full of lost boys and girls hanging out at the edge of adulthood" (29<sup>th</sup> July 2003).

The growing trend of adults performing 'childlike' behaviours (Furedi, 2006) is accompanied by a physical embodiment of young adults dressing in childlike fashions (Trites, 2018). One such trend is the twenty-first-century predilection of young adults to dress privately and in public in animal-themed 'onesies' (a one-piece leisure suit). Social commentators have conflated this fashion trend with a reversion to childhood or even babyhood, with *The Guardian's* Freeman commenting that the

“problem with the onesie is [...] that it makes one look like a child” (16<sup>th</sup> January 2012, n.pag.) and Cartner-Morley characterising them as “giant babygrows” (28<sup>th</sup> December 2012, npag.). Moreover, in his criticism of young adults, Harris (2013) coins the moniker “champion of the onesie” to denigrate the “live-at-home-forever, get-a-blog-not-a-job generation” whose pathological shirking of adult responsibilities “like working, paying rent, buying food, and wearing real clothes – clothes with a waistline that weren’t invented for small incontinent humans in nappies” (11<sup>th</sup> July 2013, n.pag.) is tantamount to inhabiting perpetual childhood.

Such criticism is part of a broader cultural narrative that expresses distress and concern about the increasing infantilisation of young people, warning of their endemic immaturity and regression to childhood (Williams, 2010; Trites, 2014, 2018). By choosing to wear and celebrate onesies that are emblems of perpetual childhood, I suggest that young adults are *chrono*-cross dressing, queering age identity by dressing in milieus that challenge age boundaries. This comfortable, playful insubordination against the conventional, buttoned-up milieu can be viewed as an embodied rebellion against the oppression and constraints of *growing up*.

### *Growing Down*

In diametric contrast to *growing up*, the 1980s saw a school of feminist literary criticism that coined the terminology *growing down*, which its proponents, Barbara White and Annis Pratt (1981), used to describe archetypal female trajectories presented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature. Pratt and White (1981) highlight the “irony that growing up, according to contemporary gender norms, means growing down – an atrophy of the personality, a premature senility” (p. 30). The conflation of female adulthood with unproductiveness, frivolity or mundanity is a

theme that is expanded upon by Waller (2009), who juxtaposes the “linear progression” that represents the “masculine version of time”, and the “female development” as “other” which “can only go so far on this progressive route before they slip back into matrilineal patterns of ‘women’s time’” (p. 35).

Transposing the metaphor of *growing down* into a twenty-first-century context through discourses such as the #metoo movement, it remains relevant to question and challenge gendered patterns of oppression that impose glass ceilings on progression and unequal rewards for success (such as gendered pay gaps). The notion that *growing up* is gendered is one that I explore through the mobilising concepts of guilt and shame and progression and success. I position such influences as systemic inequalities, family obligations and personal expectations by gender as anathema to an “equal adulthood” (Field, 2014). If it is a condition of successful adulthood that a person must constantly progress by striving for and attaining life goals, then it follows that a gendered obtrusion of *downwards growth* must be recognised and challenged, or, as I now go on to explore, emancipated via alternative expressions of growth, such as Montagu’s (1981) *growing young* and Stockton’s (2009) *growing sideways*. These alternative expressions of growth all challenge normative conceptions of ‘time’ as a regulating, forward-propelling force in successful adulthood.

### *Growing Young*

Ashley Montagu coins the phrase, *growing young*, in his eponymous work of 1981, which he defines as the “extension of the phases of development” (1981, p.1) across a person’s life cycle. Montagu troubles the notion of life “stages”, arguing that development over a person’s life is a “continuous process, not a series of periods separated one from the other, each requiring different kinds of conformities,

obligations, statuses, and roles” (p.p. 100-101). Arguing that the notion of leaving “each stage behind” represents an “error of thinking” (p. 104), Montagu cautions that we “were never intended to grow ‘up’ into the kind of adults most of us have become” (p. 2). Instead, he suggests we “continue to grow *in* and *with* most of the traits which characterise us as children” (p. 104, original emphasis). ‘Childish’ traits such as playfulness, imagination, trust, compassion, joyfulness, and wonder are some characteristics that Montagu laments as losses once adults grow out of childhood. Montagu’s conception of *growing young* does not deny the status of adulthood in society, which he acknowledges as “necessary in every society.” However, he maintains that “the rigidity” in which such social arrangements “are conceived and the boundaries within which they are enclosed” (p. 101) is unnecessary and unwelcome.

Returning to Furedi’s (2003) objection to society’s “Peter Pan-demonium” (29<sup>th</sup> July 2003), it is interesting to note that Montagu infers a situation wherein young adults increasingly retain “childlike” behaviours well into chronological adulthood. As for Montagu, the necessity to jettison such traits before assuming adult status is not only unnecessary but further, *undesirable*. The notion of growing young produces a set of conditions for successful adulthood, legitimising an expression of adulthood and growth that retains aspects of childhood. This appears to complement Lee’s notion of “partial ‘becoming-child” whereby “adults may ‘uncomplete’ themselves” (2001, p. 143) by maintaining positive childlike traits into adulthood. Resisting the binary transition of childhood to adulthood, the notion of *growing young* suggests an alternative way of doing adulthood that does not so markedly privilege adults over children or characterise the latter as necessarily “less than” the former.

### *Growing Sideways*

Kathryn Bond Stockton's 2009 book, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, presents a queer conceptualisation of growth grounded in acceptance, laterality, and renewal (Freeman, 2011). As Freeman (2011) argues, *The Queer Child* "illuminates a poetics of survival for queer children in their own now," which contrasts with the negative dialectic presented by Lee Edelman in *No Future*, "which excoriates any politics that would defer fulfilment until one grows up" (2004, p. 128). Stockton's stated aim is "to prick (deflate, or just delay) the vertical, forward-motion metaphor of growing up, and do so by exploring the many kinds of sideways growth depicted by twentieth-century texts" (2011, p. 11). The emancipatory concept of sideways growth provides an alternative and productive way of growing for queer children who refuse to wait for adult gay life to commence. It paints queer children as "impresarios of signs pointing in any direction but upwards to adulthood" (Freeman 2011, p. 129). As Salamone (2012) comments, Stockton does not explicitly clarify the concept of *growing sideways*, a choice which I suspect is deliberate. The slippery and evasive nature of the concept opposes the black and white binary of verticality that it troubles. Stockton's sideways growth paves the way for queer children to find hope and validity to the side via a trajectory of "sideways relations" to "sideways motions" to "sideways futures" (Stockton 2009).

Breaking free from the social imperative that there is "simply nowhere to grow" (Stockton, 2009, p.3) when deferment and delays are imposed, queer children queer the temporal logic by moving sideways, placing their self-as-child beside their adult-to-be. Stockton (2009) fundamentally challenges the grand narrative of *growing up*, which privileges adulthood; instead, she proposes that "'growing sideways' suggests that the width of a person's experience or ideas, their motives or their

motions, may pertain to any age, bringing ‘adults’ and ‘children’ into lateral contact of surprising sorts” (p. 11). In this way, *growing sideways* troubles the idea of a binary transition *from* childhood *to* adulthood where the two states are mutually exclusive. One must proceed with the other without the possibility of reversion. Stockton’s notion of sideways growth involves a vacillation between childhood and adulthood which she represents as the location of “energy, pleasure, vitality, and (e)motion in the back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive” (p.13). As I elucidate later in this Act, this vacillating motion between two states of being is also characteristic of the ambivalence experienced by emerging adults.

In her TEDx Talk *Why I Choose Enrichment over Progress* (2017), Gaelynn Lea expounds on the virtues of pursuing enrichment over progress, which I suggest is complementary, if not commensurate, with the concept of sideways growth. Lea contends that progress privileges those with the greatest agency, disenfranchising persons with disabilities, the elderly, or those with poverty of resources. Progress, she argues, implies “you are less valuable if you can’t achieve goals’ (01:15), whereas enrichment “allows people to pursue desirable experiences just because they make living a richer experience and not because they lead to some desired outcome” (01:55). Pursuing enrichment over progress seems to offer a panacea to emerging adults’ uncertainty about the *right way* to live to achieve self-actualisation and meaning in life (Hill et al., 2016). I, therefore, hypothesise that if the liminal period of emerging adulthood were to be re-framed as a project of enrichment rather than a period of striving for upwards growth progressing vertically via a series of milestones towards successful adulthood, perhaps the oppressive societal norms associated with the neo-liberal success paradigm could be undone. I explore this notion further in the Performance Acts.

#### ***Scene 4: Performativity***

In her essay: *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, Judith Butler (1988) challenges constructionist theories of identity formation whereby identity is understood as a stable and universal construct. Butler (1988) instead posits that identity is per/formed by repetition of performances; that is, that we perform our identities against normative paradigms. In her later work, Butler elaborates that “this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject” (1993, p.95, original emphasis). Butler conceives subjects as ‘bodies’, which she describes as “a set of boundaries, individual and societal, politically signified and maintained” (1990, p.33). Furthermore, these boundaries are spatially and temporally regulated, moving with us in time (Butler, 1993). As children’s bodies grow, experience puberty, reach sexual maturity and stop growing, the motion of these changes spatially pushes children’s bodies across the boundary into adulthood. As illustrated by Beauvais, a “child growing up is not *subjected to* the passing of time; its elongating limbs and developing existence *are* the passing of time” (2015, p.24, original emphasis). Bodies are the clocks that prescribe the right time for aetnormative rites of passage. However, as Butler (1993) explains, bodily boundaries can move in unexpected ways in response to “the power relations that contour bodies” (p.17). In this performative ontology, a subject will act out their appropriate and expected roles, thereby inhabiting those roles and taking their place in society as a culturally intelligible and viable subject (Butler, 2004a).

This thesis explores and seeks to unsettle the dominant ideology of linear growth, situating the construct of the upwards progress narrative as a regulating force

that enforces and maintains the embodiment of the ideal neo-liberal subject and that works to exclude the possibility of the queer subaltern body. The grand narrative of upwards growth (re)produces a social reality that assumes a linear and progressive growth trajectory to which traditional markers of adulthood must adhere. Choosing to, or being unable to adhere to the grand narrative of upwards growth, renders the individual a 'failure' that has not maximised their human capital. In this way, the grand narrative of upwards growth that informs the neo-liberal paradigm functions by enacting violence on Othered/non-chrononormative bodies. This violence is justified by assuring illegible subjects' silence and invalidity.

If, as discussed earlier, the nature of the differences produced by queer transgressions of expectation cannot be pinned down, defined or categorised, it follows that they also cannot be accounted for in themselves. To be 'other' is a statement of what one *is not*, but not what one *is*. And yet to exist socially and mutually interdependently is to submit to the conferral of recognition "from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own" (Butler, 2004b, p.28). Owing to "the fundamental sociability of embodied life" (Butler, 2004b, p.28), we are motivated to seek recognition of ourselves as viable and intelligible subjects, and as such, we render ourselves vulnerable to imposition, exploitation, and misrecognition. This "condition of primary vulnerability" (Butler, 2004b, p.31) demands "a way of thinking about how we are not only constituted by our relations but also dispossessed by them as well" (Butler, 2004b, p.24). This argument cautions against misrecognition of those who are Other to societal normative expectations as 'failed' subjects, suggesting that through self and other awareness "we might critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others" (Butler, 2004b, p.30).

Butler invokes the term “heterosexual matrix” to describe “a self-supporting signifying economy that wields power in the marking off of what can and cannot be thought within the terms of cultural intelligibility” (1990, pp. 99-100). This dominant paradigm asserts intelligible subjects as normatively ‘male’, ‘female’ and ‘heterosexual’, with these identity locations framed against socially constructed norms and roles via the performance of ‘acceptable’ behaviours. Deviance in one’s performance from accepted norms “initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all” (Butler, 1988, p528).

Young people enter adulthood surrounded by the media by the imagery of gender-acceptable bodies, behaviours, occupations, and values. These societal narratives have long been shaped by gendered assumptions regarding the ideal body and expression of Self, which in turn have evolved in response to social, political, and economic conditions. Nevertheless, beneath these changing ideals is what Butler describes as a “mundane reproduction of gendered identity” that is performed “in relationship to the deeply entrenched or sedimented *expectations* of gendered experience” (Butler, 1988, p.524, my emphasis). This takes its root in a kinship system that assigns ‘natural’ roles to men and women in the service of reproduction. In my Findings Acts I explore the notion of what is *expected* of young men versus young women as they progress towards adulthood. I explore the gendered narratives that inform their ideals of a ‘successful’ man or woman, and seek to reveal the societal and family expectations that constrain their performances.

If, as I suggest, normative expectations of upwards growth are gendered, resisting these regulating schemes may render individuals illegible. Returning to, or remaining within, the family home during *emerging adulthood* runs counter to the

heteronormative timeline, which implicates a transition to residential, financial and relationship independence, effectuating the establishment of a new family and home. I, therefore, suggest that it is of sociological significance to explore how the family negotiates this unscripted period and how these deeply entrenched gendered roles are adapted, enacted, or challenged by emerging adults within the family home. Furthermore, as I now elucidate, I propose that the Butlerian notion of *performativity* has broader utility within the context of emerging adult identity formation.

### *Adulthood*

The characteristic representational epistemology of ‘adulthood’ as a state of being (i.e., a noun) has, as I have discussed, precipitated a body of queer scholarship concerned with troubling the traditional traits, markers and progressions associated with ‘adult’ identity. However, evoking Butler’s notion that identities are performed into existence, emerging “as effects of connections and activities” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2013, p.53), I suggest that an alternative characterisation of ‘adult’ could manifest through “practical ontology and performativity” (Jensen, 2010 p.7.) The emancipatory power of *performativity* to “liberate agency from its conceptual confines as a human-generated force” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2013, p.61) allows ‘adult’ identity to emerge through enacting agency in interactions and activities.

The term *adulthood* entered the social media milieu in late 2008, referring to the act of behaving in an adult manner or engaging in activities associated with adulthood. Linguistics journal, *American Speech*, traces the origins of the term to a tweet on the social media platform Twitter: “Grew up in a town of 2k and adulthooded 10 years NYC. Same values: Keeping the job. Feeding the family. Educating the kids. Buying the stuff. – unholytwerp (@unholytwerp) October 2, 2008.” The term has since gained

such traction that it featured in Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year shortlist in 2016 (Oxford Dictionaries, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016, npag.), and as reported by Digiday (25<sup>th</sup> May 2016, npag.), received more than 80,000 online mentions monthly in early 2016 after the hashtag #adulthood began trending on social media. My Google image search of "adulthood" on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 yielded the following common definition of the term: "adulthood [ad-uhlt-ing] verb. The practice of behaving in a way characteristic of a responsible adult, especially the accomplishment of mundane but necessary tasks", and several popular memes: "1/5 STARS. ADULTING. OVERRATED. OVERPRICED. WOULD NOT RECOMMEND", "I don't feel like ADULTING today", "I'm done adulthood let's be mermaids", "NOPE...NOT ADULTING TODAY" and "Coffee because ADULTING is hard." These characterisations of *adulthood* as a temporary activity that one might decide (or not) to engage in, which is generally unpleasant or difficult, suggests an inversion of the grand narrative of growth, which privileges adulthood over childhood. These popular culture references position adulthood as a necessary but undesirable departure from the more enjoyable, easy, and playful state it displaces. By characterising adulthood as an *action* rather than a *state*, this formation also allows those who fail to satisfy traditional markers of adulthood to fulfil the requirements of adulthood when situations permit or require it. Whereas conventional characterisations of adulthood implicate a binary progression (*from* childhood *to* adulthood) where the end-state of being 'adult' is static and irreversible, *adulthood*, by comparison, breaks these conventions. It is a performed action, or series of actions, which signify only whilst the performer is performing. The actions performed might be recognisable as traits associated with conventional notions of adulthood, but these need not be 'transitioned to' nor permanently subsumed into

one's identity; neither must traits associated with childhood be intransigently jettisoned to engage in *adulthood*.

Importantly, as explained by Butler (1993), performative acts must be repeated by the performer to produce that which they name, such that if:

a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that “success” is always only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because the action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition of citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices* (p.226, original emphasis)

Butler's *performativity* is “the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed” (p.236), but due to its inherent emphasis on iterability over intention, its utility in mobilising *adulthood* to form a stable ‘adult’ identity is potentially limited. Young adults who engage in *adulthood* do so deliberately intermittently and temporarily. To satisfy the condition of accumulating the “force of authority” (Butler, 1993, p.226), these acts must be regularly repeated, and even then, they may only attain provisional success.

Nevertheless, whilst the performative notion of *adulthood* might offer sideways growth pathways for emerging adults (if perhaps not a stable adult identity), it is not without its detractors. *The Washington Post* journalist, Jessica Grose, problematises the concept as a “self-infantilizing rejection of female maturity in a culture that already has almost no love for grown-up women” (9<sup>th</sup> May 2017, npag.) Whilst noting that young women's usage of *adulthood* is self-referentially ironic, Grose (2017) argues that the term speaks to a more insidious societal trend, that of young women minimising their actual achievements and aggrandising smaller, trivial wins. She explains that

Young women are just afraid to be public about their *actual* achievements because if their public persona is self-assured, they are also perceived to be less likeable. Portraying themselves as less competent in their online personas is a hedge against a social ethos that regularly denigrates mature women and devalues their knowledge, sending the message that youth is the only worthwhile currency a woman has (Grose, 9th May 2017, npag., original emphasis).

The notion of *adulting* troubles the privileged positionality of adulthood over childhood by presenting adult activities as costly, dull, and difficult. Far from being exalted as a state to be aspired to, it is characterised by those temporarily engaging in *adulting* as a necessary evil. Revisiting White and Pratt's (1981) *growing down*, whereby women are described as atrophying in their mental facility and productivity as they transition to adulthood and take on traditional female roles within the home, it is interesting to consider whether the minimisation of actual achievements and ironic performativity of *adulting* is a twenty-first-century expression of this phenomenon.

This thesis examines further the phenomenon of *adulting* via lenses provided by gender performativity and chrononormative development. In light of broader socio-economic imperatives that shape the formation of adulthood and the domestic structure of the intergenerational home, the analyses offered in the later sections of this thesis consider how prevailing assumptions of gender implicate parents and adult offspring who maintain intergenerational cohabitation.

### ***Scene 5: Queer Temporalities - Time and Loco-motion***

As elaborated earlier, Butler's 'heterosexual matrix' describes acceptable behaviours performed by subjects and rewarded by society. As I have described, the neo-liberal

construction of social reality is predicated on an assumption of linear progression, in which children transition to adulthood via the attainment of independence markers and continue to progress throughout life per a grand narrative of upwards growth. As the grand narrative of upwards growth is both spatially and temporally motivated, to be an intelligible subject, one must not only perform the right behaviours but also do so in the correct chronological time and order. This is reinforced by Butler's conception of the stable gender identity as being generated by the repetition of performances *over time* (Butler, 1990, my emphasis). Queer theory's resistance to heteronormative control, oppression, and disciplining power over bodies and identities has resulted in critical attention directed towards the function of time in serving as the site of this violence. The concept of time as progressive and linear is so "natural" (Cosenza, 2014a, p. 156) that how time is constructed, and for what purposes, are invisible to the very bodies bound and regulated by it. Societies, families, and individuals organise time across different temporal horizons. Examples of common self-time regulation in the short term include to-do lists, daily schedules, and alarms; in the medium term, savings/investment planning, biological reproduction planning, and vacation planning; and in the long term, retirement, estate planning and funeral planning (Cosenza, 2014a). As Cosenza (2014a) argues, these "chronological structures "naturalize" power inequalities, control, discipline, and other factors that contribute to progress or productivity (p.156). Halberstam (2005) contends that the naturalness of progressive time is so pervasive that we are conditioned to experience emotional responses such as disappointment, frustration, guilt, and shame when we fall behind or find ourselves off track. As I discuss later in this Act, guilt and shame are generative of intergeneration ambivalence at the personal and family levels when emerging adults violate socially constructed conceptions of progressive, linear time (Freeman, 2010).

The unsettling of “straight time” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 22) over the past two decades by queer theoretical perspectives on temporality – the troubling of epistemological assumptions about the order and categorisation of time and space and our knowledge of ourselves in the past, present, and future – has been “amongst the most significant turns in queer theory” (Daniels, 2017, p.116). This analysis of the field of queer temporality proceeds by considering the seminal works of Freeman (2010), Halberstam (2005), Muñoz (2009), Edelman (1998, 2004), and Stockton (2009). I also bring these queer temporal theories into dialogue with recent advances in the theory of temporal subjectivities by Goldin (2016) and Berggren, Gottsén & Bornäs (2020).

### *Chrononormativity*

Freeman describes this disciplining structure of temporality where:

Naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation: binding is what turns mere existence into a form of mastery in a process I’ll refer to as *chrononormativity*, or the use of time to organise individual human bodies toward maximum productivity. (Freeman, 2010, p.3, original emphasis).

Under chrononormative temporality, a successful life course is constantly progressing and productive. Individuals who are out of step with productivity norms are expected to “recalibrate” and try to keep up by synchronising to the ideals of neo-liberalism, namely, the undertaking of a career and formation of one’s own distinct nuclear family (Sharma, 2011, p.442). In turn, neo-liberalism invests in the most productive members of society, whose efficient utilisation of cultural capital, social capital, habitus, and time most positively enhance the economy and modes of consumption. Freeman (2010) posits that chrononormative time is systemically naturalised, producing a sense

of belonging for those who operate within its regulating boundaries and a sense of otherness for those who contravene them. Applied to the ‘heterosexual matrix’, *chrononormativity* imposes linear and progressive milestones upon subjects that signify a transition to successful adulthood. Failure to keep up with this chrononormative timeline and order of things indicates a failure to become an intelligible and valid member of society.

Queer theorists have challenged the natural and inevitable temporality of chrononormative structures. In their studies of emerging adults, Halberstam (2005) describes “the stretched-out adolescences of queer culture makers that disrupt conventional accounts of subculture, youth culture, adulthood and maturity” (2005, p. 151). Although Halberstam’s *queer time* predates Freeman’s *chrononormativity*, its rejection of reproductive straight time and a refusal to grow up is presented as queer resistance to the chrononormative construct:

Queer time for me is the dark nightclub, the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence-early adulthood-marriage-reproduction-child rearing-retirement-death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility. It is a theory of queerness as a way of being in the world and a critique of the careful scripts that usher even the most queer among us through major markers of individuality and normativity. (Halberstam in Dinshaw et al, 2007, p.182)

Queer temporality challenges two hegemonic ideas; the first being the chrononormative ‘life schedule’ (Halberstam, 2005); and the second, the notion of temporal coding, which ascribes temporal attributes to life schedules such as (im)maturity, (un)timeliness, childishness and growing up (Berggren, Gottsén & Bornäs, 2020). Given the increasing prevalence of young adults cohabiting with

parents in Western society, this project sought to understand how and why chrononormative structures remain hegemonic in *emerging adulthood*. Here Freeman's concept of "temporal drag" is helpful (2010), which she defines thus: "I'd like to call this 'temporal drag' with all the associations that the word 'drag' has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past on the present" (p. 63). Freeman's 'temporal drag' may explain how neo-liberal values are passed down the generations, implicating chrononormative and gendered performances that are out of step with the younger generation's experience of employment, housing, and family formation. Easthope, Lieu and Judd's 2017 two-decade review of multigenerational living in Australia highlights that whilst multigenerational cohabitators recognise that their circumstances are increasingly normalised, they are nevertheless not correspondingly accepted. Easthope, Lieu and Judd (2017) explain that where financial dependence is the reason for multigenerational cohabitation, such living arrangements are pathologized as failure by society and the older generation.

This study explores whether societal narratives have failed to keep pace with norms, and whether, as Halliwell and Ackers (2021) suggest, a "temporal drag" that privileges older generational values is partly responsible for this misalignment. Halliwell and Ackers (2021) suggest that where conflicts deriving from incompatibility of generational values exist, an asymmetric power dynamic predicated on differential structural capital and status privileges the older generation. This, in turn, reinforces traditional (legacy) societal narratives at the structural level. At a family level, the different "power and status that different family members possess directly informs which family narratives are given legitimacy" (Halliwell and Ackers, p.12). The influence of differential power dynamics within the organisation of family

cohabitation is a theme to which I return in my discussion of *intergenerational ambivalence*.

### *Queer Futurity*

In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009) urges his readers to orient themselves to striving toward a utopian world and resist the “reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction” (p.22). At the ‘queer horizon’, the burdensome conditions attached to the present fall away, stimulating the possibility of change and a better future. Muñoz (2009) foregrounds *Cruising Utopia* with the opening statement: “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality” (2009, p.1), and goes on to explain that “Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present” (2009, p.1). This imagining of futurity is framed by Muñoz as “concrete” and founded on “educated hope” (2009, p.3.) as opposed to abstract philosophy. And so, for Muñoz, ‘hope’ mobilises a political motivation to effect transformation and “is both a critical affect and a methodology” (2009, p.3). Because Muñoz’s queer horizon emancipates us from regulating structures of the present, even situations saturated with commodification can be transcended, as he demonstrates when analysing O’Hara’s “Having a Coke With You” (2009, p.p. 5-6) installation: “Through queer-aesthete art consumption and queer relationality the writer describes moments imbued with a feeling of forward-dawning futurity” (2009, p.7).

Muñoz’s central theme of future orientation towards an imagined ideal, unburdened by the conditions of the present, offers a temporal trajectory for emerging adults that is consistent with queer spatial conceptions of growth. The grand narrative of growth’s oppressive pressure to make progress ‘on time’ and remain ‘on track’ is

predicated on an upwards and accumulative neo-liberal success paradigm that emphasises present limitations as problems to be overcome with hard work and prescribes preordained productivity milestones. Muñoz's reading of queer as a "collective modality of futurity" (McBean, 2013, p.124) places no such encumbrances on the point of origin. It creates space and time for sideways growth trajectories and the pursuit of enrichment over progress. Indeed, Muñoz encourages us to divert from the prescribed reproductive mandate of the present and seek out possibilities, ruptures, and differences in our striving towards a utopian future. Muñoz contends that queerness, by definition, is a bulwark against the inevitable reproduction of the present, opening up a horizon of possibilities limited in the present only by one's imagination. Although Muñoz does not use the term "enrichment" (Lea, 2017), his idea of "astonishment" is consistent with this alternative conception of personal growth. Muñoz explains that "astonishment helps one surpass the limitations of an alienating presentness and allows one to see a different time and place" (2009, p.5). Per Muñoz's account, I suggest that an "astonishment" or enrichment-fuelled trajectory offers an emancipatory alternative for emerging adults to realise imagined futures, unbound and unburdened by the uncertain and precarious conditions of the present.

Muñoz has faced criticism from theorists who dismiss this futurity as little more than cruel optimism that produces subject positions predisposed to fail (see Edelman, 1998; Edelman, 2004). In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), Edelman argues that the very framing of queer futurity reproduces the oppressive and disciplining conditions that it seeks to overcome. Edelman (2004) contends that queerness represents a rejection of futurity and stands firmly "outside the consensus by which all politics confirm the absolute value of "reproductive

futurism” (p.3). For Edelman, the only logic consistent with a queer manifesto is a rejection of the present’s social order and normative power structures, which inevitably reproduces a politically motivated future that inherently disenfranchises queers. Both Edelman (2004) and Muñoz (2009) call for resistance of the normativising effects of heteronormativity, but whilst Muñoz sees hope of queer possibilities beyond a queer horizon, unbound by the normativising tethers of the present, Edelman eschews any imagining of a future that he asserts is irrevocably constrained by what is seen as politically possible.

Notwithstanding Edelman’s pessimism about the possibility of queer futures transcending a hegemonic heteronormative political logic, I suggest that a process of identifying, reconsidering, resisting and refashioning elements of a broken-down present may be of utility in charting a course through liminal spaces/times without getting stuck or ‘failing’ in the present. Furthermore, Muñoz’s queer futurity does not ignore or reject the possibility that bodies might fail or have a predisposition to “misfire” in pursuing a utopian future. However, Muñoz queers the heteronormative (defined broadly by Muñoz as the “dominant and overarching temporal and spatial organisation of the world” (2009, p.154)) conception of failure, proposing that:

Associating this kind of failure with the performative, we can discover a utopian kernel: “The act of failing thus opens up referentiality – or of impossible reality – not because something is missing, but because something else is done, or because something else is said: the term ‘misfire’ does not refer to an absence but to an enactment of a difference (Muñoz, 2009, p.154).

This reimagination of the concept of failure, not as an absence but as doing “something else”, confers a sense of momentum and growth to emerging adults’ liminality, which the neo-liberal success paradigm denigrates as going and growing nowhere.

Muñoz rebuffs the criticism that his queer futurity is located in a hopelessly optimistic and unrealistic future by showing how potentiality is the body’s scaffold to future utopia. In his Act examining Kevin McCarty’s photographs, Muñoz reads the visualisation of pre-stages of performance as gesturing towards the hope of performance realised. In this way, I suggest that the language of potentiality has emancipatory utility for emerging adults whose hopes of self-realisation are future-oriented. Furthermore, Muñoz demonstrates how potentiality can be enacted, outlining a “manifesto” that “is a call to a doing in and for the future” ... a “call for ‘doing’ that is a becoming: the becoming of and for ‘future generations.’” (2009, p.26). Invoking a Butlerian conception of *performativity*, Muñoz urges his readers to call their future utopia into being through repetition of performance by “doing, performing, engaging the performative as a force of and for futurity” (2009, p.32).

### *Afterwardsness*

The notion of *afterwardsness* (Nachträglichkeit), first employed by Freud to describe how abuses perpetrated in childhood produce traumatic effects in puberty once the perspective of sexualisation ascribes new meaning to these memories (Goldin, 2016), has been taken up by queer theorists to demonstrate how the past and present are mutually constituted (Stockton, 2009, 2011; Freeman, 2010). Characterised by Goldin (2016) as “experiences of retrospective disorganization” (p.408) and by Stockton (2009) as “deferred effect and belated understanding” (p. 14), *afterwardsness* troubles the notion of *chrononormativity* by contending that the past influences the present, and

lived experiences are simultaneously transformed by meanings retrospectively ascribed to that very past (Berggren, Gottsén & Bornäs, 2020).

Berggren et al. (2020) present the case study of a 23-year-old man named Christopher to illustrate how *afterwardsness* is affected by perspectivisation. Such events might trigger retrospective meaning-making as internal self-reflection, external accusation, changing societal narratives, or other influences that prompt reconsideration of prior events. Often these reflexive moments occur in different contexts to the historical experience or are accompanied by new information or experiences that transform the meanings we ascribe to past events. In the case study presented by Berggren et al. (2020), Christopher is prompted to reflect on past sexual encounters from the age of 15-18 with his then-girlfriend, where he had pressured her for, in his words, ‘nagging sex.’ Christopher’s narrative emphasises that he was unaware of the problematic nature of his verbal and physical pressure on his girlfriends at the time of his assaults. He recalls interpreting his behaviour as complicit with the norms and expectations of heterosexual masculinity, experiencing happiness and satisfaction at succeeding in being a “real man” (Berggren et al., 2020, p. 611). However, the advent of “public debate” in Sweden about “nagging sex” (p. 611) and a subsequent accusation by his ex-girlfriend characterising their encounters as non-consensual rape recalled the events of Christopher’s first relationship and gave him pause to reflect and reconsider his actions. Revisiting his past actions with a new perspective gave Christopher cause to reframe his actions in a more negative light and, in turn, feel differently towards himself. He did not endorse his ex-girlfriend’s retrospective reading of their shared experience as ‘rape but acknowledged that his ‘nagging sex’ was objectionable and regrettable. Berggren et al. (2020) further note that the social media ‘outing’ of Christopher’s past sexual encounters has produced

distinct implications for his identity in the present and future. The reactions of his family, friends and social connections have profoundly impacted Christopher's present state of well-being. His past actions, thrown into the light for judgment in the present, also retain a latent threat of continuing punitive effects into his future. As Berggren et al. (2020) have shown, this case study neatly illustrates the utility of *afterwardsness* "as a concept tool for thinking critically about the complex relations between past and present, and between acts and identities" and the affective power of memory in (re)constructing identity (p. 613).

### *Backward Birthing*

Stockton (2011) introduces the concept of *backward birthing*, which I now bring into dialogue with the notion of liminality in *emerging adulthood*. For Stockton, the moniker

'gay child' is a gravestone marker for where or when one's straight life died. Straight person dead, gay child born, albeit retrospectively (even, for example, at or after the age of twenty-five). This kind of backward birthing mechanism makes the hunt for the roots of queerness a retrospective search for amalgamated forms of feelings, desires, and physical needs that led to this death of one's straight life. (p. 7)

Stockton explains that heteronormativity assumes all children to be straight (or straight emergent). Despite perhaps already feeling attracted to same-sex peers, the queer child is delayed in its fulfilment, as "linguistic markers for its queerness only arrive after it exits its childhood after it is shown not to be straight" (p.6). Similarly, I hypothesise that emerging adults in neo-liberal societies exist as 'ghosts', whose fulfilment of hopes, aspirations and expectations are delayed as they remain suspended in unrealised

in-betweenness. These spectral emerging adults can only hope to find fulfilment retrospectively once fully ‘grown up’ and are finally able to erect a gravestone marker at the moment of transition from their liminal selves. Therefore, as part of this research project, I present the “before and after” stories of two participants, Tim Casey (*Failure to Launch*), and James Schilling (*Boomerang*). Tim and James transitioned from living with their parents to living independently during the period spanning my research project and elected to interview with me again once attaining residential independence. The reflexivity and positionality of these two participants, both within and beyond *emerging adulthood*, also extends the application of the anti-narrative research approach that I employ. The perspective of looking back affords an opportunity to reflect on the performativity of the ‘imagined’ or ‘aspirational’ self (‘fake it ‘til you make it’) that in part comprises the identity project that is negotiated in *emerging adulthood*.

The prolonged performance of childlike behaviours, allied with a reluctance or inability to assume financial and residential independence presents an alternative way of *doing adulthood*. It troubles the neo-liberal success paradigm, which recognises and rewards progress towards and achievement of productive endeavours. I am interested in this alternative discourse, which challenges the notion of a binary transition *from* childhood *to* adulthood as characterised by a linear progression of “growing up” regulated by time. I propose an alternative narrative that troubles the neo-liberal notion of a successful (transition to) adulthood, instead advancing a way of doing adulthood that I call *pretzeling*, which encompasses going back to the beginning, exploring possibilities and taking one’s own time; and spatially encompasses “growing backwards”, “growing sideways”, and “growing up.” Furthermore, I seek to unsettle chrononormative linear conceptualisations of “progress”, advocating for the

realisation of individual aspirations and expectations in one's "own time." I elucidate these reimaginings of the narratives of adulthood and progress in the Performance Acts, exploring how they might be of utility to emerging adults in negotiating personal level ambivalences concerning matters of identity, interpersonal relationships, self-fulfilment/actualisation, and wellbeing.

### ***Scene 6: Intergenerational Ambivalence***

First conceptualised by Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998, intergenerational ambivalence is experienced in the (re)negotiation of adult parent/child relationships. I commence this Act with deliberations on the origin, development, and utilisation of the concept as a theoretical bulwark against the dualistic intergenerational solidarity-conflict paradigm (Bengtson, Biblarz, & Roberts, 2002; Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002). I then move to show how the evolving conceptualisation of ambivalence at the personal (micro), family (meso) and societal/structural (macro) levels has extended the application of the theory beyond intra-family relationships and into the socio-cultural and political spheres.

Since the turn of the century, ambivalence has become a significant concept used to understand family relationships (Halliwell & Ackers, 2021; Connidis, 2015; Lüscher & Hoff, 2013). In 2002 Alexis Walker published a special symposium on the notion of 'ambivalence' in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Scholars have since focused on this construct to understand nuances in family relationships beyond the dualistic intergenerational solidarity-conflict paradigm (Bengtson, Biblarz, & Roberts, 2002; Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002). The concept of ambivalence was conceived as a bridging concept to close the divide between research on family solidarity and research on family conflict (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013). By overcoming the

divide between studies on conflict or harmony, ambivalence seems to have opened a new divide between sociological and psychological analysis.

In their original framework, Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) established ambivalence as addressing the interconnection between the interpersonal and the structural. Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) first introduced the idea of intergenerational ambivalence to acknowledge the coexistence of contradictory sentiments, perceptions, and forces in family relationships. However, as Halliwell and Ackers argue (2021), psychological studies frequently apply ambivalence as an exclusively psychological concept and give little acknowledgment to how people's interpersonal tensions are interrelated with structural issues, cultural expectations, and historical contexts (Connidis, 2015). The psychological focus on exclusively interpersonal factors is derived from Lüscher and Pillemer's (1998) original framework that presented ambivalence as being experienced on different structural and interpersonal levels. This framework referred to ambivalence at the level of social structures as contradictions in institutional or economic resources, that is, as differences in social norms or the level of capital that family members possess. At the subject level, the framework referred to contradictions manifest in people's "cognitions, emotions and motivations" (Lusher & Hoff, 2013, p. 42). Lüscher and Pillemer's (1998) intent was for this framework to reflect the multilevel nature of ambivalence. However, many studies took these two levels to dichotomise ambivalence into separate sociological and psychological concepts (Halliwell & Ackers, 2021).

In subsequent papers, Lüscher and Pillemer have explained that, even though their original framework presents ambivalence in terms of levels, it was intended that studies engage with ambivalence as a multilevel concept that denotes:

the experiences of vacillating between polar contradictions of feeling, thinking, wanting, and social structures in the search for the sense and meaning of social relationships, facts and texts, which are important for unfolding and altering facets of the self and agency (Lüscher & Haller, 2016, p.p.3-4).

This disciplinary divide is conceptually antithetical; as Connidis (2015) argues, ambivalence was conceived with a “sociological imagination” to understand family relationships in “the interplay of individuals and society, of biography and history, of self and world” (Wright Mills, 1959, p.4).

With reference to the socio-ecological model, ambivalences may be experienced on an individual level, family level concerning the family’s interactions with their wider community, or structural level, whereby social forces exert competing pressures on family life (Connidis & McMullin, 2002). Therefore, while ambivalence has become significant in psychology, many of the founding contributors to this concept suggest that ambivalence is seldom used to its full capacity (Connidis, 2010; Lüscher & Hoff, 2013). But, as Connidis contends (2015, p.77), the full aim of ambivalence is to understand “how what happens inside families relates to what happens outside them.” Focusing on ambivalence at only an interpersonal level would obscure such significant issues that shape these families’ negotiations. To capture the impact that conflicting structural social expectations have, Connidis and McMullin (2002) suggest that ambivalence needs to be reframed as a dialectic relationship between agency and structure, evoking Morgan’s (1985) suggestion:

The question is not one of either individual strain or structural pressures but a dialectical combination of both, such that the wider structural tensions

reach into, shape and condition the individual responses, which in their turn structure and shape the domestic situation (Morgan, 1985, p.231).

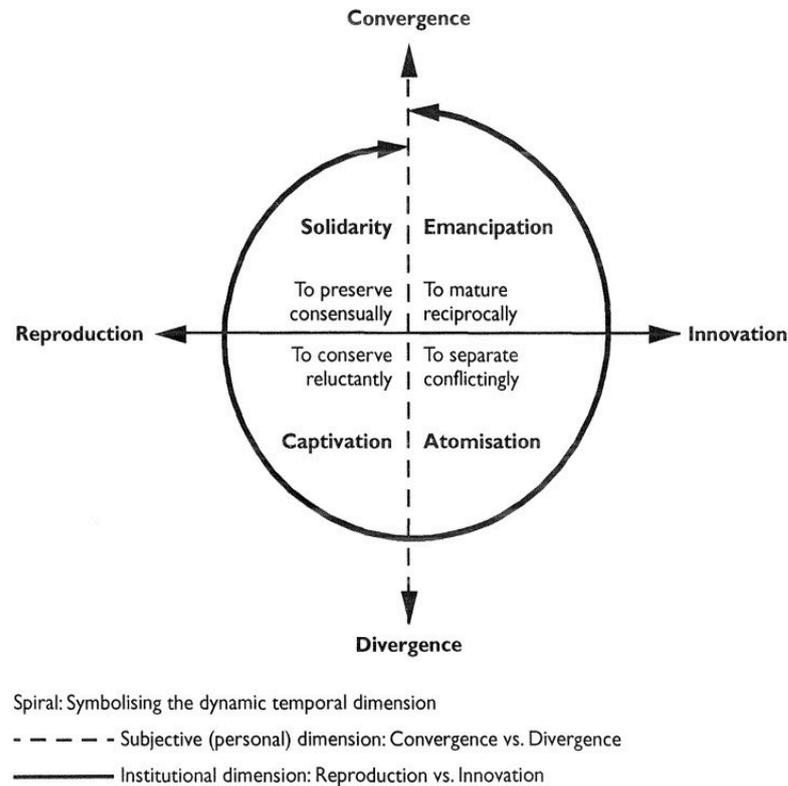
This suggests that the source of ambivalence can emerge from socio-political structures and inequalities. As Connidis and McMullin (2002) suggest: “Role conflict and overload result because of contradictions and paradoxes that are embedded within social structures” (p. 562). Although families may find better means to negotiate their issues, major structural problems may produce barriers that cannot be repaired through interpersonal dialogue alone. To develop a subjective and structurally joined-up concept of ambivalence, Connidis and McMullin embed ambivalence in a critical theory framework. Their critical theory framework suggests that four sociological principles should inform studies of ambivalence.

First, akin to broader society, the family should be viewed as the product of social inequalities and ‘structured social relations’ that bestow different family members with varying levels of power. Finch’s (1989) study illustrates how structured social relations impacted women when male privilege permitted men to focus exclusively on paid employment while women remained the default primary caregivers for aging parents. The research of Oakley (1974) and Cox (2020) also shows how the power and status of family members are shaped by patriarchy when the familial division of labour attributes paid work a much higher status than domestic work and care. This typically privileges men, but power and status can take on a generational dynamic in cohabiting intergenerational relationships because parents provide money and own/rent the house (Halliwell & Ackers, 2021; Cox, 2020). The second premise of Connidis and McMullin’s (2002) critical theory framework is that people try to negotiate the impacts of social structures by using agency to exert control over their lives. However, as Halliwell and Ackers (2020) argue, agency should not

be reduced to free choice because structural expectations often mediate self-interest. For example, McQuaid et al.'s (2019) study of cohabitation suggests that a strong sense of familial duty compelled parents to help their offspring and sacrifice their own interests. This sense of duty made cohabitation a "choice-less choice" because the social construction of parenthood left no alternative to providing residential support (McQuaid et al., 2019, p. 5). In my study, I further explore how the intersecting subjectivities of familial duty and time work to produce manifestations of guilt, shame, disappointment, and regret in parents and adult children, thereby generating experiences of ambivalence. The third and fourth premises of Connidis and McMullin's critical theory framework are that families should be understood as produced and negotiated through continued interactions and that family dynamics are the product of conflicting interests. Therefore, familial conflict should not be understood as "episodic and unpredictable but as a patterned feature of relationships" (Connidis & McMullin, 2002, p. 559). Connidis and McMullin's (2002) critical theory framework enables a sociological definition of ambivalence that understands ambivalence as "socially structured contradictions made manifest in interaction" (p. 559).

To overcome the "unfortunate dichotomy" (Connidis, 2015, p.78) inherent within early conceptions of ambivalence, Lüscher and Hoff (2013) produced a new typology with ambivalence presented as a cycle (see Figure 2.1). This 'dynamic model' challenges a linear interpretation of ambivalence in terms of personal, family, and structural levels and instead reflects that psychological and institutional dynamics happen in an evolving interplay with one another. As Lüscher clarifies, this is not to suggest that *experiences* of ambivalence may not be *viewed* personally or structurally (K. Lüscher, personal communication, 02 February 2022) but that it is unnecessarily

limiting to speak of ambivalence substantivistically. By visualising experiences of ambivalence as a dynamic model, Lüscher and Hoff (2013) show how vacillation between polar opposites of feeling, thinking, willing, doing, and social structures occur.



*Figure 2.1: Intergenerational ambivalences – a dynamic model (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013)*

This cycle proposes four ways psychological and institutional dimensions coalesce to produce and deal with ambivalence (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013). First, ‘solidarity’ reflects when ambivalence is “preserved consensually”; in other words, on the surface, families “express common feelings” but repress or conceal any problematic issues. In these cases, ambivalence becomes “latent” without disappearing (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013, p. 43). Lüscher defines latent ambivalences as those which are hidden, or which are not limited by other terms. Second, ‘captivation’ reflects families that have a continued “struggle over ambivalence which often cannot be expressed adequately in

words” (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013, p. 44). In this context, family relationships are often, out of necessity, maintained reluctantly. Third, ‘atomisation’ characterises conflicts over ambivalence that result from family separation and estrangement. Fourth, ‘emancipation’ reflects the efforts made by families to overcome ambivalence by acknowledging this and negotiating “new forms of common action” (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013, p. 44). Contrasting ‘solidarity’, ‘captivation’, ‘atomisation’ and ‘emancipation’, I suggest that experiences of ambivalence may be inherently *constructive* or *destructive*.

In Lüscher (2002) and Lüscher and Hoff, (2013) the dynamic model of intergenerational ambivalences juxtaposes personal and institutional dimensions. Lüscher (2002, p.588) elaborates: “On the *personal dimension*, there is an opposition between similarity and difference.” Differing personality traits in parents and children may generate ambivalence when these manifest beliefs, values and behaviours that are subjectively in conflict. Lüscher (2002, p. 588) argues that the institutional dimension “implies embeddedness in a concrete social system such as the family.” Lüscher (2002, p.p. 588-589) operationalises ambivalence along the institutional dimension via family members’ commitment or resistance to family traditions, values, and common ties. The two polarised dimensions of the dynamic model hold each other in tension and may be experienced differently by individuals where an imbalance in power/agency exists. For example, where there is a misalignment in personal values, beliefs and behaviours, the more powerful generation invokes the family institution to hold subjugated family members in ‘captivation’ and “to assert claims of one family member against another” (Lüscher 2002, p. 589). This understanding of the model is also seen in Letiecq, Bailey & Dahlen (2008, p. 6), who summarise ‘captivation’ thus: “The remaining field, captivation, occurs when family members assert the primacy of

the family institution over the claims of individual family members, and conserve the institution with reluctance.”

An important theme in the contemporary literature as it pertains to this study highlights the tension between ‘expectations’ and ‘disappointment’ as a key correlate of ambivalence. For example, Descartes (2006) found that when adult children require support from parents beyond the expected stage of independence, ambivalence is experienced by both generations. In their *Decade Review of Aging and Family Life* (2010), Silverstein and Giarrusso acknowledge research (e.g. Pillemer et al., 2007) that identifies parents’ unmet expectations as a source of parental ambivalence toward adult children. This is characterised as disappointment at the lack of independence achieved by adult children who have failed to ‘thrive.’ Lendon, Silverstein and Giarrusso (2014, p. 274) state that: “The most theoretically interesting individual characteristics associated with ambivalence in intergenerational relations are those that imply need, impairment, or dependence.” Issues that place adult children at the dependency on their parents, such as career difficulties, divorce and poor health choices, have been found to correlate strongly with feelings of parental ambivalence (Fingerman et al., 2008; Wilson, Shuey & Elder, 2003).

Connidis (2002, p. 560) argues that Lüscher and Pillemer’s (1998) model only refers to structural ambivalence being produced due to “contradictions in social roles, values, norms, and beliefs” between individuals. This, she suggests, overlooks two key features of structural ambivalence. First, Lüscher and Pillemer’s (1998) model of structural ambivalence masks how ‘power imbalances’ affect different family members and shape family conflicts (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998, p. 563). The effect of power imbalances between family members is a key concern of this research. I am particularly interested in how the differential economic and residual power statuses

generate experiences of ambivalence in everyday family relations. Second, Connidis (2002) argues that Lüscher and Pillemer's (1998) model overlooks the impact of conflicting structural social expectations on people. To capture the impact that conflicting structural social expectations have, Connidis (2002) suggests that ambivalence needs to be reframed as a dialectic relationship between agency and structure, evoking Morgan's (1985, p. 231) suggestion that:

...the question is not one of either individual strain or structural pressures but a dialectical combination of both, such that the wider structural tensions reach into, shape and condition the individual responses, which in their turn structure and shape the domestic situation.

Connidis (2002, p. 562) suggests that conflicts in structural social expectations demonstrate that: "Role conflict and overload result because of contradictions and paradoxes that are embedded within social structures." This means that the source of ambivalence is commonly beyond the family and instead reflective of the socio-political structures and inequalities. In this manner, while families may find better means to negotiate their issues, major structural problems may produce barriers that are too large to be repaired through interpersonal dialogue alone. Connidis (2002) proposes embedding ambivalence in a critical theory framework to develop a subjective and structurally joined-up concept of ambivalence. Connidis' (2002) critical theory framework suggests four sociological principles should inform studies of ambivalence. First, like the rest of society, the family should be viewed as the product of social inequalities and "structured social relations" (Connidis, 2002, p. 559) that bestow family members with different levels of power. The outcome of structured social relations in the family is that more constraints are faced by those economically dependent, such as cohabiting adult children (Connidis, 2002). The second premise of

this framework is that people try to negotiate the effects of social structures by using agency to try and exert control over their lives. However, people's agency performance should not be reduced to free choice, as self-interest is often mediated or repressed due to structural social expectations. For example, McQuaid et al.'s (2019, p. 5) study of cohabitation suggests that a strong sense of familial duty takes away parents' power to choose to do nothing; societal expectations and family values compel them to act, thereby sacrificing their own interests, so this is a "choice-less choice" as the social construction of parenthood leaves people without an alternative. The third premise of this framework is that families should be understood as produced and negotiated through continued interactions. Fourth, that family dynamics are the product of conflicting interests and that conflict is not just "episodic and unpredictable but rather are patterned features of relationships" (Connidis, 2002, p. 559). Connidis proposes this framework as a sociological definition of ambivalence as "socially structured contradictions made manifest in interaction"; people experience sociological ambivalence when "social structural arrangements collide with their attempts to exercise agency when negotiating relationships, including those with family members" (2002, p.559).

In this study, I employ a dynamic tri-level conceptualisation of ambivalence to show how emerging adults experience ambivalences relating to their liminal 'in-betweenness.' I explore how dominant societal narratives of success, progress, growth, independence, responsibility, financial security, and attainment of the normative markers of adulthood produce social inequalities that bestow members of the family with different levels of power and generate experiences of ambivalence at the structural level, which further manifest for emerging adults as they exercise agency in family relationships and personal identity projects. I further elucidate how

intergenerational cohabitation produces a particular context within which intergenerational ambivalences are amplified, negotiated, overcome, and suppressed by parents and their adult children.

Lüscher and Hoff (2013) note that during the late 2000s intergenerational ambivalence has increasingly been applied in intergenerational studies (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman et al., 2008). These studies have focused on either the cohabiting parent/child relationship, or adult/adult non-cohabiting relationships. Only a modest number of studies have focused on the cohabiting intergenerational relationship in which adult children care for aging parents (Wilson, Shuey & Elder, 2003; Obradovic & Cudina-Obradovic, 2004.) Whilst ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ intergenerational cohabitation have been overlooked within ambivalence literature, recent research has consistently implicated the failure of children to attain normative adult statuses in the creation of ambivalent family ties (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2006; Pillemer et al., 2007). As one prominent factor in this dynamic, dissimilarities in generational values have contributed to ambivalence in both generations (Fingerman et al., 2006; Fingerman et al., 2008). Indeed, the interpersonal level dynamic at work in the intergenerational home setting highlights how ambivalence corresponds across domains to influence economic, social and interpersonal values. Whilst scarce, the literature on intergenerational ambivalence is critical to this study, as it points to a prevailing, dominant conceptual construct around the intergenerational cohabiting family; one that regulates, stigmatises, and shames the adult-child and casts (chrono)normative aspirational traits as geared directly to ‘consumption’ and ideals of independence. This project seeks to explicate these concepts to explain the complexity of intergenerational cohabitation.

## Directorial Note (1) Conceptual Framework – plot structure and performance praxis

In keeping with the performative metaphor, this Directorial Note is intended to summarise the scripts identified in the literature before auditioning the actors, and planning and commencing rehearsals in the Methodology. This note does the work of visualising the conceptual framework upon which this research is structured in the form of a multi-modal model (Figure 2.2). Theoretically, the model identifies the key modalities that inform emerging adults' formation of identity and relationships and places them within the context of personal, familial, and structural levels. Pragmatically, it shows how vital mobilising concepts intersect with the theoretical framework to operationalise the conceptual framework.

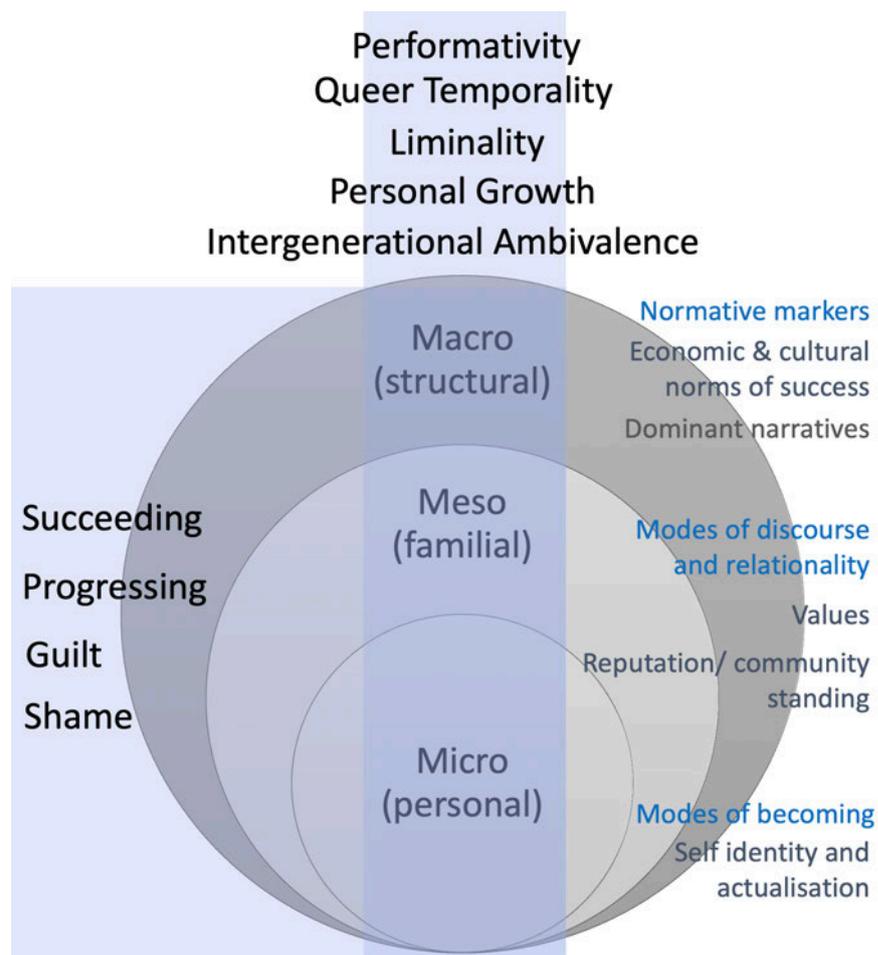


Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework

This research is structured on two dimensions; first, it identifies five key modalities (Performativity, Queer Temporality, Liminality, Personal Growth, and Intergenerational Ambivalence) that unpack how actors' identities and relationships are formed, evolved, and sustained within intergenerational cohabiting relationships. Second, it articulates how these key modalities function at micro (personal), meso (familial) and macro (structural) levels. Four key mobilising concepts intersect with the theoretical framework, setting the conceptual framework for this project. These concepts include the goal to *succeed*, the endeavour to *progress*, and the affectations of *guilt* and *shame* that emerge as part of this intergenerational cohabiting dynamic<sup>19</sup>.

The conceptual framework closely informs my methodological approach. I subvert the chrononormative narrative by adopting an anti-narrative approach (Riach, Rumens & Tyler, 2014) in my Methodology, encouraging my respondents to explore a reality in which the past, present, and future exist simultaneously unconstrained by suggestions inherent within dominant neoliberal senses of upwards growth, linear progress and chrononormative progression, a concept I refer to as *pretzeling*. Significantly, these concepts provide utility to examine the lived experience of intergenerational cohabitation and via the dynamics they suggest, offer an initial lens through which interview discussion and recounts of participant experience are considered. Via the examination of aspirations to succeed in life, and the capacity to progress and negotiate guilt and shame, participant accounts of intergenerational cohabitation emergent through this research gain depth and vibrancy as explanatory concepts; an approach that is central to anti-narrative methodology.

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<sup>19</sup> I represent *guilt* and *shame* as affective, and *progress* and *success* as effective. In my Findings, I show that *guilt* and *shame* occur as a result of failed success and progress aspirations within a (neoliberal) social context. Individuals experience these **affects** differently according to their personal, family, and social situations. However, I show that progress and success are definable and demonstrable **effects** that produce objective and measurable social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Some of the observed **affects** proceeding from these **effects** were pride, joy, relief, and contentment.

### **Act 3 Methodology - Conceptual and Methodological Framings – Performative Praxis**

I use an anti-narrative methodological framework to select, describe, analyse and present the data generated for this research. As the first section of this Act shows, anti-narrative research is a new and evolving practice inspired by Judith Butler's (1988) performative ontology that seeks to 'undo' the seeming normative certainty of subjectivities by emphasising the fluid nature of the Self and the necessarily reflexive and relational nature of meaning-making (Riach et al., 2016). Bringing this framework into dialogue with Merleau-Pontyan (1995) phenomenology via the performance mode of 'collage' (see Brockelman, 2001; Yardley, 2008; Kilgard, 2009; Cosenza, 2014) I extend this phase of contingent meaning-making to the presentation of this thesis. Furthermore, I maintain a critical, reflexive and performative approach across this thesis, extending the methodological 'undoing' (Riach et al., 2014, 2016) to the Methodology, Literature Review and Performance Acts in an intentional effort to avoid fixing, crystallising or concretising knowledge production prior to its presentation.

The extended methodological discussion presented within this Act is intended to set out the conceptual and methodological framings that inform this research, and address the second of my Research Questions, namely, 'In what ways can an anti-narrative mode of enquiry contribute to the field of intergenerational studies?' The 'conclusions' that this thesis draws in the final Concluding Thoughts Act are therefore exploratory, provocative and brief, encouraging multiple possible readings and meanings and avoiding methodological enclosure. In common with Conquergood's conceptualisation (1991), I utilise performance as a "metaphor, means, and method for thinking about and sharing what is lost and left out of our fieldwork and our texts as

well as thinking about how performance complements, alters, supplements, and critiques those texts” (p.191).

This methodological choice is conceptually consistent with the theoretical foundations of the anti-narrative approach proposed by Riach, Rumens and Tyler (2014). Riach et al. (2014, 2016) advocate an anti-narrative *approach* instead of an anti-narrative *methodology*. I suggest that this choice is a deliberate reflection of the ‘unstable’ quality of the performative ontology that their anti-narrative approach mobilises. Indeed, Riach, Rumens, and Tyler (2016) confirm this understanding in the titling of the subject of their anti-narrative manifesto, “*Towards a Butlerian methodology: Undoing organisational performativity through anti-narrative research*” (p. 2069, my emphasis) and a further statement: “For clarification, we use the term ‘anti-narrative’ to describe a methodological approach to research as a critical, reflexive process of undoing” (p.2077). It may be impossible to do more than move *towards* a Butlerian methodology, owing to the central commitment of queer theory to regard social constructs, including methods and methodologies, as undefinable and fluid experiences rather than stable and fixed entities. Therefore, as McCann (2016) argues, the process of queering methodologies does not beget a discrete and stable suite of queer methods or a queer methodology per se but represents an ongoing and evolving process that is facilitated by enacting “an attitude of unceasing disruptiveness” (Parker, 2001, p.38).

Because queering methodologies entails a radical deconstruction and reimagining of traditional research frames of being, knowing and understanding, in the first section of this Act, I declare this research project’s ontological, epistemological, and theoretical perspectivisation. Drawing substantially from the

work of Riach et al. (2014), I advance an anti-narrative methodological framework comprising:

1. Butlerian Performative Ontology;
2. Intersecting Epistemologies of Queer/Dyslexia; and
3. Pragmatic Theoretical Perspective that seeks to:
  - a. understand, and make meaning via Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology;
  - b. deconstruct hegemonic socially constructed norms and dominant narratives via post-structural perspectives; and
  - c. apply critical theory to emancipate.

In the second section of this Act, I particularise the anti-narrative approaches used to generate the data in this project. Following Riach et al. (2014, 2016), I employ six anti-narrative interviewing strategies that seek to make visible the identity ‘work’ of the performer, opening up possibilities for retrospective, present and future meaning-making and challenging the dominant societal narratives that inform participants’ views of Self. In the third section, I outline the anti-narrative approach to analysis that this research takes, again following Riach et al.’s (2016) co-constructive (Brannan, 2011), interdependent (Wray-Bliss, 2003), inter-subjective (Cunliffe, 2003), and collectively-reflexive (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015) method. In the fourth section, I show how, through the presentation of the participant and autoethnographic stories in the form of a ‘collage’ (Brockelman, 2001; Yardley, 2008; Kilgard, 2009, Cosenza, 2014), I extend the anti-narrative meaning-making project to my audience (readers), inviting them to join me in this emancipatory<sup>20</sup> endeavour. My epistemological manifesto in

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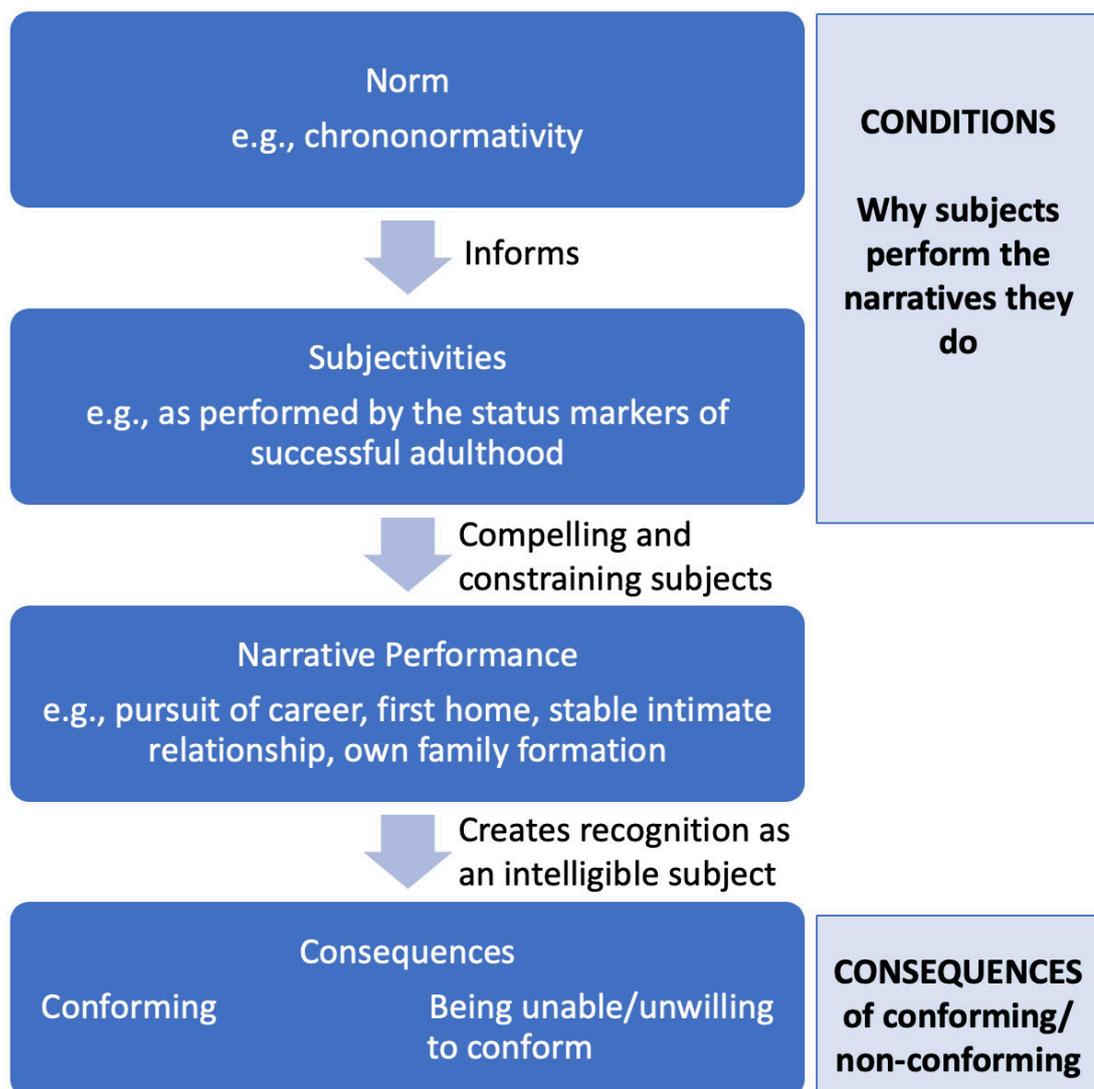
<sup>20</sup> I use the terms, 'emancipation' and 'emancipatory' throughout this thesis as a theoretical application of Critical Theory, which Moon and Blackman (2014, p.1169) define as: "Application: to emancipate or liberate" and "Emancipatory: the subjects of social inquiry should be empowered." I reproduce Moon and Blackman's (2014, p.1169) theoretical model in full at Appendix D.

this respect is to offer a performative thesis that “collapses distinctions by which creative and critical writing are typically isolated” (Pollock, 1998, p.80). In the fifth and sixth sections, I elucidate the participant sampling methods, research limitations and practical ethical considerations that represent the empirical aspects of staging this performance. Finally, I conclude the Act with an Autoethnographic Reflection on my own liminal “betweener” positionality (Cosenza, 2014, p.3), highlighting the intersectionality of queer epistemologies/epistemologies of queer and dyslexic ways of knowing and performative knowledge creation (Granger, 2010; Cosenza, 2014).

### ***Scene 1: Anti-narrative Methodological Framework***

In their landmark article Riach, Rumens and Tyler (2016) presented an anti-narrative approach inspired by Butler’s performative ontology, which seeks to ‘undo’ organisational subjectivities and better understand the consequences of a heteronormative life course. This research will draw extensively from and selectively adapt this approach, seeking to undo structural (macro) and family (meso) subjectivities to understand the lived experiences and aspirations of ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang children’ and their parents. As explained by Riach et al. (2016), an anti-narrative approach addresses a current paradox whereby “academic research with anti-oppressive commitments and emancipatory aspirations continue to textually reproduce what it purports to critique.” (p.2070). To illustrate this point in the context of my research project, the adoption of traditional narrative interviewing techniques would result in respondents narrating the chrononormative and gendered performances that these same normative structures compelled. The anti-narrative approach proposed by Riach et al. (2016) calls for a self-reflexive and collaborative approach that unravels, or as Butler (1990) characterises it, ‘makes trouble’ with the

struggle to conform, thereby illuminating individuals' complexities. Drawing on Butler's performative ontology, it is clear that subjectivities come into being and are maintained by a reiterative performance by subjects compelled to produce a coherent narrative of self. Anti-narrative approaches aim to illuminate the labour involved in conforming to these subjectivities and highlight the consequences of conforming or non-conforming (Riach et al. 2014, 2016). Below, I illustrate the steps that are 'undone' by way of a diagram (see Figure 3.1):



Anti-narrative approach encourages critical reflexive evaluation of Conditions and Consequences of narrative construction

Figure 3.1 Anti-narrative approach

In light of this project's anti-oppressive, emancipatory ambitions, this study adopts an anti-narrative methodological framework that emphasises inclusivity, collaboration, reflexivity, multi-dimensionality, co-creativity, and ethicality.

### *Butlerian Performative Ontology*

As outlined in the Prologue and Introduction to this performative thesis, this project philosophically, theoretically, and methodologically applies Judith Butler's (1988, 1990, 1993, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) theory of *performativity* to emancipate young adults from the structural subjectivities and normative conditions that compel them to "perform seemingly coherent narratives of self" (Riach et al., 2016, p.2070). This reflexive approach seeks first to question and problematize these oppressive subjectivities and conditions, then understand how, when, where, and why they are constituted before suggesting how they can be challenged and changed. Butler's works developing the concept of performativity are discussed in detail within the following Literature Review Act. However, I briefly note the key tenets of her concept here to establish the performative ontology that informs this research approach.

In her 1988 essay: *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, Butler challenges constructionist theories of identity formation whereby identity is understood as a stable and universal construct. Butler (1988) instead posits that subject positions (identities) are per/formed through the repetition of performances in accordance with normative paradigms. In her later work, Butler elaborates that "this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject" (1993, p.95, original emphasis). Essentially, the subject does not pre-exist or originate the act but is brought into being and recognised through the repeated 'doing'

of the act such that “the doing of the act is everything” (Butler, 1990, p.25). Of crucial importance to note is that subject positions are only ‘viable’ if performed in accordance with social norms that confer recognition, rendering subjectivity unstable in that it must be “always in a process of becoming” (Harding, 2007, p.1761). Butler (2005) develops this proposition a step further, arguing that “if subjective becoming is a process of doing, then it is always also a process of undoing” (Riach et al., 2016, p.2075). The desire for recognition of oneself as a culturally intelligible subject produces a vulnerability that Butler (2005) argues is true of all subjectivities; and whilst all subjectivities are precarious, those which contravene the gender binary such as transgender or non-binary, or non-heteronormative subjectivities such as those coded as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer, are more precarious than others. The same applies to identities that contravene chrononormative markers of subjectivity.

Butler’s (1990) radical proposal that subjectivity can be ‘undone’ by making visible the constraining conditions and performative work done to maintain narrative coherence opens up the possibility of challenging hegemonic, regulating subjective normativities that disavow more vulnerable subject positions. Following Butler (2004a), the key questions for the social researcher are, at what ‘cost’ does a subject work to maintain a viable narrative of self, and what are the “terms of recognition upon which it depends” (Riach et al., 2016, p.2075). Reflexivity is the key to undoing these constraining effects and exploring the possibility of constructing alternative performances that challenge the norms that subjects must conform to maintain viability.

From a methodology perspective, as Riach (2009) explains, reflexivity within the research interview “has been a focal point for deconstructing the production of knowledge within research, leading to epistemological concerns over how we come to

understand or represent another person's 'world view'" (p.357). However, Riach (2009) contends that reflexivity in social research is still chiefly employed as a retrospective rather than a 'real time' process due to project deadlines' pressures. This "places the researcher at the epicentre of any discussion of reflexivity" (Riach, 2009, p.357) and overlooks the potentiality of participant-situated reflexivity to facilitate the incorporation of participants' "perspectivism" (Bourdieu et al., 1999, p.4-5) into the analysis.

Riach et al. (2016) draw on Borgerson (2015), Dick (2013), Gilmore and Kenny (2015) and Wray-Bliss (2003) to argue for a Butlerian performativity informed approach to social research to overcome the power asymmetry which exists between the researcher/participant subject positions within the research process. Invoking Dick (2013), Riach et al. express concern about:

the extent to which researchers' understandings of the social phenomena they study are "as much constituted by their own discursive practices of researching, writing and theorising as . . . by the discursive practices of their research participants" (Dick, 2013, p.648)...[which] may lead researchers to make unreflexive assumptions about the types of subjectivities constituted through the research process, including their own, thereby replicating precisely the kind of categorical thinking that a performative theory of subjectivity is intended to critique (Riach et al., 2016, p.2070).

Cabantous et al. (2015) propose that social researchers consider two essential questions that follow directly from the deployment of Butlerian performative ontology, namely: "Who are you?" and "What are the conditions of the possibility of your becoming?" (p. 8). These questions implicate a reflexive process of

understanding the identity work involved in performing cohesive narratives that conform to social norms. Unravelling these exertions, Riach et al. (2016) contend, requires two different methodological practices, which they differentiate as “organisational *undoing*” and “*reflexive undoing*” (p.2071, original emphasis). Riach et al. (2016) explain that their conception of ‘organisational undoing’ relates to the phenomenon Dale and Latham (2015) describe as “organisational processes which fix and stabilise differences and categories and apply rules and procedures to maintain these” (p. 168). Riach et al.’s (2016) ‘reflexive undoing’ requires that the complexities, contradictions, and struggles involved in maintaining a cohesive narrative of self be made visible. Through this reflexive undoing, the requirements of organisational recognition and the ramifications of misrecognition can be examined and challenged. Mobilising a performative ontology with emancipatory aspirations, Riach et al. (2016) propose a Butler-inspired anti-narrative interview approach which differs in its application of reflexivity in several crucial ways; first, it emphasises ‘data generation’ over ‘data collection’, acknowledging the Butlerian doctrine that research data is generated performatively within the interview rather than pre-existing it, awaiting capture. As Riach et al. (2016) further note, this also cautions against citing interview data as though it were a priori, self-evident and situated in external reality, a stance that is antithetical to a Butlerian reading which would conceive of the interview itself as performative and “part of the constitution of the subject” (p.2072).

A data generation orientation also centres the research on what research participants and interviewers *do* and emphasises work that Brinkmann (2014, p.723) characterises as “trying to understand the situation by sense-making.” Second the anti-narrative approach seeks to make visible the work of performative conformity rather than simply ‘fixing’ the subjects by “reproducing the patterns of narrative coherence

and processes of organisational undoing” (Riach et al. 2016, p.2072). Third, Riach et al. (2016) follow Gilmore and Kenny (2015) in moving from self- to collective reflexivity within participant interviews and analysis. This co-creative “ongoing practice” as opposed to “an afterthought” (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015, p.73) seeks to overcome the tokenistic researcher-centric reflexivity that they argue is often a product of project time constraints. The participant/interviewer reflexivity embedded within the anti-narrative methodology may be generative in the moment and precipitate new ways of thinking.

Despite the “empirically focussed and theoretically rich” (Riach et al., 2016, p.2073) literature pertaining to Butlerian performativity, there is significant scholarly debate on the utility of the concept as a methodological praxis. Widely utilised within philosophical and theoretical scholarship, the notions of performativity and, more specifically, the process of ‘undoing’ have nevertheless attracted criticism that they are too abstract to embed within ethnographic methods empirically (see Fraser, 1997; Kelan, 2009; Morison & Macleod, 2013). The endeavour to craft a methodology that simultaneously allows for the reflexive undoing of organisational undoings whilst revealing the narratives upon which subjective recognition is conferred or disavowed has scarcely been attempted. To my knowledge, Riach et al.’s (2016) seminal work on Butlerian performativity-inspired anti-narrative approaches is the only comprehensive (and successful) project to set out to address this gap by considering how researchers:

...might go about ‘doing’ a methodological undoing; how we might engage, in and through our research practice, in a self-reflexive undoing. The latter [being] specifically designed to reveal, rather than conceal, the complexities of lived experience that are constrained in the performance of

viable, coherent organisational subjectivities, using Butler's work as a theoretical resource (Riach et al., 2016, p.2076).

Therefore, this project borrows significantly from Riach et al.'s (2016) approach and is indebted to their intellectual generosity in fastidiously particularising their theoretical logic and methods.

### *Intersecting Epistemologies of Queer/Dyslexia*

Queer and dyslexic epistemologies are predicated on anti-essentialist foundations that disrupt assumptions about the world and subject knowledge about social and organisational structures to critical examination. Different ways of *seeing* produce different ways of *knowing*. Queer and dyslexic knowledges are inherently unstable and unfixed, whether experientially through an anticategorical approach to identity and difference or perceptually via linguistic instability (letters, numbers, and words 'jumping about'). Queer and dyslexic theorists share a commitment to disrupting normalising processes that constrain agency, destabilising oppressive binaries, and deconstructing categories that disenfranchise the unintelligible 'other.' The queer and dyslexic project to advocate for anti-normal practices and identities rather than assimilating to a hegemonic normalising construct binds them to a common activism based on 'true recognition' that Parker (2001) describes as 'sheer difference' (see also Halperin, 2003; and Warner, 1999). Queer and dyslexic critiques of normalising processes that construct non-conforming subjects as 'deviant' forge the way for new, subversive ways of knowing (Butler, 2004a; Warner, 1999; Granger, 2010; Cosenza, 2014).

Queering *seeks to* "make strange... what is considered known, familiar, and commonplace" (Seidman, 1997, p. xi), while dyslexia *inherently* makes strange what

is known, familiar and commonplace. Both epistemologies are critical of claims of ‘objectivity’ and destabilise the “grand narratives that are produced by foundationalist approaches to research” (McDonald, 2017, p.135). Because queer and dyslexic ways of knowing reject claims of objectivity, the practice of generating queer and dyslexic knowledges involves multi-dimensional reflexivity (McDonald, 2017; Warner, 2004). Although there is a body of queer scholarship that argues for a narrow focus on how heteronormativity obtrudes violence on non-heterosexual subjects (see, for example, Alexander, 2003; Bersani, 1995), many queer theorists advocate for an extension of the queer mandate that challenges all forms of normative oppression (McDonald, 2016; Parker, 2016; Love, 2015; Butler, 2004a; Halperin, 2003; Warner, 1999). In this broader sense, I suggest that queer theory’s anti-assimilationist stance against normalising social and organisational structures can encompass (though not conflate) dyslexic scholarship’s calls for recognition of dyslexic ways of knowing. At their core, both queer and dyslexic epistemologies assert the claim of antinormative and non-normative ways of knowing in opposition to hegemonic and taken-for-granted ways of reading the world (McDonald, 2017). From this broad conceptualisation of ‘queer’ I turn now to consider how these knowledges might be produced.

### *Queer Ethnographies*

Queering ethnography requires reformulating the principles of ethnographic research; it involves acknowledging the fluidity of both the research participants’ and researcher’s identities and subjectivities and viewing ethnographic processes as sites in which these identities are shaped rather than processes that discover and reveal pre-existing identities (McDonald, 2017). As Burkette (2022) contends, traditional methodological enclosure produces ‘safe’ and ‘stable’ findings that are reassuringly

substantial. However, as Burkette goes on to explain, this positivistically motivated mode of inquiry:

... is also, as we all recognise on some level, *inadequate*. It brackets too much, reduces too violently, freezes too precipitously. Its safeness is rooted in its limitations. Admitting the fluidity of “truth” in our analyses is hard. We want to objectively claim *something*, as this justifies our research and disciplines scientifically. This tends to force us to hold tightly to dialogically limited constructions of the research interview (2022, p.p.307-308).

‘Queer reflexivity’ has been characterised as an approach that reflexively questions the performativity and closeting of identities, both regarding research participants and researchers, across the research process (McDonald, 2017). Introducing aspects of autoethnography as a reflexive strategy may also be an effective means by which methodologies may be queered. As Adams and Jones (2011) posit, autoethnographic enquiry complements queer ways of knowing, as it frames identities and experiences as “uncertain, fluid, open to interpretation, and able to be revised” (p.110). And as McDonald (2017) suggests, autoethnographies are, therefore “particularly conducive to queering our understandings of the social world” (p.140). They are also consistent with anti-essentialist ontology, as Madison explains:

There is no essential, original, coherent autobiographical self before the moment of self-narrating. Nor is the autobiographical self-expressive in the sense that it is the manifestation of an interiority that is somehow ontologically whole, seamless, and ‘true.’ For the self is not a documentary repository of all experiential history (Madison, 1999, p.108).

Similarly, viewing the process of academic writing *as* performance situates “the body in some kind of material surround that functions as a theatre of embodied self-representation” (Watson & Smith, p.5). Performance is necessarily embodied, such that the process of performative writing becomes part of an “epistemological loop of self: a way of knowing the self as other and the self as same” (Johnson, 2011). Due to their ‘queer’ relationship with written language, dyslexic scholars favour kinaesthetic forms of knowledge production (Cosenza, 2014a; Granger, 2010); for example, self-identifying ‘dyslexic scholar’, Cosenza employs collage (2014a) and mime (2014c) in her performative scholarship.

Cosenza’s stage and film production, *Where's Queerdo? Disabling Perceptions!*, first performed in 2012, explores the intersections of disability and queerness. She introduces the notion of the “betweener frame” (Cosenza, 2014c) to situate her knowledge production in the liminal space between cognitive impairment and kinaesthetic intelligence. In the position of “betweener”, Cosenza (2014c) explains that she finds herself neither socially/organisationally intelligible nor unintelligible, akin to what Diversi and Moreira (2009, p.19) describe as “representative blurriness.” Pushed to the “peripheries of sociological meaning-making by hegemonic rules of language use, theoretical sophistication, and representational authority” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p.21), the position of the betweener scholar is, metaphorically speaking, seated at the academic table, but so far from the Chair as to be out of earshot. Therefore, the performative narratives produced by betweener scholars represent a vehement arm-waving to gain the notice of the academy, followed by an impassioned and visceral call to action delivered from a precariously erected soapbox.

Within performance studies, the advancement of performative writing as a methodological turn has been relatively recent (Johnson, 2011). Pollock (1998) describes six defining characteristics of performative writing, which she calls ‘excursions’; these are evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational, and consequential (p.p.80–96). In seeking to develop an anti-narrative presentation of my research, I draw on Pollock’s (1998) conceptualisation of evocation, which she defines as calling forth “worlds that are otherwise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, pleasure, sensation, imagination, affect, and insight... to create what is self-evidently a *version* of what was, what is, and/or what might be” (p.80, original emphasis).

There are other ways by which scholars committed to a queer epistemology have sought to queer the interview itself. As McDonald explains, queering the interview process is not a matter of selecting queer-identifying research participants or self-identifying as a queer researcher but of framing queer research as “embodied, intersubjective encounters in which both interviewers and interviewees participate, thereby de-centring the traditional researcher/participant binary” (p.141). Attempting to ‘fix’ research participants within ‘queer categories’ such as lesbian, gay, transgender etcetera, ignores an essential tenet of queer theory in that individuals identified through normative identity categories experience these identities in different ways and over a period of different temporalities may transition in and out of these category boundaries.

Indeed, in this thesis, and within the research group constituted for this project, there are two instances of participants whose identification within ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ categorisations changed over the course of the research study. As Riach et al. (2014, 2016) explain, the practice of exploring multiple, conflicting, non-linear experiences within the interview provides anti-narrative researchers with the

means to disrupt traditionally held notions of interview narratives as factual accounts that correspond to an ‘objective’ reality. As the accounts captured for this project reveal, identity and lived experience are never so fixed, and change through time and as conceptions of the self-shift.

### *Pragmatic Theoretical Perspective*

I approach this research project with a pragmatic philosophical orientation, guided in my research design by the research questions central to this study. The main tenets of this enquiry are a motivation to understand, deconstruct and emancipate via the application of the following philosophical perspectives:

- a. Understand, and make meaning via Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology<sup>21</sup>;
- b. Deconstruct hegemonic socially constructed norms and dominant narratives via post-structural perspectives; and
- c. Apply critical theory to emancipate.

Foucault’s (1978) seminal work, *The History of Sexuality*, introduced the novel conception of ‘biopower’, which has precipitated a wealth of philosophical and sociological scholarship focused on the political meaning of the body. Foucault (1978) contends that since the advent of modernity, bodies have been increasingly regulated and governed by techniques of normalisation, discipline, and control to produce predictable, conforming productive subjects. This standpoint emphasises the importance of corporeal experience in determining how subjectivity is constituted, social existence is organised, and the possibilities to resist or change existing frames

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<sup>21</sup> At first blush the theoretical nexus of Butler’s performativity and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological ideas may not be apparent. However, by adopting this perspectivalisation I hope to demonstrate that a wide-ranging notion of performativity is to be found in Butler’s scholarship, and that this presents under-explored opportunities for development and deployment in ethnographic research approaches.

of social and organisational regulation. As elucidated in the previous section, a Butlerian read of a subject's 'identity' is predicated on the ritual performance of socially constructed categorisations that become real and produce our identities through constant repetition. Repetitious performance of intended roles and their validated meanings reaffirms, reproduces, and reifies the social order. For a social order to be resisted, it is therefore fruitless to look to 'the subject' as a site of resistance; as for Butler (1990, p.172), there is no "originary" unmediated core of subjectivity behind our performances.

Nevertheless, it is precisely the dependency of normalising social orders on the repeated re-enactment of specific roles and their consolidated, validated meanings that offers the possibility of emancipation. As Vlieghe explains:

Since iterability is an infinite process of rehearsal, it is also undeterminable. This is to say that the citational character of identity-constitution also renders it decontextualisable, offering the possibility of parodic recitation and thus of counter-hegemonic practices (Vlieghe, 2014, p.p 1022-1023).

Alternatively stated, as 'bodies', we bear identities that maintain the normalising discursive regime, *and* as a site of resistance, 'bodies' might also destabilise existing hegemonic regulating norms that produce stable identities (Vlieghe, 2014). In this way, bodies matter as the location of a form of performative agency. McNay (2004) opposes the conception of agency couched in the language of post-structural performativity, contending that it lacks, in literal terms, *substance*, it being:

...not an account of agency per se, but an account of some of the discursive pre-conditions that must prevail for certain types of linguistic innovation to be possible... Butler posits agency as a property of language conceived

as an abstract structure, rather than as a situated type of action or interaction. This conception of agency is problematic because it does not adequately address central features of agency as intention and reflexivity... Ultimately, the conflation of an idea of agency with the idea of instability within meaning systems results in a symbolic determinism... (McNay, 2004, p182).

For McNay (2004), a Butlerian read of identity offers no real possibility of resistance or change. There is no inherent property or ability in the subject that allows it to effectively distance itself from the identity conferred upon it by regulating regimes. McNay (2004) calls for a phenomenological framework to conceive identities in terms of “lived social relations” as opposed to “locations within discursive structures” (p.183) and agency as a “social practice” (p.143).

It is here that I bring Butlerian performativity into dialogue with Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology. Diana Coole’s (2008) book *Act, Butler’s Phenomenological Existentialism*, argues that Butler’s early works (e.g., Butler, 1988) are consistent with the ideas of phenomenology, precisely the approach developed by Merleau-Ponty (1995). Coole (2008) expounds that Butler’s performativity and constructivism can only be understood within the context of the body as simultaneously a source of meaning and a material entity that bears its “sedimented practices and habits” (Coole, 2008, p.15). Coole contends that the nuance that Butler’s critics often disregard is the conflict within phenomenological thought between “non-Cartesian and Cartesian versions of phenomenology” (Coole, 2008, p.14), that is, “views that do and views that do not take corporeality into account as constitutive for the meaning of human action” (Vlieghe, 2014, p.1026). In *Undoing Gender* (2004a), Butler appears to confirm this reading of her perspectivalisation:

every time I want to write about the body, the writing ends up being about language. This is not because I think that the body is reducible to language; it is not. Language emerges from the body. And therefore: performativity is not just about speech acts. It is also about bodily acts. The relation between the two is complicated, and I called it a “chiasmus” (Butler, 2004a, p.23).

In characterising this relation between bodily acts and language as a “chiasmus”, Butler is drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s (1995)’s conception of the body as both a structuring force and site of meaning (Vlieghe, 2014). Furthermore, Butler’s *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) reaffirms her commitment to the Merleau-Pontyan tradition by advancing a conceptualisation of non-essentialist ethics related to *bodily experiences*. Butler (2004a) explains that as corporeal beings, “we are not only constituted by our relations but also dispossessed by them as well (p.24). In our corporeal vulnerability, we are exposed to the harm and care of others. She illustrates this point by analysing the bodily experiences of grief and rage, contending that these are “embodied” emotions:

Grief contains within it the possibility of apprehending the fundamental sociality of embodied life, how we are from the start, and by being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own.” (Butler, 2004b, p.22)

This conceptualisation of bodily life as having an “invariably public dimension” (Butler, 2004a, p.26) emphasises that “as bodies, we are always something more than, and other than, ourselves” (Butler, 2004b, p.25).

However, whilst seeming to adopt a Merleau-Pontyan phenomenological perspective of embodiment, Butler (2004b) nevertheless rejects the calls of feminists

and queer emancipation movements for enshrinement of anti-discriminatory protections on the grounds that this instead reinforces unhelpful normative categorisations rather than undoing them, precluding a more transformational answer to this injustice: “when we argue for protection against discrimination... we have to present ourselves as bounded beings – distinct, recognisable, delineated, subjects before the law, a community defined by some shared features” (Butler, 2004b, p.24). As a scholar *with dyslexia*, this viewpoint particularly resonates. By eschewing categorisation as “dyslexic” throughout my education and professional career, I have avoided reifying the pathologising ‘impairment narrative.’ I do not accept an identity *truth* obtruded on me by society’s normalising structures. But in choosing to make visible my vulnerability and precariousness in this thesis, I submit myself willingly to a transformational experience that inevitably puts me at risk of self-loss (Butler, 2004a).

To elaborate on how the possibility of resisting and changing normalising structures is predicated on the corporeal experience of self-loss, I turn to Butler’s (2009) article, *Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity*. Here Butler explains that emancipation via

the operation of critique emerges neither from a radically unconditioned freedom nor from a radical act of individual will but from a kind of jostling that happens in the midst of social life, the very scene of being impinged upon by those we do not know. (Butler, 2009, p795).

This “public dimension” (Butler, 2004a, p.26) places us literally beside ourselves, precluding the possibility of appropriating criticality as a means of strengthening our own narcissistic position (Vlieghe, 2014). Butler finds critical emancipation outside identity politics; it posits that resistance to the regulating societal and organisational

norms might only be found in refusing or transcending identity claims. This ‘queer’ exposition of identity corresponds to “an immediate life experience” (Vlieghe, 2014, p.1033). Through anonymous corporeal experience and rejection of identity positions, the possibility of genuine emancipation is granted. New and infinitely possible futures, akin to those imagined by Muñoz (2009) beyond the ‘queer horizon’, might be realisable outside the conditioning and constraint of categories and boundaries fixed in the present. I return to these ideas and explore their theoretical and empirical implications in the Literature Review Act.

### ***Scene 2: Participant Group Definition and Identification***

I utilised a homogeneous purposive technique to define and identify my participant group (see Patton, 2001). The main goal of this technique is to focus on particular characteristics of the group of interest, which are best able to answer the research questions. In my study, the key characteristics included:

1. families with one or more adult child residing in the family home; and
2. families geographically situated in the Toowoomba region.

As I am interested in the intergenerational relationship from the perspective of the adult child and parent, it was specified at the time of recruitment that at least one adult child and at least one parent must agree to participate from each co-residing family. To identify families with these specific traits, I employed a snowball methodology. I recruited eight families, facilitated through direct contacts known to myself and the supervisory team. These include members of the local community theatre, Rotaract organisation, community centre, and the local university. These organisations are not ‘third party’ affiliates of the research but were utilised to situate flyers/advertisements for the research. Each organisation played no part in screening or recruiting

participants. Advertisements were designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of communities, acknowledging the potentiality of modalities such as ethnicity, culture, ableism, and socio-economic class to differentially impact experiences of intergenerational cohabitation. Although this recruitment method did not prescribe or mandate diversity parameters, the participant group comprises a spectrum of gender, socio-economic, ethnic, cultural and (dis)ability backgrounds. As the recruitment criteria did not preclude adult children who were themselves parents, I recruited one family in which the parent (Diane Hughs) was a grandmother to her two daughters' adult children. Accordingly, where relevant to this study, I included Diane and her daughter, Tanya's reflections about the third generation of their family (Jez and Warren).

Participants were drawn from across the Toowoomba region in which I have resided for the past 3 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) estimates the population of Toowoomba at 175,316. The region has seen 11.1% growth in population since the previous census in 2016, whilst the number of dwellings has increased by 5.6%. Intergenerational cohabitation and adult shared residences represent 3% of Toowoomba's population. Compared with the Australian population average, Toowoomba has a significantly lower proportion of high-income households (15% versus 22.5% earning over AU\$3,000 per week.)

Research participants are identified in my Performance Acts by pseudonym along with the following notations: parent (p), pre-independence (pre), post-independence (post). Pre-independence adult children are those that have not yet left their family home to live independently; post-independence adult children are those who have returned to the family home after a period living residentially independently. I confirmed in writing and verbally before obtaining consent that participation in the

research was voluntary through informed consent. Furthermore, participants were reminded that at each stage of the study, all activities within the study were free-willed, and they were free to withdraw at any stage without prejudice.

*Table 3.1: Pseudonymised<sup>22</sup> Table of Research Participants*

Family	Parent 1	Parent 2	Adult Offspring
Dale	Gordon	Harriet	Sean (pre) Age: early twenties Studying bachelor's degree and employed part time in retail
Wheller	Tom	Siri	Yvonne (pre) Age: early twenties Studying bachelor's degree
Polson	May		Charlie (pre) Age: early twenties Studying bachelor's degree and employed part time in family business
Kornell	Don		Tyson (pre) Age: mid-twenties Employed full time in aged care
Ferris	Clive		Peter (post) Age: late twenties Studying bachelor's degree and employed part time in marketing
Limpus	Andrew	Chris	Stewart (post) Age: late twenties Studying master's degree.
Schilling	Jane		James (post) Age: late thirties Studying master's degree and employed full time in training/development
Hughs	Diane		Tanya (post) Age: late forties Employed full time in aged care

<sup>22</sup> All participants are pseudonymised to protect anonymity with the exception of Stewart, Andrew and Chris Limpus, at the participants' request.

### ***Scene 3: Anti-narrative Research Approach***

#### *Qualitative Ethnographic Interviews – Techniques and Ethical Considerations*<sup>23</sup>

This study employs a qualitative participant-centred ethnographic approach which affords several lenses on a single social experience. I emphasise ascribing meaning to my subjects' lived experiences and future aspirations. A qualitative approach is key to drawing out respondents' stories allowing them to "throw light on forgotten or hidden aspects of past experience, and highlight minority experiences, which tend to be hidden in quantitative work" (Jamieson 2002, p. 23). The approach will reveal what is important to my subjects rather than leading their response and testing presumptions. Denzin and Lincoln note that using a variety of qualitative interpretive methodologies has the potential to reveal a greater depth and better understanding:

Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to fully explain their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why. No single method can grasp all of the subtle variations in ongoing human experience. Consequently, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.12).

My study's multi-technique approach is designed to unpack both conscious and unconscious feelings toward the key themes being studied.

I follow Riach et al. (2016) in structuring and conducting one-on-one in-depth interviews. A vital aim of this approach is to create a reflexive space that encourages

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<sup>23</sup> Ethics documentation, approval documents and participant information/ consent forms are provided at Appendix C. The Interview Schedule is provided at Appendix E.

critical reflection and collaborative co-construction. A semi-structured interview guide was used to navigate the respondents in talking about their experiences of, and aspirations for, emerging adulthood, gender, family and work in the past, present and future. As I elaborate more in-depth later in this section, I followed Riach et al. (2016) in leveraging their six anti-narrative interview strategies: 1. Discuss the relative importance of different factors influencing beliefs and behaviour; 2. Prompt temporal dislocation (by cross-referencing other times in respondents' lives); 3. Encourage respondents to consider alternatives (i.e. what could or should be); 4. Reconfigure positions by asking respondents to consider what others in their situation might experience; 5. Question knowability to gain greater depth of understanding about ideas that may be taken for granted or obscured; and 6. Share my autoethnography to subvert the interviewer/ interviewee dichotomy. By disrupting the linearity and coherence of the respondents' narratives, I sought to avoid them rehearsing versions of normative reality that this research aims to undo.

Interviews were conducted in participants' homes. As an ethnographer, I assumed an 'etic' perspective and approached the case site of the home as a site laden with symbolic meaning and affective association for my participants. Part of the process of understanding my participants involved coming to understand the home location of the participants as I engaged with them in dialogue. I was invited to tour six out of the eight homes I visited, which variously included photo galleries, shared living spaces, participant's living spaces, and gardens and grounds. I was offered refreshments at all homes and invited to stay for dinner on three occasions, the latter I respectfully declined. As a visitor rather than a cohabitor, I was cognisant of the steps required to broker a level of trust that allowed me to elicit participants' stories, which included showing respect for participants' home space, inviting participants to suggest

where within the home or garden the interview was conducted, introducing myself and welcoming questions about myself and the project, sharing my ethnography and beginning the interview with ‘warm up’ questions that allowed respondents to open up about their lived experiences gradually. Initial interviews were digitally recorded and lasted between an hour and two hours in duration. This time inconvenience was acknowledged at the outset, and all activities were positioned as voluntary. I used a field journal to note my methodological and ethical reflections during the interview and supplemented these notes when listening to the interview recordings the next day. I endeavoured to capture contextual information such as body language, tone of voice, eagerness, awkwardness, dissembling, reticence, or resistance, acknowledging Burkette’s argument that the

aesthetic elements inhering before, during, and after textual utterance are, instead, constitutive within its meaning as they perform within the sample’s generative, *and iterative*, instantiations. It’s not (only) the case that context matters. Context grounds the knowledge that subsequent analysis unveils” (Burkette, 2022, p.301, emphasis in original).

I also noted modes of questioning that yielded reciprocal reflexivity, or participant induced reflexivity, characterised by Riach (2009) as “sticky moments” where the “situatedness and assumptions of interview protocol and research context were actively questioned or broken down” (p. 361). Here I invoke Weick (2002), who contends that “an observational moment when something unexpected occurs is an ideal time to get a quick glimpse of a presupposition or tendency that may affect observing, interpretation and acting” (p. 897). One such example occurred in my research when Jane Schilling (mother of James) took the opportunity of my asking, “do you have any questions for me?” to ask: “how do you find James? *[Laughter]*”

This precipitated an exchange which prompted Jane to question her naturally positive bias (“He is unique. I thought I was just biased...”) that might influence the high regard and esteem in which she held her son. Weick (2002, p.897) encourages researchers to note and compare reflexive moments “in time” *within* the interview to those reflexive moments generated “after the time” *upon* the interview once it is an artefact.

Once the initial interviews had been transcribed, participants were provided with their transcripts and invited to attend a subsequent interview where emergent findings could be elaborated, discussed, challenged, and reframed. This was designed to be an iterative participant-led interview, where participants determined the duration and topics for discussion. Following Riach et al. (2016) this approach was intended to be collectively reflexive (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015), interdependent (Wray-Bliss, 2003) and inter-subjective (Cunliffe, 2003). The second round of interviews produced a second set of transcripts, which, together with their original transcripts, were subject to first and second level thematic analysis and provided to participants for review. Two participants recontacted me between 6-and 14 months post our initial interviews and requested another interview to update me on their changed circumstances and give a further account of themselves, both retrospectively and with a view to the present and future horizons.

Tyson Kornell<sup>24</sup>, a 24-year-old originally fit the category of *failure to launch* participant was eager to inform me that he had recently purchased a unit a short distance from his family home and was now financially and residentially independent. He requested to review his original interview transcript as a precursor to re-interviewing with me in his new home to reflect on his past, present, and future

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<sup>24</sup> Pseudonym.

circumstances and aspirations. James Schilling<sup>25</sup>, a 39-year-old who originally fit the category of *boomerang* participant, also later recontacted me to report a momentous change in his circumstances, whereby he had formed a stable and committed partnership, moved out of his mother's "garage" and into his partner's home, and secured full-time employment within a new profession. As a filmmaker and documentarian, he was keen to record a studio-style interview with me, which could stand as a "time capsule" of this pivotal moment in his life. Honouring both James' wish and the performative construct of this thesis, I reproduce much of the transcript of his final interview in the second of my Performance Acts alongside a contextual analysis of James's first two interviews during his period of cohabitation.

An additional research participant requested to participate in the research 16 months after my original fieldwork. Stewart Limpus<sup>26</sup>, now 28 years of age, was my acquaintance through our local community theatre, where we have both performed. At that time of my first phase of fieldwork, Stewart was residing independently and employed in an administrative position at the same company as his father. At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Stewart was retrenched and became dependent on the jobseeker allowance for income. Consequently, Stewart decided to return to live with his parents. He contacted me shortly after that to explore his interest in pursuing an academic career. Having spoken to me at some length previously about my doctoral project and my pathway back into academia via a Masters by research degree, he was inspired to consider a similar career trajectory for himself.

Accordingly, in 2020 Stewart embarked on a Masters by research degree in sociology (the same program of research that I undertook). Upon commencement of

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<sup>25</sup> Pseudonym.

<sup>26</sup> Real name, at the participant's request.

his research programme, he telegraphed his interest in understanding whether the theories and approaches deployed in this project might be of some utility in his enquiry into performances of neo-pagan rituals and identities within modern Australian Wiccan communities. Stewart has entered my research project as an identified participant whose autoethnographic reflections provide an additional point of participant-centred reflexivity. The insights and analysis derived from our interviews are presented in the third of my Performance Acts as a co-authored collaborative autoethnographic collage, which we propose to develop into an article for publication.

#### *Anti-narrative Interviewing*

Stewart Limpus identifies as having high-functioning Asperger's Syndrome. He was diagnosed in early childhood and received special learning support throughout his childhood and university education. In collaborating with Stewart on a collaborative autoethnographic article, I needed to share the conceptual framework for this study and the anti-narrative approach I intended to deploy. At first, the idea of 'undoing' a subject caused Stewart great concern, as this prompted memories of his childhood where he felt he had been 'undone' by those he trusted to support his learning. Butler's post-modern deconstructionist language triggered an overwhelmingly negative emotional response in Stewart, preventing him from engaging with the anti-narrative concept. I responded first by explaining the anti-narrative endeavour in lay terms and then discussing my approach's ethical issues and considerations. I reproduce my 'lay' conversation with Stewart here to make visible the work of "decolonising knowledge production, pedagogy and praxis" from the position of "betweenness" (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 19), acknowledging Yardley's (2008) argument that "the inclusion... of many kinds of text acknowledges that there are multiple ways in which

human cognitive networks process information and make creative leaps” (Introduction section, para.1).

*Explaining the anti-narrative approach in lay terms*

In employing a narrative approach to interviewing, I might ask a participant to tell me about a period or event in their life, what happened and how they felt about it. I might also introduce reflexivity and ask them to reflect on why they acted and felt as they did. In this way, the participant relates their story and motivations, providing insight into their actions and thinking at the time. In this narrative approach, the ‘rules’ governing these actions and motivations go unchallenged and alternatives unexplored.

An anti-narrative approach tries to discover the ‘hidden rules’ that cause people to think and act as they do. And it opens up different possible meanings and actions by challenging participants to imagine what could have been and what could be if they were free of the rules. It asks the respondent to imagine themselves back at that inflection point and consider: “What if you had taken a different option? What were the different possibilities for an alternative future? How might things have turned out differently? How might that have affected your sense of self/worth?” It then goes even further by unravelling the framework that presented those choices and asks: “What if the rules were different? What different choices might have been possible, and what choices you have made? How might things have been different then?” It questions the authority of these rules by asking: “How do you know that is what you were/are supposed to do? How do you know that is what people/society thinks (of you)? Where does that rule come from? Who says that is how it is supposed to be? Should it be a rule?” The anti-narrative approach also allows the participant to consider these choices from a distance, releasing them from self-judgement and the desire to

confirm. It may ask how they might advise a friend in a similar situation or, through sharing the researcher's stories, create a sense of permission/ possibility to break the rules.

To further illustrate the anti-narrative approach, I share a simple analogy: You are buying a car in Australia today and are presented with a choice of colours – black, white, red, blue, yellow, and green. Being Australian and culturally sensitive to the 'tall poppy syndrome', you are anxious not to stand out even though yellow is your favourite colour and you long for a yellow car. You choose the most popular colour – white. So much is the insight gleaned in the narrative approach. Enter the anti-narrative approach. But what if you chose yellow under the same cultural conditions? How might it make you feel to stand out so conspicuously? Might you feel embarrassment or joy in expressing your true preference? Where/whom do you get this disapproving sense of 'tall poppy syndrome' from? Is it correct, appropriate, or should it be challenged? What if a friend bought a green car? How would you react? What if I told you that I drive a bright blue car with black stripes receive positive reactions wherever I go? Does that change how you view coloured cars? Or me? Now let's change the rules. Suppose you lived in a culture where colour had significant symbolic meaning – black symbolising death, white frugality, red good luck, yellow prosperity and green good health. What colour would you choose now? How might you feel about yourself, driving a car whose colour was loaded with additional cultural meaning?

Narrating the anti-narrative strategies that I intended to deploy in metaphors with which Stewart was more familiar proved enlightening for Stewart. He was now easily able to engage with the intentionality and process underpinning this methodological approach and make an informed decision about the ethicality of undertaking a reflexive undoing. It also helped crystallise my understanding of the

concept, reminding me that the act of performing not only creates new knowledge and insight for the audience but also for the performer.

*Ethical considerations and implications of 'undoing':*

As I foreground earlier in this Act, a methodological 'undoing' is a reflexive project requiring the researcher to continually question their frameworks of knowing, assumptions, value systems, and unconscious adherence to normalising knowledge structures. As Dick (2013) cautions, it is the potential complicity in normalising subjective categorisation that researchers must strive to overcome if they are to avoid reproducing or replicating the compulsion to maintain narrative intelligibility. Nevertheless, this undoing of the coherent subject positions that research participants strive to maintain poses an ethical challenge. Wray-Bliss (2003) points out that the more precarious the research participant's position, the greater the risk to their coherence. Anti-narrative's commitment to a reflexive undoing that destabilises the "carefully crafted semblances of coherence" (Riach et al., 2016, p.2084) of research participants may be particularly threatening to those whose subject positions are vulnerable to organisational misrecognition.

To attempt to mitigate this risk, my intention in all interviews was to reassure participants that their positionality and being were appropriate; and critically, that I did not consider their intergenerational cohabitation circumstances a 'problem' to be investigated, understood, and fixed. I utilised varying techniques in an effort to achieve this aim. In my recruitment of participants, I explained that my study is concerned with an increasingly common phenomena, and cited Australian radio station, Triple J's 2018 'What's Up In Your World' survey of 11,000 Australians aged 18 – 29 which found that 42 per cent of that cohort reported living in their family home. During the

interviews I avoided framing adult intergenerational cohabitation in pejorative terms, and I took care to mark any anxiety or ambivalence about participants' positionality. On the occasions where I participants problematized their positionality in terms of 'failure' or shamefulness, I juxtaposed alternative readings of their circumstances, for example, prompting them to consider the unhelpful structures of late capitalism that might have impacted their situation; or reframing intergenerational cohabitation as financially prudent and responsible.

Nevertheless, in seeking to consciously avoid 'fixing' research participants in subjective categorisation, I acknowledge that anti-narrative interviewing risks 'unravelling' research participants rather than 'undoing' organisational undoings. Riach et al. (2016) suggest that the risk of unravelling the research participant is inherent to all qualitative research because of the power asymmetry in the researcher/participant dichotomy. The occlusion of this risk in traditional qualitative narrative interviewing methods may be more unhelpful in that it inadvertently reifies the organisational undoings that constrain and compel narrative coherence. Instead, Riach et al. (2016, p.2083) propose framing the research relationship as one of "reciprocation and recognition." This draws on Butler's (2004a, p.23) "integrated ethico-politics" that emphasises:

the mutual vulnerability engendered by our need for recognition in exposing ourselves to the Other, through our fundamentally embodied relationality, [whereby] we constantly stake a claim to recognition yet simultaneously run the risk of misrecognition...By opening ourselves up to the Other, Butler reminds us, we both reaffirm our existence at the same time as rendering ourselves vulnerable to its disavowal. In this sense, she invites us to engage with the challenges for ethics, reflexivity and narrative

posed by a theoretical recognition of our mutual inter-dependency and the need for us to develop an ethical openness to understanding the constraints governing the conferral of recognition, as well as the consequences of its denial (Riach et al., 2016, p.p. 2082-2083).

In this place of reflexive reciprocation and recognition, which Riach et al. (2016, p.2083) characterise an “ethics of openness”, research participants acknowledge and reflect upon the effort involved in performing coherent narratives. Research participants’ lived experiences are framed as the “basis on which claims to knowing subjectivity could be made and valued” (Riach et al., 2016, p. 2083), thus subverting the traditional asymmetric power dynamic whereby academic knowledge and knowledge processes are privileged.

#### *Six Strategies of Anti-narrative Interviewing*

Butler’s *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) is the foundation for Riach et al.’s (2016) anti-narrative research approach. It provides the most fully developed conceptualisation of how narrative operationalises self: “I come into being as a reflexive subject only in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself” (Butler, 2005, p.15). Being compelled to account for oneself “draws upon narrative voice and authority, being directed toward an audience with the aim of persuasion” (Butler, 2005, p.12), or as Riach et al. (2016, p.2076) succinctly explain: “narrative is framed as a process of organisation through which the desire for recognition of oneself as a viable, coherent self is both compelled and constrained.” By narrating ourselves in a way that conforms to the constraining societal norms, we win recognition, coherence, and intelligibility for ourselves, but as Riach et al. (2016) ponder, at what cost? Riach et al. (2016) posit that within the constraints of organisational settings, the

capability of a subject to produce a coherent narrative and thus give an account of one's ethically viable Self becomes conflated in the construction of Self as a performative narration. The anti-narrative approach emphasises how narrative by Butler's account is an ontological premise rather than an epistemic position or theoretical perspective. The methodological implication for anti-narrative interviewing is that narratives are regarded as guises of coherence that research participants are compelled to performatively narrate, rather than mechanisms by which participants construct or impose meaning on organisational subjectivities. As McDonald (2017) explains, "participants' narratives are not seen as stories about themselves, but rather stories about how they account for themselves and the constitution of their subjectivities" (p.142). Therefore, a crucial function of anti-narrative interviewing is to 'undo' the performative coherence of the participants' narratives and by extension, challenge the normative conceptions of living that they had come to assume as 'failure to launch' or 'boomerang' individuals, opening up a modality of interviewing that anticipates alternatives and extends conceptions of Self.

Riach et al. (2016) propose six strategies that aim to create reflexive spaces within the interview. Research participants and researchers can reflect on the work involved in attaining and maintaining viability through the narration of coherent selves. These strategies are only briefly particularised within a single paragraph of Riach et al.'s 2014 paper, *Un/doing Chrononormativity: Negotiating Ageing, Gender and Sexuality in Organizational Life*. I deployed these strategies within my anti-narrative interviews to produce moments of participant-centred and participant-induced reflexivity. The sample questions reproduced here are drawn from across the participant group interview transcripts and are not intended to be exhaustive but rather illustrative of the types of questions that I used to operationalise these strategies.

Where a specific framing of a question was particularly successful in generating reflexive reciprocation or produced “sticky moments” (Riach, 2009, p.357), I noted this in my field journal, including a time code to prompt further methodological reflection when reviewing the recording the next day. These moments of “real-time reflexivity” that occurred “within” the interview provided greater depth of understanding when subjecting the interview to “after the time” reflexivity and analysis (Weick, 2002, p.897).

For example, in my interview with Sean Dale, the deployment of ‘examining knowability’ and ‘reconfiguring positions’ produced a real-time reflexive moment where Sean’s labour in trying to present himself “professionally” in our interview was made visible.

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**Sean Dale:** “Just because, for me, it’s not very stable, and I still consider myself a kid.”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Do you?”

**Sean Dale:** “Yeah, I think so...”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Okay, so do you think your parents view you as a kid or an adult?”

**Sean Dale:** “Oh, a bit of both, depending. I talk like I’m a kid, I would say.”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Right, go on, explain that.”

**Sean Dale:** “Yeah, I don’t know, I just – I use slang and things like that a lot and it’s not very professional sounding.”

**Sherree (researcher):** “So, you’re putting on a performance for me, are you?”

**Sean Dale:** “Yeah, more so, but it still doesn’t sound as professional as it could.”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Why are you putting on a performance for me?”

**Sean Dale:** “Because it seems like, I don’t know, maybe it’s just the topics that we talk about as a family. So, for instance, we will talk about why Boyd is in the Broncos team and who can replace him and that will be an hour-long conversation, but it’s more, yeah, it’s more just casual. This is more professional.”

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At the point of this exchange in our interview, I noted in my field journal that Sean’s demeanour changed markedly. He shrugged and slouched backwards, put up his feet on the arm of the chair and grabbed a handful of biscuits. From this point onwards, he also began using more hand gestures and was generally more animated, leaning forwards to emphasise his points. The pace of the questions/answers also increased demonstrably. This sticky moment appeared to ‘release’ Sean from a perceived obligation to conduct himself ‘professionally’ and permitted him to drop his assumed professional persona.

In reflecting back on this sticky moment when reviewing the audio recording and field notes, I noted a missed opportunity to broach this observation with Sean directly. Had I been more practiced in anti-narrative interviewing, I might have shared with Sean my interpretation of his ‘release’ in order to phenomenographically confirm these interpretive hunches and include Sean within the co-construction. In consideration of the anti-narrative approach’s emphasis on concerns for co-constructedness and epistemic relativity, this sticky moment might be noted as a missed opportunity to embed reflexivity in my enactment of practice as an interviewer/researcher. In subsequent interviews, I deliberately used terms such as “chat” and “talk” in my set-up rather than “interview” to create a more relaxed, co-creative space for conversation.

Acknowledging the novelty of the anti-narrative interviewing approach and the paucity of information to support its empirical operationalisation, I annotate my summaries of the six anti-narrative interviewing strategies that I deployed with examples of the types of questions that I posed to operationalise these strategies. As a novice of the anti-narrative interviewing approach, I do not propose these sample questions as methodologically optimal or complete. I have identified and classified these sample questions retrospectively in the interview transcripts, and I caveat that within the interviews I was striving to achieve the anti-narrative outcomes rather than attempting to develop a suite of methodological instruments. However, I hope my methodological transparency here will assist scholarly readers of this thesis who might be interested in deploying or further developing an anti-narrative interviewing approach.

#### (1) Relative Importance

This strategy encourages discussion of similarities or disparities of importance between different relational elements and events. In ascertaining the ‘work’ that participants do to produce coherent narratives of self, I found that not all work is deemed of equal importance, nor is it uniformly arduous to perform. Reflecting on periods ‘before’ and ‘after’ attaining organisational recognition and intelligibility, participants also reported experiencing differing levels of precariousness, vulnerability and (in)validity depending on their perception of the gap between their current and desired positions and how much work it would take to bridge.

Sample questions:

“You talked about that period of time where you were ‘less’, or you felt *less*. I’m just wondering what it feels like to feel *more* and what ‘more’ it is you’re looking for.”

“Three things have changed since we last spoke; you’ve moved out of home, you’re in a long-term relationship, and you’ve secured a permanent job. Which has been the most important in terms of your feelings of personal success... and which has had the biggest influence on your happiness?”

“Compare how you think you feel about inviting that person to a date here versus how you might've felt if you were inviting her to a date to the previous residence that you just left?”

## (2) Temporal Dislocation

Temporal dislocation seeks to unsettle the chrononormative orders inscribed in organisational life, which mandate the ‘right time’ for stages of progression to occur. By disrupting the inevitability and authority of the linear progress narrative, research participants are freed to consider other possibilities for their past selves, alternative ways of being and new modes of recognition. The aim is not to unravel the participant by re-writing their history but to undo the regulating temporal schemes upon which organisational subjectivities depend. Participants’ comparison of their past, present, and projected future selves as potentially holding differing epistemological standpoints (for example, due to greater experience and maturity, a different perspective, or ‘hindsight’) created moments of ‘real-time reflexivity’ (Riach et al., 2014). Furthermore, the discipline of temporal probing resists the Wray-Bliss’ “painful puzzle” (Wray-Bliss, 2003, p. 321) of reproducing chrononormative scripts that admit causal narratives and categorical thinking.

Sample questions:

“Was there any of that legacy thinking in the way in which you originally partnered around this property?”

“What does life look like in your ideal scenario when you’re 31?”

“How do you feel your life might have turned out if you had 20 years ago met your current partner, been living in your current house, and been doing your current job?”

“Now put yourself in the time machine and zap yourself 20 years ahead. So you're 60, yep. What advice do you think that 60-year-old you is giving you in your 40s?”

“Talk to me about that, so ten years from now, he's the lead- what does that mean about him being the leader of the household, and what does that mean for you with the kids and with working?”

“Suppose you're back in your time machine, and you're 30, and you were talking to me about John and saying he's successful; what would make him so at that point?”

### (3) Alternatives

This strategy of ‘real-time reflexivity’ (Riach et al., 2014) encourages research participants to explore alternative life trajectories and consider how different choices at moments of inflection might have resulted in different performances and meanings of self. Exploring alternatives troubles the *compulsion* to maintain narrative intelligibility by destabilising the organisational undoings that constrain and compel narrative coherence. It invites participants to ignore the normative conditions and organisational subjectivities that produced their seemingly coherent narratives of self and imagine how they might have acted and whom they might have become if subjectively unconstrained.

Sample questions:

“What would you do differently?”

“What other options did you consider at that point?”

“What would've had to have changed to have kept you in the UK back then? What opportunity would have to have come by?”

“What other options were there? If you’d not been to that expo, what would’ve happened?”

“So, if I could click my fingers now, you wouldn’t have taken that path? Or would you?”

“If you had got the job and moved into a unit but not got the relationship, what would be different for you?”

#### (4) Reconfigure Positions

The strategy of using first- and third-person formations to reconfigure positions aims to unravel normative conditions and organisational subjectivities without provoking the research participants’ compulsion to ‘account for themselves’ out of a desire to maintain organisational recognition and viability. Research participants whose subject positions are particularly vulnerable to organisational misrecognition may struggle to engage with anti-narrative strategies of temporal dislocation and exploration of alternatives that might appear to unravel the labour involved in cohering. By removing these high stakes and making the *performance* the subject of enquiry, not the *Self*, research participants can unravel the conditions of constraint and organisational subjectivities without unravelling their semblances of coherence.

Sample questions:

“If a friend were in the same situation as you and you wanted to reassure them that “it is okay to be at home”, what would you say to them?”

“How do you think she’d have responded in the same circumstances? Do you think she would have done anything differently to you?”

“What would be a “normal” living situation for a 32-year-old?”

“What do you think your Mum and Dad would say? Are the moments in your life that they’re most proud of?”

“How do you think they would define your success in life so far?”

“By society standards, do you think you'd be considered successful?”

“Do you think that your parents think of you as successful?”

#### (5) Examine Knowability

The strategy of questioning participants' and researchers' 'knowability' underpins collective reflexivity by embedding a recognition-based ethic of openness (Butler, 2004a). It aims to subvert the assumed epistemic hierarchy within the interview process by positioning participants' lived experiences (as opposed to academic knowledge) as the basis on which “claims to knowing subjectivity could be made and valued” (Riach et al., 2016, p.2083).

Sample questions:

“How do you know that?”

“Where do you get that impression from?”

“Who are the “people” that you are talking about when you say that “people aren't thinking of me as having a real job”?”

“Why? Why *shouldn't*? Shouldn't, what? Where are you getting that idea from that it shouldn't be tested?”

“How did you come to that way of thinking, that there are smarter ways of doing things, and that they are the ways you now want to proceed?”

“What makes you think that people aren't thinking of you as having a real job? How do you know this?”

“Where did that observation come from?”

#### (6) Share Autoethnography

As elucidated earlier in this section, I attempted to encourage participant induced reflexivity to subvert the assumed epistemic hierarchy within the interview process.

The strategy of sharing autoethnographic reflections within the interview and responding openly and fully to research participants' questions creates opportunities for a mutual understanding of the work of unravelling of normalising conditions and organisational subjectivities. As Riach et al. (2016, p.2080) explain: "This goes beyond a 'willingness and openness . . . to be challenged and have [our] views radically called into question by those . . . [we] are studying' (Spicer et al., 2009, p.548) and moves us into a reflexive interrogation of our own narrative performativities as researchers." The below extracts from my interviews with Tyson Kornell and Sean Dale show how through sharing my story and reflecting on its meaning to me, I opened up reflexive space for shared recognition of "the conditions of possibility for being and becoming organisational subjects" (Cabantous et al., 2015, p.14).

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**Tyson Kornell:** "Do you feel like, well, do you have friends back home, or even here that have children? Do you – are you envious, or are you happy you don't have that responsibility?"

**Sherree (researcher):** "I guess I have lots of friends who have children. By the time you get to my age, typically, they do. And I have never wanted that. I guess at 23, I wasn't absolutely certain. But by the time I got to 33, and now 39, I am certain that children weren't right for me. Just because they never – they never came onto my radar as something I wanted... I thought it would make my life more complicated. And I saw people making a lot of compromises because you have to because children are expensive. And you need to think about their schooling. And you need to arrange your working life around being able to pick them up, and drop them off, and take them to places... And I just thought actually that probably has never been something that I

wanted enough to make all those compromises to my freedom. But I do look at people who have had a partnership with somebody for 10-15 years. And I think it would be nice to walk in sync with somebody who was there to witness your life's ups and downs. And love and care for you for that whole time. And see you change, see you grow, and always be a support for that. And someone for whom you could be that support. So, if there's any envy, I suppose, it's in looking at that. And thinking there were moments where I made a choice. And I maybe could have made a choice to go with a relationship or go with travel, or something like that. And I decided to go for the travel, or the job, or the – the career. And I didn't – I didn't invest in the relationship. Which meant that didn't work. And I look back, and I sometimes wonder if that was the right call. Are there any decisions you've made? Where you've looked back and think I could have done that differently, or not yet?"

**Tyson Kornell:** "No, not yet, no. As far as what I've done, I've done. You know, whether it was right or wrong, I – I've – so yes, sometimes you wish you could have treated people nicer. But other times, you just think, well, it is what it is, unfortunately. Or fortunately... I – if I don't end up having children or being married. That wouldn't disappoint me. If I did, that'd be great too. But yeah, I – I sort of believe the older you get, you adapt to your own life around you. But you still make your own choices and where you end up. Sometimes you can't help where you end with your situation. But no, I sort of – it's probably not that simple. But I sort of believe you make your own calls and your own life. And as long as you're happy at the end of the day."

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Tyson's capacity to pose questions demonstrates a foundational feature of anti-narrative interviewing, that being the subversion of the interviewer/participant hierarchy and encouragement of co-construction. In every interview I asked

interviewees at the conclusion of my discussion guide what questions they might like to ask me. As I had generally also shared occasional autoethnographic reflections during the interview (which often elicited questions) this invitation to co-question was by this late stage of the interview not novel or unexpected. In several interviews (for example, Tyson Kornell, Jane Schilling and Charlie Polson) this participant-led questioning stretched beyond ten minutes, the longest such being over 30 minutes. This feature of the anti-narrative interviewing approach is distinct from more established forms of ethnographic and phenomenographic interviewing, and is worthy of note for inclusion in interviewing approaches that seek to embed participant-centred reflexivity.

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**Sean Dale:** “So why did you leave it?”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Because I moved out of marketing and into general management, and a wise man said not long ago that once you’re the CEO of something, you work too long, and you’d have to be an idiot to stick in it for very long. I enjoyed it for about five years, and I gave up at that point when I realised my life was just work, so I am now semi-retired into academia because I work half the hours.”

**Sean Dale:** “That’s why you smiled so much when I made that comment?”

**Sherree (researcher):** “Yes. So, I went from 80 hours a week now to a pretty lazy 35-40, but marketing itself, I really enjoyed. There was just that relentless “golden boy pathway” that I followed too as an only child, where you expect to move to the next thing and the next thing; after a marketing director is a CEO, which is interesting reflecting on where your path might end up if you find yourself keep moving through jobs. At which point do you stick at the one you really enjoy?”

**Sean Dale:** “Yeah, I think I would really enjoy a magazine job, and they’re like, look, this is our product, come out and shoot some ads for us, so I would take out my little camera and do a little ad on Photoshop in a magazine. That would be cool. I don’t know how to use Photoshop, but... I did – what do they call it – work experience in that, and I enjoyed it, for a magazine, and that was pretty fun.”

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In the exchanges reproduced above, Tyson and Sean both responded to my autoethnographic reflections by expressing views about their future aspirations that ‘edited’ their previous narratives. They opened themselves up to possibilities that deviated from heteronormative and chrononormative life trajectories. When asked earlier in the interview about his vision for what life would look like ten years into the future, Tyson admitted that he had not given the matter much thought but supposed that he would marry and have children: “I suppose yeah I – I haven’t really even thought about it. I suppose maybe eventually down the track, I’d like to be married and have children... I’d probably yeah – a wife, and probably a few children.” This viewpoint contrasted with the considerably more self-reflexive response following his questioning of my circumstances. Similarly, Sean initially reproduced what he perceived to be his parents’ chrononormative expectations when asked about his intended career trajectory: “I’m Mum’s only kid, so I’ll just finish uni and then get a job in that field, and then they will be happy... I study business commerce; my major is marketing, and so I assume I will eventually move to Brisbane to find a job.” After I had shared my change of career story, he confided that he would actually prefer to pursue a career producing advertisements for magazines, having previously done an internship in that field.

The six anti-narrative interviewing strategies deployed in this research sought to ‘undo’ the performative coherence of participants’ narratives, making visible ‘work’ done in the pursuit of the desire for organisational recognition. I showed how anti-narrative interviewing, premised upon a performative ontology, is empirically possible within qualitative ethnographic methods of enquiry. Furthermore, I responded to Gilmore and Kenny (2015, p. 74), who emphasise the importance of embedding reflexivity within the interview itself, proposing that if researchers “wish to remain committed to the production of rich accounts in which the embeddedness of researchers within organisational research contexts is given space to emerge, the development of new approaches is needed.” The research participant/interviewer reflexivity embedded within the anti-narrative interviewing approach may be generative in the moment and precipitate new ways of thinking. Invoking Stockton (2009), I argue for the utility of an anti-narrative approach that regards history as merely spread without beginning and end; and as an accumulation of knowledge and insight that grows to infinity. I hope to have progressed the methodological project initiated by Riach et al. (2016) to develop a critical, reflexive performativity within organisational and sociological research and demonstrated the utility of the anti-narrative interviewing approach in encouraging ‘real-time reflexivity’ and ‘participant-centred reflexivity.’ In the following two sections, I elucidate how I extend the anti-narrative approach to analysis and presentation of findings to expand further and evolve a Butlerian-inspired methodological approach.

#### ***Scene 4: Anti-narrative Analysis***

The fundamental tenets of the anti-narrative analytical approach deployed here are consistent with the anti-narrative research approach; I adopt a reflexive voice-centred

mode of analysis (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) that empirically and analytically operationalises Butler's performative ontology. Exploring intersections between queer and disabled epistemologies, I adopt a co-constructive (Brannan, 2011), interdependent (Wray-Bliss, 2003), inter-subjective (Cunliffe, 2003), collectively-reflexive (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015) method. Rather than seeking to 'fix' participants via boundary or categorical frames (McCall, 2005), I followed Riach (2009), and Riach et al. (2016) in developing a collaborative, inter-subjective analytical approach that embeds reflexivity via "an interrogation of our own frameworks of knowing" (Riach, 2009, p. 359). As its basis, this approach acknowledges reflexivity as situated and enacted within the research process by both the research participant and researcher.

In exploring how to operationalise this epistemological standpoint empirically, I found a paucity of scholarship concerning how to incorporate participants' perspectivism into the analysis. Alvesson (2003, p.14) advocates a "reflexive pragmatism view of the interview" where the participant's narrative is considered a reflexive account imbued with multiple potential meanings. This approach blurs the boundary between research interview and post-interview analysis by conceptualising the participant as a reflexive subject and identifying different positions that participants might uphold across the research process. However, this epistemological standpoint does not imply a specific analytical method by which research participants can come to be known and understood. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) propose a participant-centric mode of textual analysis whereby double-columned pages present a traditional thematic analysis alongside researcher reflections. Overlaying reflections post the thematic analysis stage mitigates the risk of creating an infinite loop of analysis of analysis whilst at the same time introducing a point of reflection on a

traditionally ‘fixed’ category or boundary of understanding. However, it also maintains the conventional positionality of the researcher at the centre of the reflexive discussion as facilitator and curator. In attempting to flatten this epistemological hierarchy, Riach (2009) suggests “moving these writings from reflection to reflexion within the analysis” (p.364). By providing research participants with an opportunity to review their transcripts alongside the researcher’s first level of analysis, the participant’s voice is heard on top of the data, opening up the opportunity for differing positions to be discussed, challenged, confirmed, and thus, co-created.

This research project adapts Riach’s (2009) participant-centric analytical approach. Per Riach (2009), the traditional boundaries between the research interview and analysis ‘stages’ were blurred, with the anti-narrative interview approach constructed to position the research participant both inside and outside the interview as a reflexive subject. Throughout the interview and analysis process, I subjected my assumptions and insights to reflexive critique, both through self-reflexion and ongoing dialogue with my research participants. Methodologically, this involved moments of ‘real-time reflexivity’ (Riach et al., 2014), as elucidated in the previous section, and post-interview exchanges vis telephone, email, and follow-up face-to-face interviews to encourage further moments of participant centred reflexivity. I flexibly applied Braun and Clarke’s (2019) six phases of thematic analysis, maintaining the discipline of their framework of meaning-making whilst also making room for participant-centred reflexivity. I followed Riach’s (2009) principle of ascribing an active role to research participants in analysing textual data and co-construction of knowledge. However, I also noted Riach’s (2009) concerns that her expeditious approach of presenting research participants with a curated transcript that picked out sections that she coded as ‘key parts’ of the interview risked unintentionally imposing researcher-

centred reflexivity. Therefore, when designing the elements of the analysis process that were intended to encourage participant centred reflexivity, I assiduously avoided setting out the parameters for discussion.

Once the initial interviews had been transcribed, participants were provided with their transcripts and invited to attend a subsequent interview where emergent findings could be elaborated, discussed, challenged, and reframed. This was designed to be an iterative participant-led interview, where participants determined the duration and topics for discussion. This approach was intended to be collectively reflexive (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015), interdependent (Wray-Bliss, 2003), and inter-subjective (Cunliffe, 2003), as I now elucidate. Ahead of our subsequent interview, I asked participants to indicate the parts of their transcript that they felt were ‘most important.’ I intentionally left this request vague and unqualified to create reflexive space for participants’ own interpretation of their notion of ‘importance.’

During this intervening period, I also undertook a first level thematic analysis to code the data generated in interviews, which involved a line-by-line reading of the research participants’ verbatim transcripts in companion with my field notes. Like Mauthner and Doucet’s (2003, p.419) “reader response”, the simultaneous reading of interview transcripts and field notes afforded me a second reflexive lens through which to view the data and the opportunity to compare reflexive moments “in time” *within* the interview, to those reflexive moments generated “after the time” *upon* the interview once it became an artefact (Weick, 2002, p.897). The inclusion of contextual information such as body language, tone of voice, eagerness, awkwardness, dissembling, reticence, or resistance provided “a multiplicity of aesthetic valences and their trajectories” and opened up additional “epistemological lenses to explore” (Burkette, 2022, p.308). Acknowledging Deener’s (2018) argument that for a

qualitative study to produce anything beyond “complex noise” (p.p.295-296), it must by necessity narrow the field of enquiry, I nevertheless sought to maintain a reflexively open space where research participants could determine the focus of our subsequent interviews and secondary communications (email, text messages and telephone conversations). This was intended to guard against the researcher’s interpretive choices solidifying into interpretive paradigms that unintentionally narrow the epistemological possibilities for knowledge generation and meaning-making (Burkette, 2022). As elucidated in the previous section, subsequent interviews focused on parts of the original interviews deemed ‘most important’ by the research participants. These reflexions produced a second set of transcripts and field notes. Together with the original data set, these reflexions were subject to first and second level thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and provided to participants inviting their review. Three research participants provided further insight via telephone and email.

Following Braun and Clarke’s (2019) thematic analysis framework, I next undertook a second phase of analysis, generating initial codes that appeared to be of interest across the data set. In the third analysis phase, I searched for and collated codes into potential themes to be reviewed in the fourth phase. I re-engaged the three research participants who had provided feedback post the second round of interviews, inviting them to participate in the review of potential themes. One of the research participants volunteered to participate in this analysis stage, which involved collaboratively checking the relevance of potential themes across the data set and co-creating a thematic map of the analysis. The final two analysis phases were researcher-centric in design and departed from Braun and Clarke’s (2019) framework by incorporating methodological implications of ‘queer’ and ‘disabled’ epistemologies.

The fifth phase entailed defining, naming, and articulating the *multiple possible stories* told by each theme. These multiple possible stories were brought into dialogue with the literature, overlaid, juxtaposed, intersected, and assembled into a collage. I intentionally created space for multi-layered readings and multiple possible meanings (Yardley, 2008) to allow the final meaning-making stage to remain ‘undone’ and ‘unfixed.’

### ***Scene 5: Anti-narrative Presentation of Findings***

Riach et al.’s (2014) anti-narrative approach proposes several ways in which a Butlerian performative ontology might be operationalised theoretically, methodologically and analytically. Accordingly, Riach et al. (2014) describe and deploy a set of inclusive, collaborative, and reflexive research methods and analytical approaches that seek to ‘undo’ (hetero)normative ways of knowing. I suggest that a further step “towards a Butlerian methodology” (Riach et al., 2014, p.2069) and the translation of Butler’s theoretical ideas about performativity into research practice is to extend the inclusive, collaborative, reflexive meaning-making stage of the research project to the presentation of the findings. Here I turn to the intersection of queer and dyslexic ways of knowing. As elucidated in an earlier section, Cosenza (2014b, p. 1191) claims there are “dyslexic epistemologies that are related to a dyslexic processing of letters, symbols, words, social interactions, collective learning environments, achievement, standards, the academy, the world” and sets out to formulate a “dyslexic methodology” that reclaims this form of multi-dimensional processing and knowing, which medically and academically is pathologised as a deficiency. Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) draws from scholarship on performative writing to challenge the normative structures of academic writing. In

proposing a dyslexic methodology, she extrapolates more broadly the legitimacy of queer ways of knowing, echoing Diversi & Moreira (2009), Yardley (2008) and Granger (2010) in her call for a decolonisation of knowledge production.

It was at first curious to me that as a self-identifying “dyslexic scholar”, Cosenza (2014a) states that:

The critical component to a dyslexic methodology is writing as a method.

Richardson (2000) explains that “writing as inquiry” is coming to know something new through the physical process of writing in a postmodern context. She claims, “I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it” (p. 924) (Cosenza, 2014b, p.1196).

People with dyslexia typically do not embrace writing as a native form of communication or knowledge-making. Indeed, in *Where's Queerdo? Disabling perceptions!* (2014c), Cosenza argues for a queering of knowledge production within academia that incorporates kinaesthetic (mime) and audio presentations. However, in her manifesto, *Language Matters: A Dyslexic Methodology* (2004b), Cosenza invokes Richardson's (2000) postmodern approach to rationalising her call for writing as a key method in dyslexic knowledge production:

The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method of theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles. (Richardson, 2000, p. 928) (Cosenza, 2014b, p.1196).

Cosenza then contends that a dyslexic methodology must unsettle normative modes of knowledge production by presenting dyslexic knowledges in authentic dyslexic ways

that trouble “universal claims to “right”, leaving room for multiple ways of writing, reading, meaning-making, and expressing symbols” (2014b, p.1196). Through presenting alternatives to the universal “right”, that queer forms of knowledge production can come to be acknowledged, validated, and assimilated. By bending ourselves to the normative disciplining constraints of the academy, scholars who have dyslexic or queer ways of knowing do a disservice not only to ourselves but also to our colleagues. According to Cosenza (2014b), our “mistakes” should precipitate reflexivity; what can we learn from the miss-spellings, miss-readings, and different ways of seeing symbols that might open up possibilities for multiple ways of knowing the world? Cosenza (2014b, p.1197) explains that “the “non-normative” writing techniques of queer and dyslexic scholars matter, as the non-normative writing process is a way of coming to know the world. When writing *into* the subject, the dyslexic “writer’s articulate presence” is a means of claiming material space, a positionality.” Cosenza’s (2014a, 2014b, 2014c) pioneering autoethnographic works exploring the intersectionality of queerness and dyslexia provide a lens through which to view critical disability pedagogy from a dyslexic perspective, opening up possibilities for a dyslexic epistemology and methodology that echo Yardley’s (2008) argument that not only does the study of dyslexic ways of knowing demonstrate that there are many different ways of processing and understanding texts, but that it is *ethical* to leave space for multi-layered readings:

The inclusion here of many kinds of text acknowledges that there are multiple ways in which human cognitive networks process information and make creative leaps. This contribution directly presents the case for multi-layered narrative inquiry as a paradigm of ethical activity (Introduction section, para.1).

Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) advocates performative writing in the form of collage as a method of queer (and dyslexic) writing. She draws heavily from Yardley (2008) and Kilgard (2009) in her deployment of performative collaging as a research presentation method. Collage as a mode of performative writing is the assemblage of distinct and often disparate evocations, which might include texts, images, and symbols to create a larger picture. There is space for multiple readings and multiple meanings in the gaps between the parts

Explaining the collaging process in their seminal *Theatres for Literature* (1980), Kleinau and McHughes posit that the new work of a collage “incorporates and overrides the identities of the components” (p.139). In more contemporary performance scholarship, this relationship of conceptualised in more complex terms; as for example, Goulish (2001) proposes: “A work is an object overflowing its frame converging into a series of other objects each overflowing their frames, not becoming one another, but becoming events, each moving in the direction of their own infinite singularity and difference” (p.100). Similarly, Brockelman (2001) connects the multiplicity of possible readings and meanings of collage to postmodernism, arguing that the assemblage of elements from different worlds into a single composition demands “a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element”, which calls to attention the “irreducible heterogeneity of the ‘postmodern condition’” (p.p.10-11). Each word, phrase, paragraph, section, image and symbol may have discrete meaning, but once assembled in a collage, they resonate with each other and the whole, such that each element and the whole may produce multiple possible knowledges.

The practice of assembling a performative collage is similarly contested within performance scholarship. Kilgard (2009) explains that collage takes the idea that all performance is intertextual as its central premise. In constructing, assembling, and

arranging a collage as a performative constituent of this thesis, I draw on Kilgard's (2009) four key elements, which she proposes as "paradigmatic for performance studies: 1) Collage involves examining the (at least) double life of constitutive components; 2) Collage is a sensual/sensory/embodied practice; 3) Collage involves juxtapositions and relationships of elements in time and space; 4) Collage is unsettled" (p.11). It is well established that performance is inherently embodied and that in its evocation and transcription from the body to page, bodies do matter. However, Kilgard (2009, p.13) argues that "the embodied activity of making a collage is under-theorised." Kilgard describes her collage-making process as "intensely physical" (2009, p.13).

Similarly, my collage-making process employed a kinaesthetic technique of rendering my data and analysis in a tactile material format. Having completed a thematic analysis of the research data described earlier in this Act, I next set out to produce a physical representation of my entire dataset. Guided by Kilgard's (2009) method, I first printed out the below text in A3 size and taped it to my wall, highlighting in yellow highlighter the elements of the method that I intended to follow, accompanied by methodological annotations pertaining specifically to my project. To illustrate my collage-making process and 'make visible' my 'dyslexic ways of knowing', I now reproduce this text with my original yellow highlights and annotations in parentheses:

*How To Make a Collage Out of this Essay*

- Print the entire essay. (dataset)
- Take scissors and cut the whole thing up into little pieces.
  - o You could cut each page into the same size pieces.
  - o Or you could cut each small section apart.
  - o Or you could cut shapes into the pages.
- Or cut up this whole issue of *Liminalities* if you want.
  - o Make sure you use recycled paper for your project if you decide to do this.
- Make sure that there is some logic to your cutting.

- o Be able to articulate what that logic is. (printouts are cut up into “bits” that correspond to themes and sub-themes identified in the thematic analysis)
  - o You may cut with abandon if you can narrate your abandon and explain your motivations.
    - You could choose to tear instead of cutting. (the experience of tearing pages out of my supervisory notebooks is particularly gratifying)
    - Or you could burn the edges.
    - Perhaps you experience cutting up text as destructive rather than creative. If so, you could use the uncut text as a foundation for layering other texts.
  - Next, gather additional texts that are relevant to your experience of collage and performance studies. These might include:
    - o books and articles about performance studies; (printouts of key book chapters and articles are yellow-highlighted and added to the piles of themed paper)
    - o artifacts from productions you have helped develop;
    - o programs from the seven most recent performances you have witnessed;
    - o the latest issues of *Text and Performance Quarterly* and *TDR*;
    - o the novel you read last week;
    - o a clip from one of the beautiful performances documented in *Liminalities*;
    - o or anything else that connects to this research in some way. (include Confirmation of Candidature Document/Presentation/Milestones; printouts of my personal/reflective journal pages (where relevant experiences are chronicled), and printouts of emails to my parents, family and friends discussing my PhD experiences for the purpose of ethnographic reflection)
  - You can make this collage with a friend.
  - Try automatic writing.
  - After you gather some texts, begin to arrange them in some meaningful way. (sub-themes ‘orbit’ key themes spatially and are situated close to similar sub-themes and furthest away from different/contradictory sub-themes)
  - Don’t discount happy accidents or serendipity. (add paired coloured post-it notes and sticky dots with matching ‘happy’ symbols to mark “happy accidents” and serendipitous occurrences)
  - Don’t be afraid to make deliberate juxtapositions.
    - o Attend to the places where texts collide—to the borders. (add paired coloured post-it notes and sticky dots with matching ‘grumpy’ symbols to mark textual collisions)
  - Try to articulate your strategy of layering and arranging.
  - Make deliberate choices.
  - Acknowledge the theories guiding your practice.
  - Recognize your struggle to understand and fully articulate this aesthetic/scholarly activity.
  - Seek guidance from your mentors.
- (Kilgard, 2009, p.17, original emphasis)

Accordingly, I printed my participants' transcripts, emails, and telephone messages; scanned and printed research participants' drawings and diagrams; scanned and printed my field journal; exported and printed my thematic analysis; and all the pages out of my supervisory notebooks and printed copies of "anything else that connects to this research in some way" (Kilgard, 2009, p.17). Scissors in hand, I set about cutting and arranging "bits" (Brummett, 1991, p.70) into themes and sub-themes identified from my analysis. I deployed what I shall characterise here as a *planets and moons* approach, using my lounge room as my 'collage universe.' According to my house plans, my lounge space is 5.9m x 3.5m, though my collage universe was perhaps a metre and a half narrower owing to the presence of a wall-length sofa.

I first laid out the six key themes identified in my thematic analysis in a central skeleton lengthways, each occupying a 1m x 2m space. Each key theme was denoted by a 'placeholder' theme header texted in a distinct colour on an A4 sheet. Data bits were gathered around the theme header in piles according to their data types (for example, research participant transcripts, research participant emails, field journal entries etc.). Once all six *planets* were laid out, I rearranged their position in the universe to spatially represent the extent to which the themes were philosophically complementary, distinct, or contradictory. Attending to each theme individually, I then picked out the bits in each pile that were best representative of the sub-themes identified within my thematic analysis. I used A5 sheets to denote placeholder sub-theme headers, texted in the same colour as their corresponding planet. I then piled these *moons* in orbit around their corresponding planet, once again spatially positioning complementary themes closest together and distinct or contradictory themes concentrically and diametrically further apart. Next, I took up a box of different coloured post-it notes and sticky dots and moved around the room identifying "happy

accidents”, “serendipitous” occurrences and “textual collisions” (Kilgard, 2009, p.17). I doodled paired symbols on the post-it notes and sticky dots and affixed them to the coalescing or colliding bits to highlight these elements held in happy or destructive “crisis.”<sup>27</sup>

Finally, I employed Kilgard’s (2009) compositional methodological strategy of research juxtaposition. Inspired by Shields and Kepke’s (1996) “Gallery Theatre” approach, I sought to present “multiple texts juxtaposed within a prepared environment as a context to prompt multiple mediations, multiple readings and meanings” (p.p. 73-74). In seeking to produce a reflexive space of shared learning, I noted Vaughan’s (2005) pedagogical praxis that defines collage as “built on juxtaposition, on the interplay of fragments from multiple sources, whose piecing together creates resonances and connections that form the basis of discussion and learning” (p.12). The process of identifying texts that, when juxtaposed, might resonate is a skilled practice requiring some trial and error. On the one hand, as Dillon (2004) explains, juxtaposition is produced when seemingly unconnected and disparate texts are presented adjacently. However, for collage to hold possibilities for multiple readings and meanings, some connection, however inexplicit, must be present:

We say two things are juxtaposed when they are placed side by side or one after the other with no connecting matter or continuing thread or common topic. Some inexplicit connection is nonetheless implied, or else one would simply have a pile of spare parts—*disjecta membra*—which may not even be parts of the same thing or similar things. Juxtaposition can thus be a matter of degree (Dillon, 2004, par. 6).

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<sup>27</sup> A visualisation of the planets and moons thematic map is provided at Appendix B.

I aimed to create resonances across the data set through juxtapositions of themes and sub-themes, complementary, distinct, and contradictory texts. Per Markham (2005), Kilgard (2009) and Cosenza (2014a, 2014b), I layered out the bits, juxtaposed in spatiality, seeking out implicit commonalities among the histories of the various worlds to which the bits had belonged. I captured meanings that jumped out of these ‘crises’ as fragments of insight to fuel my Performance Acts, resisting the urge to make meaning within the collage itself. Across performance scholarship, there is a broad consensus that collage requires a profound level of engagement in the meaning-making process by the audience. Indeed, Picasso drew this distinction between cubism’s *Trompe l’oeil* (trick of the eye) and collage’s *Trompe l’esprit* (trick of the spirit), or unsettled quality that must be fully experienced to be understood (Kilgard, 2009). Kuspit (1989) almost appears to anticipate the ontological positions of Butler (2005) and Harding (2007) in his conceptualisation of the unsettled nature of collage as being “in a process of becoming” (Harding, 2007, p.1761). For Kuspit:

Collage is a demonstration of this process of the many becoming the one, with the one never fully resolved because of the many that continue to impinge upon it... Concrecence is, in effect, never finished, however much there may be the illusion of completeness. This is the poetry of becoming—the poetry of relativity—and it is what collage is about: the tentativeness of every unity of being because of the persistence of becoming, even when absolute entity-ness seems achieved (Kuspit, 1989, p.42).

In her performative essay, *Collage: A Paradigm for Performance Studies*, Amy Kilgard (2009) acknowledges the work of the audience in participating in collage’s meaning-making process:

I acknowledge and appreciate the work that the collage structure of this essay demands of you, the reader. There are no “guarantees of meaning” ([Brockelman, 2001, p.]37), at least not in the sense of many traditional essays that have one clear and specific thesis statement that you can walk away articulating. The thesis is in the gaps, in the juxtapositions, and in the (perhaps miraculous) possibilities of the meaning-making process. It is in the crisis of collage (Kilgard, 2009, p.2).

Evoking Brockelman’s (2001) description of collage as “an art of crisis—an art in perpetual crisis” (p.35), Kilgard’s (2009) “crisis of collage” represents a disruption of normative structures of academic writing; and as Kilgard (2009) further elucidates, collage produces a “contested space” of “possibilities for critical intervention in... the social world” (p.3). This “contested space” is otherwise conceptualised by Perloff (1983) as “mise en question” (p.10), which translates as being open to question. This reflexive challenge is extended to both collage-makers and the audience. With this commitment in mind, I perform my findings and hope to inspire the critical intervention of my audience.

### ***Scene 6: Limitations and Positionality***

A benefit of recruiting such a narrow cohort is the commonality of respondents’ lived experiences. This affords a depth of understanding where themes can be explored from multiple shared viewpoints. However, I acknowledge that caution must be observed in extrapolating my research findings to the broader population, particularly those located in multi-cultural cities and professional communities where lived experiences will be markedly different. Furthermore, as an adult recently cohabiting with a 75-year-old parent, my situation influences how my research questions have been formed

and methodology constructed, including my interpretation of the data. Qualitative researchers must display sensitivity to how a social situation is interpreted from a particular background and set of values. Altheide and Johnson (1994) note that the narrative between researchers and respondents is a co-construction; therefore: “there should be clear ‘tracks’ indicating the [interpretive steps] made” (p.493). As an ethnographer, I must consider how my situation and characteristics (culture, ethnicity, ability/impairment, language, age, social class, and gender) impact my relation to my respondents and how I may analyse the data (Okely and Callaway, 1992). My anti-narrative approach allows me to view the subject through different lenses and subject my analysis and findings to collaborative reflexivity.

### ***Scene 7: Autoethnographic Reflection***

It is not uncommon for me to type an incorrect number into my mobile phone keypad when trying to make a booking, key in an incorrect security code, or muddle times on my appointments calendar. Numbers are impishly mischievous and will prestidigitate themselves into all manner of combinations. Without the benefit of context, I find numbers tricky to pin down. Where a number is situated in context, it is somewhat more anchored. I know my next electricity reading is on 24.03.22 – the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 (the current calendar year), not as my mind first read it, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2024. I am equally sure that I will be billed somewhere in the order of \$180 rather than the dissembling \$810 that my fingers initially typed. However, I do not trust myself to input the correct bank account number or sort code for the bill transfer without triple-checking my numbers (though, fortunately, these days, we have BPAY scans).

Being a scholar with dyslexia sometimes feels like a contradiction in terms (though perhaps arguably less so than a ‘dyslexic businesswoman’). Only a handful of

scholars ‘identify’ themselves as dyslexic, and even fewer of those scholars have made dyslexia the autoethnographic subject of their writing (Granger, 2010). None of these ‘dyslexic scholars’ (as I shall refer to those who assume this identity overtly) have focused on numerical difficulties associated with visual dyslexia. However, there exists an insightful and compelling body of autoethnographic dyslexic scholarship concerning difficulties experienced with textual comprehension and reproduction and, more broadly, dyslexic identity management within the academic sphere. Yardley, Granger, Kilgard and Cosenza have done much to ‘make visible’ the ‘work’ involved in performing a ‘dyslexic scholar’ identity within the sphere of higher education and academia, as well as “decolonising knowledge production, pedagogy and praxis” from the position of “betweener” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 19).

In her formative article, *A Tribute to My Dyslexic Body: As I Travel in the Form of a Ghost*, Granger (2010) characterises her dyslexic body as a ghost that haunts and disrupts the academy. She recalls the times in her academic career when she has disciplined herself to push past pain and exhaustion to prove to herself that she is not disabled. It is in these moments of dangerous masochism that “the real is thrown into crisis” (Gordon, 1997, p.43), and her ghostly form “insists on being real” (Granger, 2010, Lessons In Reading section, para.3). The invisibility of her impairment and the ‘work’ required to subjugate her dyslexic body to the disciplining norms of the academy renders Granger’s ghostly form unintelligible. Her dyslexic non-normative processes produce knowledge in ways that are unacceptable to the knowledge “gatekeepers” (Granger, 2010, Final, Very Important, Dystracting Thoughts section, para.7). These reflections resonate strongly as I, too, push through to the early hours of the morning, seven days a week, 18 hours a day, reading and re-reading, writing, and re-writing, striving to prove to myself that I can successfully and punctually

perform this thesis in the crucible of the academy. I ponder why I am breaking my body, mind, and spirit to conform to the requirements, timelines and conventions prescribed by the academy's normative ways of knowledge production. Despite my slower reading, processing and writing, I feel compelled to 'measure up' to the academics whose doctoral degrees have taken less than three years, so I persist in self-enforcing an arbitrary temporal prison that regulates and oppresses me. I know that my supervisors would approve an extension to this project if they knew of my cognitive impairment, and I am confident that my institution would be equally accommodating. And yet to own this ghost of mine and make "allowances" for it would lessen me, weaken me, and haunt me. Performativity validates and captivates me; I compulsively and repeatedly replicate the 'good student' performance that is my aspirational self, whatever the physical and mental cost<sup>28</sup>.

Several of my research participants have employed spatially and physically diminutive language ("less/small/weak") concerning their sense of diminished self-worth in being obliged to reside with their parents. Stewart feels society's disapproval "press in" and mentally crush him into a smaller person. James set a limit of two years on the period he was prepared to reside with his mother to remain "viable." I reflect on my sense of unintelligibility and 'less-ness', my need to 'measure up' and 'stay on track', and I wonder how these spatially and temporally motivated normative forces have become inscribed on my sense of self. Through their ground-breaking scholarship, dyslexic scholars like Granger, Yardley, Kilgard and Cosenza emancipate fearful, ashamed, self-internalised 'unintelligible' scholars with dyslexia like me, helping us inhabit our spectral selves. Granger (2010) explains that the first step in

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<sup>28</sup> As I write this scene, I am simultaneously revisiting the 12<sup>th</sup> draft of my Performance Acts and surviving on less than 5 hours of sleep per night.

contesting the construction of impairment is to pay attention to how people with non-normative ways of reading and learning *do* read and *do* learn:

When we pay attention to how I do read and how I do learn, then the previous crisis (how it is that I am not learning) is thrown into crisis. The crisis is no longer about locating or fixing impairments. The new crisis becomes the potential destruction of the boundaries between the mind and body, abled and disabled, smart and stupid, truth and fiction, and I can make my way, entering in as a subject and transforming as a ghost (Granger, 2010, Introduction, para 5, original emphasis).

As discussed earlier in this Act, the notion of *crisis* (“crisis of collage”, Kilgard, 2009, p.2) that Granger and Kilgard advocate for is a powerful disrupter to the dominant, pathologising, ‘impairment narrative’ and a means through which dyslexic (and I would extend this to *queer*) ways of knowing can be made visible. Accordingly, Granger (2010) articulates her process of reading, which she explains involves spiralling, retracing, revolving:

When I read, I never start from the first word and travel through to the end of the paragraph, and oftentimes even the end of the sentence. Rather, I'll read in the shape of a spiral. Sometimes I'll read the first half of the sentence three times before I get to the end of it, and then I start back two sentences before the one I had just completed. I do this because there are many random spellings that make words become incomprehensible. It is as if I'm forever completing a fill in the blank vocabulary quiz, except I don't have a word bank on hand. Context clues of all kinds become an essential component to reading. In reading, I'm always stopping to tend to

my webs, my puzzles, my Rubik's Cubes (Granger, 2010, Lessons in Reading section, para 1).

Granger's description of her reading process resonates strongly, as I, too, read in an arc motion, beginning at the centre of a line of text, then swinging left and right to fill in the flanks. I find this way of visually 'anchoring' the text in the centre of the page gives it less scope to jump about, packing it into its rightful place like a row of sardines squeezed tightly in a tin. Like Granger, I use context clues to make meaning of individual words and syntax. The words 'slot' into place for me, not so much like a *Rubik's Cube*, more akin to *Connect 4*. I scan for patterns, make connections, and then keep slotting in the coloured discs. When I am tripped up by syntax construction that is unfamiliar, my scanner jolts to a stop. Much like a gap in the *Connect 4*, I focus my attention on understanding how the gap might be significant, what meaning it could have, and if perhaps I could ignore it and still complete the picture.



Figure 3.2: *Connect 4*

The earliest family photos of me playing *Connect 4* with my auntie are from a caravan holiday in 1984. Therefore, it's been almost 40 years that I have pondered how these two players pictured on the box have arrived at this position without either of them winning the game on an earlier turn. *Game Theory* has long been a fascination of mine (it is the only Economics subject that I excelled in when I read my Philosophy, Politics & Economics undergraduate degree). I also enjoy the challenge of reverse-engineering *game theory* to discern which moves must have been played in which sequence. Accordingly, I have always wondered why the boy is pictured poised to drop his red disc in the top position to connect the four red discs diagonally when he ought to have won the game on his previous turn by connecting the red discs on the third row, second column from the left. Instead, on his previous turn, the boy clearly chose to block the yellow diagonal run from the bottom right corner, a defensive move that I argue is atypical of his aggressive game strategy. The strategic positioning of the reds is masterful; the boy had set up the unassailable central X. If this aggressive strategic position was deliberate, I wonder how he could have missed his earlier chance to win the game. I could perhaps read the boy's eager smile as overconfidence, which might have prevented him from paying due care and attention to his previous move. For the penultimate disc of the game, the man elected to play the yellow disc to the left of the boy's defensive red rather than connect his own run of vertical yellow discs from the bottom right to win the game. This also perplexes me. Perhaps, I speculate, the man is the boy's father and wished to encourage his son's strategic thinking rather than punish the tactical mistake. Or maybe the man was so ashamed to be manoeuvred into such a weak strategic position by a young boy that he was conditioned into a defensively reactive mode of play that obscured the opportunity for victory when fortuitously presented. It might also be the case that the marketing

manager or photographer placed the discs unthinkingly and directed the man to clutch a yellow disc in anticipation of his next turn (despite clearly being beaten on two fronts) and the boy to assume a gleeful grin, hand poised tauntingly over the winning slot.

The idea of multiple possible readings and multiple possible meanings resonates with my understanding and experience of dyslexia, which produces a natural ability to “apply various meanings to symbols, letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, texts and so on” (Cosenza, 2014a, p.157). As explored earlier in this Act, Cosenza’s (2014b) ‘dyslexic methodology’ sets out to reclaim this form of multi-dimensional processing and knowing. Echoing Granger (2010), Cosenza (2014b) calls for dyslexic and queer ways of processing and knowing to be made visible and acknowledged as legitimate and valuable, rather than being medically and academically pathologised as a deficiency. Cosenza (2014b) draws from scholarship on collage and performative writing to challenge the normative structures of academic writing. In proposing a queer/dyslexic methodology, she emphasises the legitimacy of queer ways of knowing, echoing Diversi & Moreira (2009), Yardley (2008) and Granger (2010). Granger (2010) goes further, presenting a manifesto for the decolonisation of knowledge production, which I quote at length to avoid reducing to soundbites a compelling and impassioned call to action:

We need new ways of talking about and approaching learning disability or even the "bad student" as politically situated, not just medically / biologically situated in a category. This is new terrain. We need different ways of talking to have a new way of (ad)ressing our strengths in ways that can take us further than our weaknesses to prepare us to address social barriers... In discussing people with learning disabilities, our methods

must consider the ways in which the construction of impairment weighs on us. It doesn't have to be like this. Words and narratives have the potential to create new meanings, new worlds, new identities, new communities, and can be a way of resisting those structures that press on us, a way of negotiating power... Our Bodies Need Our Theories. So I beg you (Are you with me?), use your sweet, sweet trouble shooting skills and relocate these problems in new words and worlds because only then can we begin to imagine the potential of building something new. Our schools, our theories, our words need our bodies (Final, Very Important, Dystracting Thoughts, para 8 & 9, original emphasis).

I may not be ready to fully embrace my ghost nor claim due 'allowances' for my cognitive impairment, but my body stands as an ally, trouble-shooter and co-creator in this broader endeavour.

## **Directorial Note (2) Emergence of Affirming Language**

Terminology used to describe adult offspring that remain or return to reside in the parental home is overwhelmingly couched in the negative. I find the pejorative terms, ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ problematic, and have employed them here critically in order to locate the thesis in the current cohabitation literature with the aim of challenging these discourses. At no point were these terms used in participant interviews or in recruitment materials.

Katherine Newman’s (2012) cross-national study spanning Denmark, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, and the United States of America, found that local cultural norms, economic factors, and social policies influence both the incidence of intergenerational cohabitation and the extent to which it is considered socially acceptable. This is further reflected in Otters and Hollander (2015) who suggest that in Southern Europe, offspring staying at home until marriage is a more normalised practice as the extended family is the primary institution of social security. Yet even in these more favourable contexts, adult offspring who cohabit with their parents are still infantilized with labels such as *bamboccioni* “big babies” and “KIPPERS – Kids in Parents’ Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings” (Otters & Hollander, 2015, p.40).

In my recent paper (Halliwell & Ackers, 2022) I used the terminology ‘adult-offspring’ to avoid the infantilising inference of children as meaning pre-adulthood. However, as examined in the review of the literature, and discussed in the Performance Acts and Concluding Thoughts Act, the experiences of ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ adults are so different as to render a homogeneous naming-convention counterproductively un-nuanced. I therefore propose a conceptualisation that reflects the characteristic ‘becoming’ of adults during these liminal phases of their lives

(Butler, 2005; Harding, 2007; Riach et al. 2016) and builds on Arnett's (2000) established theorisation of *emerging adulthood*.

Despite sharing many of the liminal traits that Arnett (2000) associates with the period of early adulthood (spanning late teens through to the twenties), such as financial, residential and relationship instability, feelings of in-between-ness, self-focus, identity exploration, and a sense of possibility, 'boomerangers' appear to be chronologically excluded from Arnett's categorisation of emerging adults. Indeed, Arnett confirms this reading in his suggestions that the confluence of prolonged educational opportunities, flexible residential arrangements and fluid career options in Western cultures produces the unique parameters for emerging adulthood, which can only exist "in cultures that *postpone the entry* into adult roles and responsibilities until well past the late teens" (Arnett, 2000, p.478, my emphasis). Arnett's conceptualisation of emerging adulthood, therefore, seems to apply exclusively to young people who have yet to 'enter' (transition to) adult roles. I therefore suggest a conceptualisation that acknowledges that 'boomerangers' who have *regressed back* to a stage of liminal un-becoming have much in common with the state of 'in-betweenness' occupied by emerging adults; whilst at the same time noting the critical difference in their positionality, namely that they have previously completed or perhaps partially completed this transition. Accordingly, I propose the retirement of 'boomerang' in favour of 're-emerging' adult/adulthood.

## **Act 4 Performance – Failure to Launch and Launching to Fail: Subverting the Normative Flight Plan**

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The “squirrel” to *Top Gun* launched in Australian cinemas on 26 May 2022. I am reminded of a famous exchange from the original movie:

Maverick: “You know on the first one I crashed and burned.”

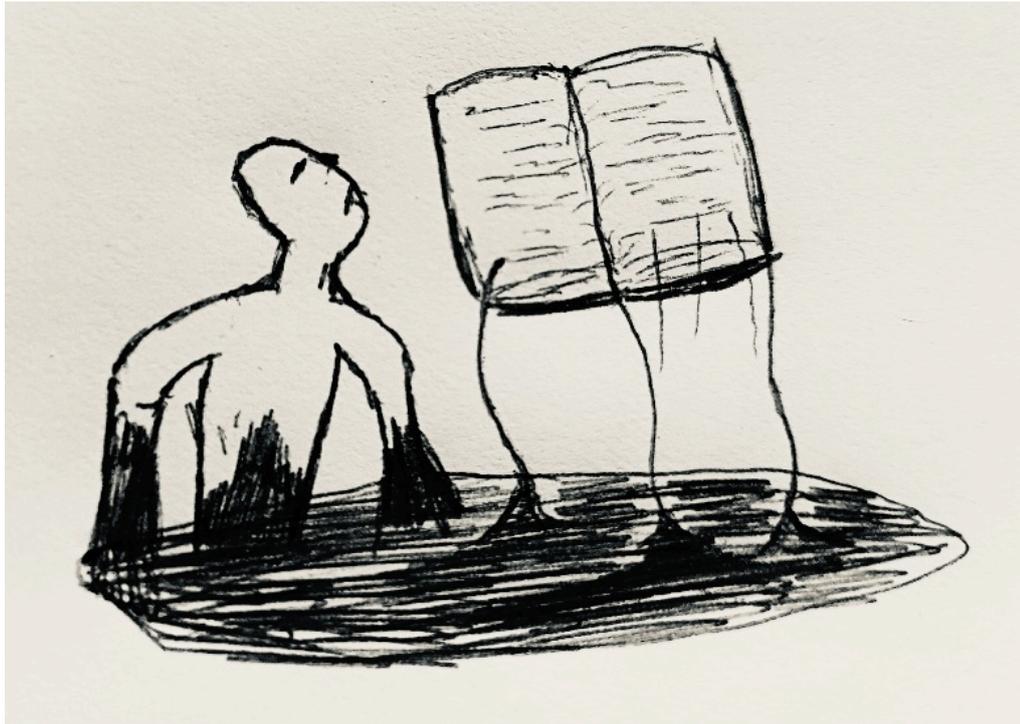
Charlie: “And the second?”

Maverick: “I don't know, but uh, it's looking good so far.”

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Peter Ferris (post) and Stewart Limpus (post) both opted to pursue undergraduate degrees at their local university after graduating high school. This afforded them the opportunity to continue residing in their family home throughout their further education. Peter exceeded his and his family’s expectations by gaining an acceptance into a well-regarded engineering Bachelor’s Degree programme, fuelling his future hope of working in the aerospace industry. Stewart elected to study education and aspired to teach history at high school level. Neither finished their programme of study, choosing instead to withdraw after becoming disillusioned with their studies and future career aspirations. Peter is now 27 and Stewart now 28 years of age; both men have returned to live in their respective family homes after having spent several years residing independently. Peter has completed two years of a Bachelor’s Degree in Business, and Stewart, after later successfully completing a degree in Anthropology, has recently commenced a Master’s Degree by Research.

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*Figure 4.1: “Retrenched, Returned, Re-emerged”, Stewart Limpus*

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Peter Ferris (post) reflects back on his initial entry into university as a time of conviction and impetus: “I had been told that by people you know take a gap year, chill out, experience life a bit, explore, travel and I just went ‘nup nup, want to do uni, want to finish, want to get going.’” He explains that this sense of urgent forward momentum was a product of the high school system:

This is the only advice I normally give anyone that’s grade 11 or 12 going into uni is you don’t have to decide straight away but often it feels like you do. Like soon as soon as you finish school they’re like right you need to be in uni, or you need to be doing an apprenticeship.

Peter’s hastiness to commence university resulted in a superficial reconnaissance of his career options. Accordingly, he chose a subject that he believed played to his strengths and was relevant to his future career goals. Like many young people, he discussed his career aspirations with his high school careers advisor and was advised

to pursue a course of study that interested him and leveraged his natural skillset. As an exceptional mathematician and problem-solver with comparatively mediocre literacy, he shortlisted programmes that emphasised numeracy. Combined with his interest in “everything to do with technology” and “fascination with aircraft”, an engineering degree programme “ticked the right boxes.” Despite finding the course relatively easy and doing well in his assignments, he “couldn’t commit” and “changed through the different disciplines of engineering a few times... from civil to electrical to back to civil and then left.” Reflecting on his waning motivation, Peter suggests that his “maturity level at the time” was not compatible with university life. I asked whether a different degree course might have suited him better had he been better informed about his options. Peter replied that the issue was one of timing rather than subject matter:

I probably would have dropped out of whatever course I started with because I’d just feel like I probably wasn’t ready to do uni at that time. I didn’t have the motivation... I couldn’t apply myself to it... I don’t think anything would change, it might just change what degree got dropped and what degree I’m in now and that’s about it... I’d still end up here. I could have chosen a different degree, but I would still be having the same conversation with you because the degree has nothing to do with where I am.

After two years of study and several changes of major, Peter came to the realisation that his original career aspirations and planned path to success were unattainable. His superficial exploration of potential career pathways whilst in the final year of high school had identified engineering as a route into the aerospace industry. However, he was disappointed to find on further investigation that this aspiration was not feasible within Australia:

Originally, I wanted to be an aerospace engineer because I had such a fascination with aircraft and was looking at doing that sort of avenue but I looked on the defence sites and went I don't really want to just design runways and I don't want to just do the armaments ... I want to actually design actual aircraft but that's not a thing in Australia and so well maybe I don't want to be an aerospace engineer then. So that sort of shut it down and... I never really got a direction again.

Whilst Peter looks back on these aborted university years as a valuable learning experience, he also acknowledges that he might have learned more about himself and made more prudent early adulthood choices if he had taken the time after school to consider his options more carefully. He was advised by older friends and relatives to take a gap year and travel before committing to further study, however he was in a "rush" to "get going" and not lose any time. Peter now feels that his myopic vision was a function of immaturity and a lack of perspective borne of a sheltered experience in the world commensurate with childhood. He notes that many of his peers similarly failed to connect their studies to their career aspirations. He hypothesises that this is a "maturity thing" that is common amongst most young people.

...the mindset I don't think develops enough for people... so like I think if you're not 100% sure, if you're not completely set in your ways and even if you are, have a real good think about having a break and just, you know, work, experience the workforce because even if it's just Maccas<sup>29</sup> you'll understand how bad it is and how much better it is if you're getting paid more... as a 16, 17-year-old, you just see your next step. Like there's not many big vision 17, 16-year-olds.

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<sup>29</sup> Colloquial term for McDonalds restaurants.

Peter responded to this initial setback by moving out of his parents' home and committing to a full-time role at McDonalds as a shift manager. For Peter this was never his long-term career plan, but rather a stop-gap that paid "good money." He explains: "When I first started at McDonalds it was literally just a part time job so I can do uni and then it just became, I had nothing better to do so I need to work, I need money." After seven years working for McDonalds, Peter "lost motivation" and "moved home just to save money and sort out what [he] wanted to do with life." He senses that this hiatus put him "behind" his peers in terms of career progression, but is unconcerned about trying to recalibrate to society's temporal norms:

I've already started pretty late into study, I still have a year and a half left, so I'm going to be nearly 28 by the time I finish which is fine but and I'm not worried about any of that sort of thing and I think that's the biggest ticket for me is I was in such a rush when I was young but now that I'm sort of a little bit older and a bit more mature I can just, I'm taking it as it comes.

Peter now has a relatively ambiguous career goal of being his "own boss" and starting a business. He is uncertain and unclear about the particulars of his future vision, but happy to work it out as he progresses through his university degree.

I have been talking to my lecturers... the last one was like you should probably start looking into what you want to do with your business and start getting the groundwork going. I'm like: "Okay, my bad, yep righto."

So... I don't really know but I'm on the path of trying to work it out.

The vagueness in Peter's future plans is a deliberate strategy to minimise risk of failure. As Peter explains, he tries not to visualise the future state of success because

failure to achieve a vision, particularly one that is uncertain or unclear, can lead to emotional pain:

I really have tried to learn not to visualize things in the future too much because I find setting expectations like that when they can change quite drastically especially when you're uncertain of your path can set you up for some big heartbreak or depression.

Nevertheless, Peter has re-launched himself as an aspiring business entrepreneur, choosing to undertake a programme of study that he believes will “lead to” this long-term career outcome. The seven years of educational and occupational liminality immediately preceding his return to the family home and second stint at university were, in Peter’s estimation, an inevitable period of transience and self-discovery. The greatest ‘success’ of this period for Peter was the acquisition of self-awareness, insight and maturity needed to make the ‘right’ choices the second time around.

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The pejorative term, “failure to launch” implies a delay to the chrononormative schedule by which young people “ought to have” left home to live independently. However, this research finds that a period of continued residential and financial stability and stasis can provide young people with the security to explore possibilities for their future without the pressure to prematurely limit options. Forming relationships, testing career options, preparing oneself for the challenges of residential independence, travelling for leisure, and working overseas whilst financially dependent on a parent is a privilege that affords greater time to reflect on future aspirations and plans.

Charlie Polson (pre) and his two older brothers work in their family business and remain resident in their childhood home. Whilst the family business provides a

career “safety-net” for Charlie, his future aspiration post-graduation from university is to pursue a second degree in education to “convert” his “risky” Bachelor of Creative Arts Degree into a comparably more “stable” and “accepted” career as a teacher. He acknowledges that he is in a very privileged position of being able to pursue his dream of teaching music “which is very, like, competitive, and hard to get into” and undertaking an extended period of tertiary study by retaining the safety net of “free accommodation” and part-time employment in the family business. Notwithstanding these “blessings”, Charlie still feels driven by the neoliberal independence narrative to “test” himself and “feel like a proper adult” by running his own finances and living independently. He has therefore not yet resolved whether to follow a financially prudent strategy of continuing residing with his parents to save money for the future or to seek independent accommodations upon commencement of his second degree.

Yvonne Wheller (pre) graduated university with a Bachelor’s Degree in nursing. She elected to remain living in the family home throughout her university studies and into her early twenties whilst undertaking early career training at the regional hospital. Originally planning to use nursing as a springboard into physiotherapy or occupational health, Yvonne has decided to persist in nursing whilst she completes her specialist rotations. She also has earmarked this time to save money for a possible 12-month overseas nursing placement and explore what she wants to do career wise within the health sector. Yvonne is grateful to her parents for supporting her residentially and financially whilst she tests out a career as a Registered Nurse and explores opportunities within the wider healthcare sector domestically and potentially overseas. She experiences guilt and regret at being a financial burden: “at the moment they’re the ones who are supporting and providing care for me. I don’t see what I’m doing for them apart from being a leech.” However, Yvonne acknowledges that

without her parents taking “the brunt” of her immature mistakes and continuing to accommodate her, her career choices would be significantly more limited.

Tyson Kornell (ex-F) first interviewed with me in October 2019 at the age of 23 when he was living in his parents’ converted garage, accommodations he referred to as “a shed, Siberia.” At the time Tyson described cohabiting with his parents as “awkward” and “not one thing or the other.” He expressed a sense of feeling out of place as an emerging adult still residing in his childhood home:

It almost feels like I’ve outgrown here now, and it is time for me to move on. And I’ve said to dad on a couple of occasions, “Look... I am going to go.” And he’s said: “No, no how about you just stay here until we pass away?” And it’s I can’t. I’m not just going to wait around.

At the time of our interview Tyson was already employed in a healthcare role that he considered his final career destination, and in possession of savings sufficient to fund a deposit on a first apartment. Despite having attained these financial markers of independence, Tyson perceived that he was “behind the eight-ball a bit” and dreamed of buying his own place by the age of 25 or 26. During my first interview with Tyson he expressed a strong desire to live independently: “I really can’t wait until I can be independent on my own and be able to rely on myself.” Tyson explained that his reticence in making a firm plan to move out was due to a lack of confidence, which in part was a result of his mother and father still taking care of him in the same way that he’s been cared for as a child. He acknowledged that the next two years cohabiting with his parents would enable him to prepare himself for a successful transition to residential independence:

Yeah, probably have to learn how to cook for myself. And learn how to pay attention to bills, and electricity and all that sort of stuff. But yeah, it’s

a bit daunting. But I think mum and dad do it in a way that they wouldn't let me go out on my own until they knew that I'd be alright. I have two older sisters who are really good at preparing me, and letting me know what I may need to pay attention to as well. So, I have a pretty good family that will help me, yeah.

After speaking with me Tyson was motivated to begin researching local properties and engaged his sister and mother to coach him on managing household budgets and logistics. Over the course of then next year, he produced a thorough launch plan to ensure he was financially, logistically and emotionally "ready to go." At age 24 he purchased an apartment in the same suburb as his parents, and surprised himself by how well his preparations had smoothed his transition to residential independence:

It has gone a lot easier than what I thought it was going to be, because before, last time we spoke, I thought, "Gee, living on my own, I want it. I want that independence, but gee!" But I am finding that for the first couple of months since I've been living there it has gone smoothly. It's gone really well. Yeah, I really enjoy that independent side of it.

Tyson explains that even though he felt "off-track" versus his peers by still residing with his parents, he was grateful for the time to fully prepare for the logistical challenges of living independently and to save for a deposit to achieve his ultimate dream of purchasing a first home rather than renting: "Yeah, I wasn't keen on renting, but I wanted to have something of my own and my own space."

Diane Hughs (p) discloses that at age 27, her grandson, Jez, still resides with his mother and is financially dependent on her for his accommodations, living expenses and his further training and educational opportunities. As an aspiring actor, Jez graduated from a specialised acting school with a Bachelor's Degree in Arts and

Theatre Studies and has been doing “nothing” in the past seven years “waiting for a big break.” Diane laments her eldest daughter, Janice’s, decision to fund her son’s continued acting training at home and overseas without mandating that Jez alleviates her burden by engaging in some form of employment:

**Diane Hughs:** Jez is hoping to get some work in the theatre... I can be more sympathetic with Jez because it's hit and miss in the theatre, he got his degree in arts and theatre studies, and is really bright, and he's done his year at drama school, he's done various other places, but he's just not hit lucky you know, not been discovered... But that's all he wants to do, so we just keep saying get a job (laughing). Now we don't mind if Jez got a job in a bar, he used to work in the bar at the, you know in the holidays, at weekends- he'd be working and wouldn't be relying on our Janice...

**Sherree (researcher):** So, you're supportive of him going after his theatre dreams?

**Diane Hughs:** Yeah, no ... if he paid for himself. Well, if he's got to wait, and so why doesn't he do something in the meantime? I mean a lot of actors have done all kinds of jobs haven't they?

**Sherree (researcher):** Yeah, why do you think he doesn't?

**Diane Hughs:** I don't know if he's had his fun, and I think, you know, I keep saying that's enough Janice, you know, that's enough. I think in his mind, he thinks, you know, my mum'll bail me out or whatever, and so we've been telling Janice, that's enough, that's enough.

Despite her insistence that her daughter ceases underwriting Jez's prolonged and indefinite occupational liminality, Diane is supportive of her grandson's pursuit of a future acting career that demands not just talent but also good fortune and cultural

receptivity. Diane acknowledges and empathises that creative arts career aspirations may take longer to come to fruition, and praises Jez’s persistence and dedication. Projecting ahead ten years Diane would like to see her grandson achieve his dreams: “I hope Jez is a successful actor. I’d love him to be, I think he would love it.” The opportunity afforded to Charlie, Yvonne and Jez to explore career possibilities and training and educational opportunities at home and overseas, and the opportunity for Tyson to prepare thoroughly for his residential independence, might more accurately be described as ‘preparing to launch’ rather than ‘failure to launch.’ As Sean Dale (pre) clearly articulates “I don’t think anyone is dead certain on everything they want to do.” In an increasingly precarious world full of possibilities but no guarantees, extra preparation and flight planning might be the most responsible and prudent strategy for emerging adults whose career goals or plans are uncertain.

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Figure 4.2: “The Only Way Is Up”, Sherree Halliwell Self Portrait (1)

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Okay so in high school grade 10 they always start with asking you “what do you want to become and do for your future?” Which in some ways I agree with and in some ways I don’t because it’s pretty young to actually go and not force kids, but sort of force kids to start making these huge decisions. So, basically, we had all of these tests done, like the Myers-Briggs ones and what sort of personality do you have here’s a list of jobs that would suit your personality and nursing like medical things were on there... I wanted to do physiotherapy I think at that stage, like that was really interesting to me... So yeah the plan was to do physiotherapy after this [nursing degree] potentially but of course as you get older things change and I think I’ll stick with nursing for a little bit until I figure out what I really do want to do and in the meantime I’m happy with nursing, but yeah it’s not one of the whole “I was meant to be this for all my life”, you know...It’s sort of been an “okay let’s explore this and then figure out what else is from there. Yvonne Wheller (pre)

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All of the boomerang research participants talked about situations where commitments to future engagements – such as study programmes, career pathways, relationships and residential accommodations – had been made prior to exploration. Tanya Hughs (post) immigrated to Australia with her newly married husband, Trevor, to take up an opportunity in nursing. She had no particular interest in the nursing profession when deciding on a career pathway in high school, and unlike her highly motivated and career-driven older sister, she describes herself as a “scallywag” who was drawn to

the free nursing accommodations, “paid apprenticeship” and opportunity to live away from home. As the family’s main income-earner, Tanya’s unplanned pregnancy forced the young couple to reconsider their inner-city one-bedroom apartment. However, as Tanya explains, she felt that their situation was no longer viable:

We didn’t have enough money to move... I knew I didn’t want to be in Manchester. I didn’t – well we couldn’t afford the country. To go further out into the nicer areas or to wherever, couldn’t afford it... Trevor was unemployed. Through no fault. He went through loads of different jobs all over the place, even worked at the airport, making the meals. He was in petrol stations. He was doing anything and everything that he could possibly get. But it was a particularly tough time at that particular time... I said I don’t want to stay here, we need to sort something out, we need to do something.

Hearing from her friend that an international nursing exhibition was being held at their local hotel, Tanya decided to attend. Prior to that evening she had no connections to Australia and had not spoken with her husband about emigrating. However, she and her friend signed up for an Australian nursing visa that evening and returned home to their respective partner to break the news: “Trevor was a little bit reluctant or whatever, but because he wasn’t sure. I’ve always been a bit of an opportunist.”

Seizing on this opportunity to make a new start, Tanya and Trevor used Tanya’s nursing “passport” to relocate to Toowoomba, Australia where regional nurses were sought: “I just thought it’s an opportunity to leave, leave and to start afresh somewhere... And so come away with positivity and new horizons and to do that, and to establish our little family.” Tanya’s story evokes Stockton (2009) and Muñoz (2009) – growing backwards in queer temporality and forwards beyond queer

horizons. Tanya explains that she experienced tremendous solidarity in starting afresh with her husband and focusing on jointly building the future beyond new horizons without the baggage of the family, money worries and ‘hard’ life in the present. For their young family, Australia represented a new beginning where they could re-emerge and reinvent themselves without the pressure of expectations generating relationship conflict:

Who knows where our relationship would be if we’d have stayed in the UK. Because people fight about money when you’re young, because you think that’s what it’s all about. Not necessarily not earning enough, but you’ve got your bills coming and you’ve got your other things, you’ve got other things and you can’t afford things. And it’s just – and it’s hard. It was really hard over there. Whereas when we came here, we found we only had each other and that was great... It was good that there was no expectations... You don’t realize that you’re being pressured because it comes from all different sections.

Tanya and Trevor have never regretted their move to Australia, despite Tanya facing a challenging career progression which she puts down to “jobs for the boys” where “recognition goes from one to another to another.” This is a situation that Tanya does not believe has changed over the years, and she is concerned for her daughter’s advancement in this context: “I think you have to be Teflon coated. Yeah, I do. I do. I think yes, you can be yourself to a certain extent but then, to be taken seriously, you do have to prove yourself more. Because there is still, there is the old boys’ network and the old boys’ club.” Tanya has always been the family’s primary income earner, which has resulted in the family needing to make costly arrangements for childcare support as their family grew. After the passing of Tanya’s father, her mother Diane,

agreed to immigrate to Australia and cohabit with her daughter's family to provide additional childcare and financial support. Reflecting on what she initially regarded as her family's "unusual" circumstances, Tanya acknowledges that she was surprised to discover two other colleagues in their forties who live with their parents. However, whether or not it is "unusual" in today's society for intergenerational cohabitation to persist beyond early adulthood, she is not concerned with external expectations: "We're family, we all live together. That's the expectation."

Peter Ferris (post) reflected that his "rush" into an engineering undergraduate degree programme without properly considering his future career opportunities inevitably led to his disillusionment two years down the track when he realised his degree would not lead to the aerospace career he aspired to. He explains that immediately post leaving school he was not mature enough to make visionary decisions about his future career. He also laments that he did not explore his future possibilities and believes that he was overly hasty to launch into university for fear of being left behind by his peers. Peter now advises high school seniors in his local community to consider travel or short-term work the hospitality sector prior to committing to further education, training or an apprenticeship.

Stewart Limpus (post) enjoyed his literature and humanities classes in senior high school. He was encouraged by a school career advisor to follow his interests when choosing a future career. Stewart comments that having Asperger's Syndrome "probably meant that I took that too literally" and opted for a degree in education pursuant to a career as a high school teacher, as this was an environment that was both familiar and interesting. Within six months of embarking on his degree, Stewart realised that teaching was stressful and unsuited to his personality, resulting in his withdrawal from the course. He returned to university the following year to complete

a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology. Stewart looks back on this decision as “dreaming”, as the qualification did not lead to a career opportunity, and as a result he struggled through two further years of unemployment. This liminal period Stewart describes as being directionless, which triggered unhelpful behaviours and habits that detrimentally impacted his mental and emotional wellbeing:

I was lacking in direction and passion and as a result of that suffered mentally and emotionally. I wasn't growing as a person and was stuck in unproductive addictive habits for years, like video-games and porn for example, as a result of that lack of growth and as a method to cope with negative emotions I was feeling.

Stewart explains that he retrospectively vilified this period of his personal history, hypothesising that this “retrospective disorganisation” (Goldin, 2016, p.408) of the meaning he ascribed to these behaviours, also characterised by Freud as *afterwardsness*, was a way of motivating himself to avoid such unhelpful behaviours in the future. Reflecting on this period from his new vantage point of having “found” his “passions” and embarked on a trajectory of personal growth, Stewart is more inclined to look back with an empathetic gaze:

After I finally found my passions mid 2018 and began really growing as a person I think I developed a very negative opinion of this time...only really choosing to recall the negative aspects. Perhaps I was using this to unconsciously motivate myself to make up for lost time ... what I am now perceiving as unhealthy habits that might not have actually been as bad at the time in that context. It's just the way I'm retroactively interpreting it, I think... I think it might be healthier to re-assess this period of my life and come up with a more rounded view of that time. To be fair to myself, I was

going through the tail end of puberty and some other stuff in the early years of that period so I should give myself a little more slack.

After around two years of unemployment, Stewart's father secured him a position via "subconscious nepotism" at his place of work. Desperate at age 23 to "get going", Stewart grasped this opportunity without considering whether it was of long-term interest or aligned to his skills and experience. He recounts that he very quickly came to understand that he was out of his depth: "They gave me the tasks. I'm like, I have no fucking clue what I'm doing." He explains that he believes he was kept on at the company because his father was in a very senior position in executive management. However, the experience of "failure" to meet his boss' expectations had a profoundly negative impact on his self-esteem and confidence:

I struggled my way through it and failed and they still kept me on. They kept me on doing all these different tasks and I kept failing at them. Part of the problem was, I didn't know I was failing...12 months in the boss was telling me: "You have a 70 percent failure rate on every task we give you." I'm like, "Then why am I still here?" It was frustrating and very in some cases in infantilizing when she just says: "We have no work to give you because anything we give you, we have to redo." I feel that's lingered on where I don't quite trust myself... because even though I might have all these skills, I don't know when I'm failing. I feel like that, that resentment's lingered, and I think it rubs off on when my parents recommend: "Oh, you could get a job here, or here, or here, or here." I'm like, "Well, yeah—" Yeah.

Stewart reflects that he did not know himself well enough to make the "right choices" after graduating high school, and acted on impulse and the advice of more

worldly-wise adults such as teachers and parents, rather than his own careful planning, exploration and self-reflection. He feels that until the age of 24 or 25 he had an immaturity of outlook that resulted in him following advice blindly, a trait he characterises “inhibitions of a teenage mind.” Upon returning to live with his parents after being retrenched from his employment and losing his apartment, Stewart decided to engage a professional career mentor to discuss his options for the future. At that time, he also took a keen interest in my research as we increased our acquaintance through our mutual affiliation with our local community theatre. Over a period of six months, Stewart researched possible career opportunities connected to his interest in Pagan and Neo-Pagan histories, legacies, rituals and communities, and secured entry onto a Master’s Degree by Research programme. Stewart acknowledges that he feels like “he should have been a bit further ahead” at this stage in his life:

I feel that I discovered that maybe a little bit later... I feel like, there's a lot of wasted time where I could've easily discovered what it is I was passionate about and set off on that trajectory earlier, but then again, something I fail to remind myself of is that there are other people my age who still have absolutely no idea what they're doing.

However, Stewart explains that he was unable to make progress whilst he was “lingering in that confused state of not knowing what drives me.” It was only in his mid-twenties that he believed he was “developed enough as a person” to know that he was passionate about and be able to connect that passion to what he wanted to do.

James Schilling (post) was in his final year of high school and undecided about his post-high school graduation plans, when a chance encounter with his mother’s colleague set him on his future career path. As his mother, Jane, recounts:

He was doing a few things at school, and thought tourism. And another time he thought he might wanna be a chef. He's a good cook... Then he went with a friend of mine [in TV production], and they did some editing of commercials... and it was 11:30 p.m. and I waited for him and worried, but I knew he was with a friend. Anyway, he came in and shut the door, and said, "That was awesome. I know exactly what I wanna do with the rest of my life. I'm gonna repeat grade 11, get another board subject and go to uni and do film and TV." That's what he did.

James completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts degree specialising in film, TV and journalism, and immediately after graduation landed a graduate position in TV production. For the 15 years he grew his skills and experience, achieving national and international credits in lifestyle and documentary programming. However, his career aspiration from the outset of his creative arts journey had been to make feature films in Hollywood.

James was in his final year of university when he met his future wife. At aged 22, he had never had an intimate relationship, and was unconfident and shy around women to whom he was attracted. Flattered by the attentions of gregarious and confident first-year student, Erika, he quickly formed an attachment which proceeded within a year to marriage. Jane Schilling describes her son's ex-wife, Erika, as "very controlling", "unable to fulfil James" and a "Betty Boop" character who was "always bubbly, laughy, but a bit superficial." Erika withdrew from university in the second semester of her first year and for the next ten years was employed in a number of casual part-time jobs. In the last five years of their marriage, Erika withdrew from the workforce due to increasingly complex mental health issues. Over the course of their

marriage, James began to “resent” his wife’s “anchoring” of him to a situation where he felt unable to pursue his Hollywood aspirations:

I lived with a lot of anger... which burned into a lot of resentment because I was holding the fort... I was already locked in, locked into a marriage, locked into a mortgage, could not pivot, so a lot of anger... my integrity and outlook on life trapping me into a corner where I was responsible for a wife who wouldn’t try and succeed with me.

Reflecting on his 15-year marriage, James characterises that period in his life as “wasted time” whereby his impetuous decision to marry his first girlfriend resulted in the loss of his carefully planned career plans and aspirations. James describes the “grief” of losing not only his marriage when it broke down, but also the opportunity to take a risk on a career that is now beyond his reach:

Accommodating a second person into your life in a relationship takes time and investment of yourself into that, and I felt as that if I didn’t have that relationship, I probably would have used those hours towards my creative success. So, I felt like it was a waste. It’s a grieving process of the relationship where you look at that, the hours of time spent on a relationship that inevitably failed... You need to do it young... Those hours you spent on that woman that didn’t work out, you could’ve spent making shit over here and actually getting noticed.

James’ loss of his marriage, retrenchment from his employment and return to his family home led to a period of re-evaluation and self-reflection for James. Accordingly, he decided to pivot into education and retrain as a media teacher, whilst pursuing his dream of making a feature film as a side-venture. James’ caution and reticence to form another relationship led him to develop a strong and foundational

friendship with his new partner, prior to them embarking on a relationship some 12 months later. James wishes he could have advised his 22-year-old Self to take a similarly respectful and careful approach to forming a partnership, but acknowledges that he was not emotionally mature enough to have followed that advice at the time.

Tanya and her husband Trevor's courageous decision to abandon their career, home and family support network to start again in Australia using Tanya's "passport" as a Registered Nurse proved to be "the making of" the family. Despite their continued hardships securing a reliable dual-income and funding expensive childcare, their decision to launch into the unknown with little prior exploration has been a great success. However, as Peter, Stewart and James acknowledge, their urgency to launch, which precluded exploration of their options, possibilities and potential future consequences, has produced aborted and misguided choices in emerging adulthood. Whilst their "failures" were instructive in informing their new flight plans, all three men characterised these periods of their life as "wasted" time. Peter and Stewart left home to live financially and residentially independently, but remained in a state of occupational liminality. It was through "boomeranging" back to their respective family homes and refocusing on educational programmes that aligned with their aspirations, that they were they able to reimagine their future careers and re-launch successfully on alternative growth trajectories. James reflects on the past 15 years and laments the "wasted time" and loss of his future. He believes that had he not been obliged to "carry" his ex-wife, his dreams might have taken flight. Coming to this realisation at 39 years-of age, at a stage in life where he has recently secured a new career, relationship and financial responsibilities, James now feels that he can no longer take a risk on his Hollywood dream. The financial stakes of failure are too high

with only twenty years before retirement to relaunch and rebuild should he “crash and burn.”

Peter, Stewart and James all made early adulthood choices concerning long-term commitments to their education, future career, relationship and residential independence without engaging in an exploratory period of emerging adulthood. Reflecting on their subsequent dissatisfaction, disappointment and in each case, their ultimate decision to start over again, this “rush” to launch might be viewed as premature foreclosure. Peter, Stewart and James all reflect that they are back where they started - living with their parents in the same circumstances as ten or twenty years earlier.

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I never knew what I was going to do. So I was never one of these children that went this is what I'm going to be... I just sort of fell in and ...I was a good time girl. It gets me away from home and they're going to pay me to do it. It just so happened that when I went there, I absolutely had – I loved it. Tanya Hughs (post)

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I do not seek to reduce boomeranging to a ‘cautionary tale’, as the process of returning to the family home to recalibrate, reassess, and reaffirm or reimagine one’s future plans in a place of residential security is complex and multidimensional. This research also supports the scholarly literature in finding that the ‘causes’ and ‘consequences’ of boomeranging are far from homogenous, in spite of the reductive and simplistic characterisations of the phenomenon in popular culture. However, this research does highlight instances of premature ‘launching to fail’ in the stories of Peter, Stewart and

James, which in part can be explained by a drive towards early foreclosure without engaging in a period of self-exploration. These stories illustrate that there can be long-term socioeconomic costs of foreclosing on adulthood status markers before engaging in exploration of possibilities and opportunities. Emerging adults who are anxious to escape an ambiguous adulthood identity whereby they are suspended in the socioeconomic betwixt and between, sometimes find themselves *pretzeling* back at a later stage and relaunching towards a different destination to the side. I find the notion of pretzeling useful to characterise and reframe the temporal and spatial orientation of re-emerging adults' personal growth trajectories. Typically, metaphors that represent young adulthood tend to be chrononormative and linear (see for example Furlong and Cartmel (2006), Ingold (2007), Jeffrey (2010), Leccardi (2018), Karlin (2019), Berlant (2011) and Cuzzocrea (2020) who have variously employed travel or space metaphors to characterise twenty-first-century youth transitions as delayed, stuck, off track, broken down, or disrupted.) I suggest that through pretzeling the neoliberal progress paradigm, valid personal growth trajectories may be backwards (in time or place), forwards, sideways and upwards.

These stories may assist in subverting the normative characterisation of those who choose to remain in their family home and defer making 'final' decisions about their future career as 'failures' to launch. I propose that this moniker be retired in favour of a less loaded and time-agnostic characterisation: *preparing to launch*. The converse risk to failing to launch – that of premature launch, crash land, and return to base – is little discussed in the emerging adulthood literature, which tends to adopt either a holistically empathetic, or homogenously disparaging view. By seeking to better understand the different experiences of liminality experienced by emerging adults pre-launch, and re-emerging adults post-launch, this research seeks to reveal

the value of exploration ‘betwixt and between’ childhood and adulthood, and present a more nuanced understanding of these periods of ‘becoming’ in subject’s lives.

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It’s sort of a funny stage. It’s sort of like when you’re going from a kid to a teenager. It’s that awkward stage, you’re not sure if your mum’s still cooking [your] meals. But she still expects me to act like a grown man sort of – it’s a bit awkward. I can’t really describe it. It’s very - it’s just a very – you don’t know what – where you stand, sort of thing... I don’t feel like I’m still their small son. But at the same time, I’m out earning my own money, and doing my own things. So, I feel like I’m doing some adult things. But yeah, it’s – it’s hard to describe, it’s a bit of an awkward stage.”

Tyson Kornell (pre)

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### **Reversion**

Where is the man who once mastered the words of meaning  
and slew forth a torrent of creation onto the  
soul-stained world around him?

He is lying hollow and coddled in the arms of his boyhood  
self in the grips of a death-dream dynamic.

Such a reversion was unbecoming, but ultimately inevitable.

The soul flows much like water or oil in the culture-space that  
partitions it from the thought-constructs of man.

When the space changes shape, so does the soul.

I have been locked into the time worn structure of family,  
reverted to the old mould of me.

Such is the price of living atop the rotted heap of ancient mistakes we call civilization.

And so my soul sits contorted, flexed apart to fit back into the old mould of me. To escape this pain, the flex flayed parts of me that were the man most high, have slipped soddenly into the recesses of memory. Dormant they dream of days to dance and decree their directive destinies, clench hard in the wrath hewn hands of hierogamy.

It is the space that maketh men,  
it is action that compels him,  
it is purpose that propels them.

What can a man do,  
when space becomes contorted with the soul-stained stench of past selves,  
when actions are barred by the chains of bureaucracy,  
when purpose finds no portion of the day to be performed?  
*Stewart Limpus*

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### **Lines of Flight**

Soaring upwards, spiralling sideways,  
Out of captivity, free and clear.  
Far horizons, new beginnings,  
Beyond reproach, beyond fear.  
Break the tightening temporal chains  
That bind the subject's fledgling wings.  
Grasp the future, striving, hoping  
Release soul from earth-bound things.

*Sherree Halliwell*

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Figure 4.3: “Enrichment over Progress”, Sherree Halliwell Self Portrait (2)

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#### *Autoethnographic Reflection*

Throughout school my abiding aspiration was to “go to Oxford University.” I can no longer remember where I acquired the notion that the University of Oxford was the best university in the world, as my apprehension of it predates my memory. Certainly, it did not come from personal experience, as prior to visiting that institution as an aspiring sixth-former<sup>30</sup> I had never met or known of anyone who had attended the University of Oxford. My aspiration to attend any university was regarded as a peculiarity by my extended family, but as my junior school Head Mistress recounts, I declared myself Oxford-bound from the age of six or seven and resolutely vocalised

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<sup>30</sup> UK term for the final two years of high school prior to university.

this aspiration throughout my schooling. My predilection for academia was not founded on any great academic talent. I entered high school with some notable skill in creative writing, middling aptitude for humanities and science (which were not taught at my junior school) and a bottom set<sup>31</sup> comprehension of mathematics (the numbers still jumped around maddeningly at this point). However, despite my working-class “blue-collar” habitus and unremarkable social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977), I had a strong sense of my identity as a future scholar.

Upon matriculating, my aspiration to “go to Oxford University” quickly transitioned to an aspiration to “get an Oxford University degree.” The latter proved so academically challenging, the toil of overcoming the burdensome baggage of my dyslexia so exhausting, that I had little concern for future visioning beyond that horizon (Muñoz, 2009). My choice of Undergraduate Degree - Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) – was intentionally broad, as I had not fixed on a particular career prior to entering higher education; I had not even decided whether to specialise in the arts or sciences, as the quantitative, qualitative, existential and empirical all appealed to my ‘ambidextrous’ brain. Hedging my bets seemed the most sensible upwards growth trajectory at a stage in my personal development when making the ‘wrong’ choice and foreclosing future options was more daunting than missing the mark seeking the ‘right’ choice. The ‘loss’ of options at a time when I was ill-equipped to discrepate between them was incongruous with my acquisitive orientation. For me, the *raison d’être* of a university education was to ‘grow’ my skills and experiences in

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31 When entering high school in the UK, students are typically ability-assessed in core subjects such as mathematics, English, humanities (history, geography) and science. They are segregated into ‘sets’ to attend core subject classes with students of a similar ability. Students may be re-assigned to higher or lower ability sets at the commencement of each academic year based on their performance in end of year examinations.

order to ‘expand’ the world of opportunities available to me. The loss of an entire field of opportunities at age 18 in pursuit of a vocational degree was unsupportable.

In my final year of undergraduate study, I was invited by my politics tutor to consider extending my academic term and undertaking a program of Master’s Degree research pursuant to a PhD under his supervision. The notion of an extended period of scholarship strongly appealed, but three years of undergraduate study at the University of Oxford had convinced me that its unrelenting pace and rigorous pursuit of excellence was incompatible with my meandering and imperfect ways of knowing. Furthermore, the idea of putting off getting a ‘real job’ and subsisting on the pittance that I could earn doing menial work in my term vacations for another four years seemed very impractical, imprudent and self-indulgent. At that time, I did not view scholarship as a ‘career.’ Within my family, education and training have always been represented in neoliberal economic terms as the *means* by which one acquires the skills and experience to do a job, not the job *itself*. Furthermore, the greater the time (and financial) investment in education or training, the higher the expected returns in future financial earning potential. Predicated on that understanding, if I were to entertain a programme of masters or doctoral study, it must lead to a specific career destination, and guided by a neoliberal way of understanding the *value* of training and education, that career destination must effectuate additional earning potential commensurate with the four years invested in striving towards it. Accordingly, I considered higher degrees the exclusive preserve of my middle or upper-class peers, whose living expenses were underwritten by their parents. However, such extended periods of unproductive self-actualisation were not for the ‘likes of me.’ I instead opted for a graduate fellowship with world-leading communications organisation, WPP. The organisation’s ex-CEO,

Martin Sorrell, described the WPP Fellowship in a LinkedIn post (2016) as a scheme which broadened successful applicants' horizons and valued their diversity of thought:

WPP created the Fellowship more than 20 years ago in 1995 as a way of developing new generations, and new kinds of leaders for our companies [...] The idea was to recruit top graduates and give them the unique experience of working across different fields of marketing communications in different business cultures around the world. Over three years, Fellows work in three WPP companies, often on three continents. Our policy is immediately to give Fellows (whose first rotation is always in either London or New York) the kind of responsibility that scares them, and scares us. [...]

As they work through their three annual placements, they have the chance to experiment and decide what kind of specialism and business they're best suited to [...] Statistically, it's already harder than trying to enter Harvard Business School, with around a dozen Fellows appointed each year from up to 2,000 applicants. [...] Unlike graduate schemes for some other large organisations, we are not looking for a "type", because there is no such thing as a typical Fellow. We don't want identikit leaders for our businesses. Fellows will have achieved high levels of academic success, but the subject doesn't matter. What does matter is that they are interesting, interested and enthusiastic. They need an ambidextrous brain, both logical and intuitive, they need to be intellectually curious, and they need to demonstrate originality and independence of thought. (Sorrell, 12th September 2016, n.pag.)

Amongst the job opportunities available to me, the WPP Fellowship offered the broadest and most numerous possibilities for personal enrichment and career growth. This greatly appealed, as at age 21, my vision of a future career was no clearer than it had been at 18. Reflecting back on this prolonged state of career liminality, I believe I was unable to fix on a professional specialism because I had already found my perfect fit within academia. However, the Fellowship's emphasis on developing leaders of the future, through "scary" levels of early responsibility, and exposure to different marketing fields, business cultures and global markets, resonated with my aspiration to 'find myself' through a learning orientation towards personal and professional growth. WPP's philosophy of encouraging experimentation and delaying specialism gave me the time and geographical space to find myself without 'falling behind.' Furthermore, their proactive embrace of diversity, and encouragement of intellectual curiosity, originality and independence of thought resonated with my queer ways of being.

WPP fostered an experience of career liminality that concomitantly inspired an exploration of possibilities and greatly accelerated my upwards personal growth. Adopting WPP's philosophy as a personal mindset has opened up possibilities for my career that have expanded my horizons well beyond my adolescent imaginings. I have travelled widely, embraced increasingly 'scary' responsibilities, and taken risks in my professional and personal life that have rewarded me with two decades of enriching and trailblazing experiences. The vision and innovation of WPP's approach to graduate development was unique and revolutionary at its inception in 1995, and continued to be so throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. WPP's encouragement of diversity of thought and practice amongst its emerging leaders contrasted markedly with large corporates across Westernised society governed by neoliberal principles,

which emphasised graduate programmes that produced specialised upwardly progressive career trajectories. As I survey the overwhelmingly vocation-focused programmes privileged by universities, I ponder whether such a strong emphasis on early foreclosure is in society’s best interests. Might we be better served giving the liminal possibilities of emerging adulthood a little more airtime?

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*Figure 4.4: “There’s Always More Time”, Sherree Halliwell Portrait of Hal Halliwell (Father)*

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The result of residential dependence for Sean is a vacillating uncertainty as to whether he has reached adulthood. Describing his situation, Sean explains, “it’s not very stable and I still consider myself a kid.” The determining factors for Sean in maintaining his “kid” status are his “lack of responsibility” and relative inexperience: “in the world of experience I’m very limited experience-wise.” He also considers that his parents might view him as being “a bit of both” child and adult, as he talks like a kid using “slang” expressions that are “not very professional sounding”, but otherwise is responsible enough not to do “silly things” which are hallmarks of irresponsible and immature children. As both Sean and his parents acknowledge, Sean’s enterprising attitude from a young age and parsimonious approach to saving money have put him in a position whereby he could afford to move out of home and fund independent accommodations. Perhaps partly for this reason, both Gordon and Harriet Dale expressed an expectation that Sean would move out of the family home once he had graduated university. Sean confirmed that he was choosing to remain in the family home for pragmatic reasons rather than necessity: “I’d move out now but then I would have to fund it, and I could fund it, but it’s nice to live here and do very little and pay no rent.” Projecting forwards, Sean imagines that he will have achieved fully-fledged adult status when he moves out of home and is working full time, transitions that he describes as “adulthood.” However, even after achieving these situational transitions to adulthood, he explains that residential and financial independence may result in regression to “kid-related” behaviours such as drinking coke or eating “Maccas all the time” which he could not “get away with” whilst cohabiting with his parents.

Sean’s sense of being “a bit of both” child and adult simultaneously affirms and unsettles traditional markers of adulthood. On the one hand, Sean notes that residential independence and full-time employment are unequivocally “adulthood”

situations, however he differentiates these adulthood *status markers* from adult *behaviours* such as taking responsibility, presenting oneself professionally, being more mature and making “healthy” choices “longevity-wise.” As Sean explains, as an adult “you can still do kid things, there’s aspects of you that can still be a kid” and conversely, as a residentially and financially dependent “kid” it is possible to be chronologically an adult and only adopt adult behaviours when situationally required. Sean confirmed that our interview was such a situation, and that his perception of the “professional” nature of our interview called for him to give a professional performance, although he reflected “it still doesn’t sound as professional as it could.”

Similar to Sean, Tyson chose to remain residing in his parents’ home after graduating high school and gaining full time employment, despite possessing sufficient financial resources to fund independent accommodation. However, for Tyson, the decision to remain in his family home was not driven by a pragmatic decision to save money on rent. Keen to contribute to the family budget upon commencing work, Tyson negotiated to pay rent at a level commensurate with external market rates for a room in a shared house. Notwithstanding his financial independence, full time employment, and contributions to the family household budget, Tyson still did not feel that he had completed the transition to full adulthood: “I still feel the same to be honest. Still feel – I don’t think it’s given me any more independence if I have to be honest.” Tyson explained that although he had achieved several of the traditional status markers of adulthood, residential independence was key to his feeling like an adult. For him this was linked to proving that he could rely on himself rather than being capable of financially contributing to his accommodations. As Tyson explains:

I still don’t – I suppose legally I am. But no again I still feel it – not until I’m out on my own, and completely independent – relying on myself that

I'll feel like I'm an adult. I'm by myself, rely on me. I mean I have job – a paying job. Drive myself to and from my – so there is elements in my life today that I'm independent. But no I don't feel totally like an adult just now.

At the time of our first interview, Tyson was not confident that he would be able to manage running a household. Tyson aspired to buy his own property and live alone rather than entering the rental market and sharing with others. Therefore, this transition to residential independence represented for Tyson a test of his capability to live completely independently relying solely upon himself as a fully-fledged adult.

Yvonne also acknowledged that residing within the family home “sheltered” her from some of the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood:

Adulthood, that's something that I'm going to come to terms with really soon because I guess living at home you do have that prolonged time in your nest in some ways, like with my friends who did have to leave early and actually start being independent living by themselves, they did have to learn those things a lot earlier than I have. I feel yeah I've been a bit sheltered from adulthood ... like... you're not going to have a wall in front of you, i.e., my father, be a wall in front of you taking most of the brunt of that and knowing how to pave the way through all of life... I think it's realizing all the things that he's done for me over the years that now I have to do for myself.

Yvonne is intending to travel overseas with her long-term partner to take opportunity of a nursing work placement. She predicts that “leaving at the airport for that trip” will be the “moment” she completes the transition to adulthood. Her relationship and employment circumstances will remain unchanged; however, the spatial move will

change the degree to which she exercises agency over these and the other aspects of her life. Whilst living with her parents she has been obliged to seek their approval for her relationships and consider their career advice. As Yvonne's father, Tom, commented, "that's one good thing about them being at home is you've got a chance to perfect them a bit longer so they keep away from the stupid stuff." Tom Wheller recounts that he objected strenuously to Yvonne's previous partner and prevented her from seeing him "he was a complete, what do you call it?... And I was like, he's not going to be the right... he's not the one; I don't care what you think of him. Yeah, that got nailed on the head pretty quickly which upset her at the time, but she's learned from that which is good."

Yvonne acknowledges that the "independence of actually standing on my own two feet for myself" will require "knowledge of being an adult" that she has not yet had the opportunity to acquire due to her sheltered circumstances. When asked if she considered herself to be an adult she replied: "Technically I legally am... but I feel like there are like in between parts between each phase you know and this is sort of an in-between phase at the moment before becoming an actually adult." The awareness of being in a liminal in-between phase, either by choice or necessity, is something that is common to the emerging adults interviewed in this study. Sean, Tyson and Yvonne's reflections highlight emerging adults' difficulty in situating their identity status within the traditional boundaries of childhood and adulthood. These traditional boundaries appear to still exist as *status markers* of adulthood at a structural level of adulthood identity formation, but are often undone by intermittent behaviours that confer temporary adult or child status respectively on those *doing* adulting or 'kidding' (a term I use to encapsulate both intentional childlike behaviours and being 'misrecognised' (see Butler, 2004b) as a child.

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“Childishness” is a highly loaded socio-cultural narrative that implies there is a right and wrong way to “do” adulthood (Trites, 2014). This research finds that the notion of *being childlike* has polemically differing meanings and implications for self-identity, which are contingent on whether one is performing a childlike identity intentionally or being subjected to it on account of one’s circumstances. Whilst the former is typically characterised in terms of agentic action – such as “playing”, “exploring” and having “adventures”, the latter is more negatively conceptualised as an unwelcome subjectivity, which research participants have variously described as being “infantilised”, “emasculated” and “patronised.” Lachlan Harris’s (2013) article for *The Guardian* (Australia) presents an anti-onesie petition which calls for Australians to “End this Fashion Scourge Once and for All.” Harris describes those who wear and celebrate these problematic emblems of perpetual childhood as “champion[s] of the onesie”, which he conflates with pathological shirking of adult responsibilities “like working, paying rent, buying food, and wearing real clothes – clothes with a waistline that weren’t invented for small incontinent humans in nappies” (Harris, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013, n.pag.). I read this critique to my partner, who jokingly proposed that he procure a super-hero cape for my Christmas present, emblazoned with “Champion of the Onesie.”

In contrast with Harris’ conception of the onesie-wearer as the preserve of the “live-at-home-forever, get-a-blog-not-a-job generation” (11<sup>th</sup> July 2013, n.pag.), I began my zoological fashion collection at around the time that I ascended to the higher levels of my corporate career. At the time that I ‘retired’ from my position as Managing Director of an international franchise network, I owned ten such garments. Faced with increasingly stressful corporate challenges in my 80-hour a week ‘day job’,

I achieved emotional and psychological separation in my home life by physically shedding my corporate suit and identity, and *chrono-cross dressing* in playful animal-themed comfortable clothing. Dressed in these carefree, childlike garments, the burdens and responsibilities of my oppressive and ‘grown up’ adult life could be temporarily suspended, allowing me to focus my energies on my partner. In my review of the literature, I discussed the notion of ‘adulging’, which describes the actions of young people who temporarily engage with onerous ‘adult’ tasks, before retreating back to childhood. Reflecting on my onesie-wearing, it might be characterised as the reverse of this phenomena – engaging in a temporary regression to childhood, engaging in ‘kidding’ as a panacea for the heavy burdens of adulthood. Interestingly I have not felt motivated to add to my onesie collection since semi-retiring to academia, and I note that my onesie-wearing still tends to coincide with particularly stressful periods in my academic writing or Board Directorship responsibilities.

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Figure 4.5: “Sherree Halliwell The Champion of the Onesie” Video Trailer (click image for hyperlink to YouTube video or paste <https://youtu.be/JSTFs2U8Q0Q> into internet browser)

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I am still my own person rather than a 16-year-old child.. I can do my own things. I'm not a child. But yes, it makes me feel like a child.. I feel like a kid again, yes, I feel like a child when, the fact that I am living at home and my mum is making me dinner again and washing my clothes. James Schilling (post)

She probably still likes to treat me like a little kid. And that she still likes to do the washing, and the cleaning, and food and cooking stuff, like that. Just.. to make sure she knows that.. she still loves me and cares for me. Tyson Kornell (pre)

They'll forever see us as their babies forever. So, it'll be like "oh you idiot" or "why'd you do this? I said to do this, this is how I raised you." But I think when we start having our own families I think that's when they'll be like "oh my gosh you know they're not so little anymore." Yvonne Wheller (pre)

I still consider myself a kid.. I talk like I'm a kid.. I'm never in charge of anything else. I fed the neighbour's dog the other day, but that's not really a big responsibility. I would let a kid do that. Sean Dale (pre)

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Stewart Limpus and Peter Ferris are re-emerging adults in their late twenties who have both experienced unsettledness and, by their own estimation, “failure” in the areas of higher education, employment and accommodation. Stewart describes “having enough self-awareness and reflection to know what it is you want to do rather than lingering in a perpetual state of potentialness” as a “hallmark of adulthood and maturity.” He also identifies “relationship forming, working relationships, more mature social relationships” and “romantic sexual relationships” as traits of adulthood. Similarly, Peter characterises adulthood as having paid employment that pays the bills, leaving the childhood home “between 18 to I guess mid 25,” and “you should be in a relationship probably by the time you’re 30... and looking towards, you know, family, definitely.”

While both men have yet to complete their current higher-education programmes, commence their aspired-to careers, or establish their own families, this is not because they do not aspire to achieve these traditional adulthood markers. Stewart explains that these markers are reinforced by what he perceives as his parents’ aspirations for him:

I feel they want me to get some part-time work to keep focusing on my studies so I can get a job, so I can earn money and do all the things that they’ve done... By that I mean, save up and be with a nice girl, and buy a house, and have three and a half kids and a dog.

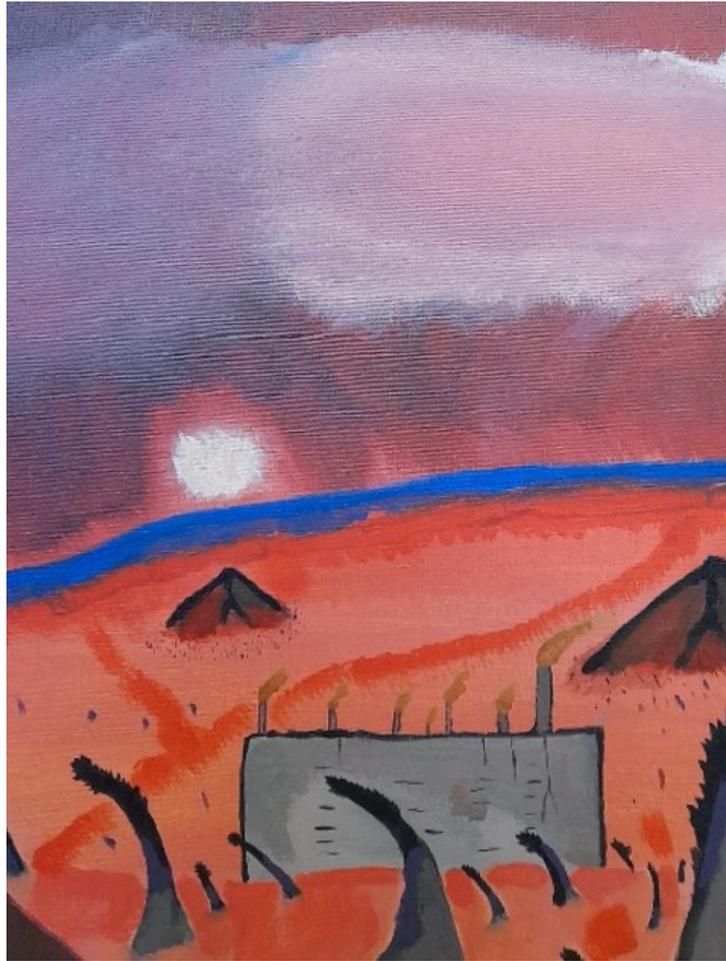
Stewart’s aspirations to complete his Master’s Degree, gain full-time employment as an academic, buy his own place and have a “long-term relationship” by his “early thirties” reinforce that traditional *status markers* of adulthood remain important signifiers of a successful adulthood well beyond the chronological age of adulthood. At 28 years of age, Stewart believes that he is “off-track” in this respect, and ought to have “set off on that trajectory earlier.” Nevertheless, he acknowledges that these

delays are “growing more and more common just due to broader economic context.” Similarly, Peter’s future vision for himself involves running his own business, having enough personal wealth to travel for business and leisure, and at some point in time, his own family. Stewart and Peter both consider themselves to be adults rather than children. However, the extent to which they feel their adulthood has been *successful* is greatly influenced by their notion of being late or “off track” in achieving traditional status markers of adulthood.

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A successful man, you get the job, you get the high paying job actually, like your teachers and your lawyers and your doctors, that’s what they expect, that you’ll pay the bills for the family... there are a lot of cultural norms sort of stuff that they think to be successful you have to have those white-collar jobs. Even to this day people still kind of look down on your blue collar, like your trades and all that, which makes no sense... I think the other thing that comes into success is not just that but society also has the family thing comes into it too. That if you’re being successful you’ve got the real job and you’ve got the good family. Charlie Polson (pre)

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*Figure 4.6: “No Man’s Land”, Stewart Limpus*

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For many of the emerging and re-emerging adults in this study, personal expectations are focused on the achievement of the traditional status markers of adulthood within a ‘normal’ or ‘socially acceptable’ period of time post high school or higher education. All research participants suggested that residential independence and full-time employment in a chosen ‘career’ ought to occur within one’s early to mid-twenties. There was more disparity concerning the timeframe in which long-term relationships and own family were expected to be established, however, late-thirties was generally considered “late”, despite broad acknowledgment that it is more socially acceptable for people to delay family formation.

There was little discussion of structural barriers to achieving the traditional status markers of adulthood, such as paucity of affordable housing or graduate opportunities. Most reflected that an inability to achieve their expected outcomes in ten years' time (the period I asked them to 'jump forward to') would be a great disappointment, likely resulting from injudicious life choices. In addition to traditional status markers of adulthood, emerging adults also emphasised internal traits such as maturity, responsibility and being self-reliant in their definition of a "successful" transition to adulthood. They expected to develop these traits after achieving residential independence. A successful adulthood involves progressing through individual milestones towards the achievement of employment, residential and relationship goals, whilst developing skills that prove one's capability to thrive as an autonomous, self-reliant and independently successful person. This progressive mindset is characterised by Yvonne Wheller (pre): "I mean you can, you can do, you can do life like in the same place, but I'd rather keep going and learning more."

The notion of 'help' or 'assistance' in this individualist endeavour was proactively rejected by several of the participants. Peter Ferris (post) reflects that changing course once he had set out on a career path was a difficult decision because he would have to rely on the support of his parents: "I don't like the feeling of ever being helpless or I hate needing help." Tyson Kornell (pre) characterises a successful adulthood as "relying on myself... I'm by myself, rely on me." Yvonne explains that she is most proud of her achievement in securing overseas employment because she achieved it without help: "I've done that purely by myself. So once I get there I think I'll be like, this was me. Yeah because a lot of the other things has been me and Mum and Dad, or me and Dad." Similarly, James Schilling (post) describes the next chapter in his career as a solo "test to see if I'm smart enough and also if I'm good enough",

and notes “it’s up to me to succeed.” He explains that he prefers to only have himself “to thank or blame” (Bauman, 2001, p.9), as relying on others can produce more unpredictable outcomes: “I like being self-sufficient... I don’t like relying on people. I don’t want to have to rely on anyone because people disappoint you [and] I don’t like being beholden to anyone, owing anyone.”

Notwithstanding this overarching project of individualisation, the imaginary grand narrative of upwards growth appears to obtrude upon emerging and re-emerging adults’ expectations. Sean Dale (pre) has landed on a university track pursuant to a career in marketing. His future flight plan is one that he believes his parents wish for him. However, Sean’s own vision of the future is more nebulous and open to possibilities. He entertains the idea of growing his own business, pursuing a career in sales, continuing as a supermarket shelf-stacker, and exploring possible paid work in press advertising. However, this exploratory period faces early foreclosure (Silva, 2013) due to the perceived “golden boy” expectations of his parents, which have launched Sean on a linear trajectory with no room to deviate from a natural progression from marketing degree to graduate marketing position.

These foreclosing parental aspirations are imaginary and unnecessary – his parents only wish for him to be “happy.” The following exchange highlights the extent to which Sean is labouring to meet this imaginary expectations:

**Sherree (researcher):** What are your goals?

**Sean Dale:** Like, well, these guys want me to finish uni and get a high paying job somewhere... Yeah, that’s why I’m at uni, otherwise I wouldn’t be at uni... Because it makes them feel good, so I went to uni.

**Sherree (researcher):** How do you know that?

**Sean Dale:** Because they wanted me to go to uni and they just assumed that I would, so I did and ....

**Sherree (researcher):** And what conversations did you have with them about maybe not following that path?

**Sean Dale:** I didn't.

**Sherree (researcher):** You didn't?

**Sean Dale:** Because I knew that would disappoint them, so ...-

**Sherree (researcher):** How did you know?

**Sean Dale:** Because I – they were – because they've always wanted me to and the other – Dad has three other kids but they all – not all because one of them ended up becoming a school counsellor, so I guess not all, but their upbringing was worse and so I'm like the golden child, so I followed the golden child route.

**Sherree (researcher):** So, you're on the golden child route at the moment, okay, and how long will that continue for, do you think?

**Sean Dale:** I think I'm just tasked with it. I'm Mum's only kid so I'll just finish uni and then get a job in that field and then they will be happy.

**Sherree (researcher):** What if you had chosen not to do a degree?

**Sean Dale:** Oh, shit would have hit the fan, I suspect.

**Sherree (researcher):** Why?

**Sean Dale:** I don't know. Marketing seemed interesting, and I got an average OP and so I just went into that. I would like to own a business and I would like to be in sales essentially and just sell stuff to people but... it just seems like it could be an interesting job on paper. Or selling houses. I don't know how much money you make but it seems like it could be

interesting. The problem with a lot of things is it takes ages to get the point where you can be like, oh, so this isn't or is, but you've wasted X amount of time to figure that out... I have a Blue Card <sup>32</sup>and an RSA<sup>33</sup> so I could work a bar. I'd like to own a bar... Yeah, I think... work with the degree that I get and go for some business that sounds important, they have a fancy name on it... Yeah, I feel like marketing is probably a stepping-stone... I guess I just look for a job in that field and then move to wherever they need me to move and then get a shit-box and live in that. I think I would really enjoy a magazine job and they're like, look, this is our product, come out and shoot some ads for us, so I would take out my little camera and do a little ad on Photoshop in a magazine. That would be cool.

Interestingly, Sean's father, Gordon Dale (p), was the most outspoken of the parents in cautioning against family and society emphasising "traditional" neoliberal markers of success at the expense of young adults' happiness:

Most people are not bright enough to realise they've got to make the most of the way the kids are, not – most people are very follow the crowd, sort of thing. The crowd is saying, basically, you know, sort of get as far as you can, and scramble if you don't succeed academically, then you can scramble and get a business and become successful, and yeah, those traditional things are still there, very strongly.

Gordon puts this down to pervasive consumerism, which he suggests is generated at the societal level and reified subconsciously within families:

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<sup>32</sup> System used in Queensland, Australia as a prevention/monitoring system for people working with children.

<sup>33</sup> Responsible Service of Alcohol certification required to serve alcohol commercially in Queensland, Australia.

Oh, it's something you don't hear, it's something that happens in families at a subconscious level. Yeah, oh, yeah, very subtle; socialising and expectation giving – when the kids are playing on the ground, you know, “Oh, a Ferrari, eh?” Oh, no, no, no – no, it's a Ford Focus, mate.

Tanya Hughs (post) is also critical of the unrealistic expectations that she believes society imposes on young adults. She explains that societal expectations that “everybody” will pursue a higher education trajectory and progress to graduate jobs is creating a generation that is condemned to failure:

I think the expectation is that everybody goes to university, everybody gets graduate jobs, and of course, that doesn't happen. You look at where Tony works. He works at the call centre there and half of them have got degrees in things that they've never done. Half the night packers at Coles have got psychology degrees and sociology degrees... I feel that people feel as though they're let down more, that they don't achieve.

This weight of societal expectation is also felt by emerging adults. Peter Ferris (post) and Stewart Limpus (post) felt pressured to ascend to higher education immediately after finishing high school in order to continue their upwards growth trajectory without “losing time.” Similarly, James Schilling (post) expected to continue his “natural progression” from Australian to Hollywood filmmaker, and was devastated by his personal “failure” to achieve this aspiration. Yvonne Wheller (pre) explains that she is choosing a “horizontal” career path that progresses at a “slow, steady incline” which she suspects society may view as “pretty stagnant”, but which she perceives as being equally successful in her *own time*:

I think society expects us also to be working towards our goals of you know moving up... I think that's also part of my expectations. Like I would want

to progress too, but I don't see horizontal as not progressing I think you know it's like a slow steady incline- I think like in this day and age, we want everything now. So, I think the faster you get higher, that's probably progression more so than the whole steady increase... I think they would see it as like a oh that's pretty stagnant you know.

Expectations are, I suggest, intrinsically situated in space and bound by time. They concern a specific happening, which a person expects to occur or have occurred within a particular time period. Even when expressed as an expectation that a happening will occur at "some time" in the future, that "some time" is still necessarily an undetermined future point *in time*. As Elizabeth Freeman (2011) asserts, "time binds" the performative work that we do and aspire to do, creating a gauge of measurement that gives rise to met, partially met or unmet expectations.

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Neighbours in front, 'Malcolm's Motors' 34 right? Principal of the business. His father has expectations of him. Said to me the other day, I still don't know what the fuck I'm good at. And I felt like saying to him, well you'd be like that, one of the presidents of the United States that failed at 17 different ventures before he became president." Gordon Dale (p)

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As established in the review of the literature, the idea that personal growth is a desirable, upwardly progressing, cumulative realisation of productive endeavours (Trites, 2014) is allied closely to the neo-liberal success paradigm. Described by Jenks

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<sup>34</sup> Company name changed to protect research participant anonymity.

as “the single most compelling metaphor of contemporary culture” (2005, p.6), the notion of ‘growth’ as the yardstick by which any human endeavour is measured is compelling and pervasive. This research sought to understand emerging and re-emerging adults’ notions of a *successful adulthood*. The theme of (upwards) growth was not one that I had identified at the outset of this project, nor prior to engaging my research participants; it was emergent from the interviews and subsequently became a central theme of this thesis. This research supports Jenks’ (2005) assertion that human success trajectories, goals and achievements are typically framed by both individuals and broader society in terms of growth metaphors. Furthermore, these spatially motivated growth metaphors intersect with neoliberal economic frames to inform emerging and re-emerging adults’ “yardstick” for self-worth.

Many of the research participants used spatially motivated metaphor of to describe their intergenerational cohabitation experiences, progress trajectories and future goals. As elucidated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), using metaphor in discourse highlights underlying thought-processes that reveal how we see and respond to the world. Utilising Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) framework, I suggest that the following underlying conceptual metaphors inform the use of spatially informed metaphors by research participants: “LIFE IS A JOURNEY”, “MOVEMENT IS PROGRESS”, “GROWTH IS UP” and “SUCCESS IS AHEAD.” These macropropositions<sup>35</sup> appear to reify the Grand Narrative of Upwards Growth. They emphasise the upwardly progressive characteristic of success and advocate for movement around or over obstacles using the personal attributes of hard work and perseverance. I have identified

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<sup>35</sup> Martin et al. (2018, p.2) define macropropositions as being “derived from the microstructure by deleting the unneeded propositions and generalizing some groups of propositions, forming the gist of the discourse” (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978).

54 discrete uses<sup>36</sup> of spatial metaphor (Table 4.1). As Charteris-Black (2004, p.92) explain, “metaphors rarely occur single” and “typically cluster to produce a ‘battery’ of metaphors.” Within these accounts I have identified three ideational functions (Fairclough, 1995; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) that inform the macro propositions; these are: 1. Life trajectory characterised as journeying by land, air and sea (Life Journey); 2. Challenges and opportunities framed as geographical goals to overcome or reach (Geographical Goal); and 3. Successful career envisioned as linear, ahead and upwardly progressive (Upward/Forward Progression).

*Table 4.1 Spatial Metaphors used by Research Participants*

<b>Research Participant</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Ideational function</b>
James Schilling	“Whatever it was I chose was my own path to choose”	Life Journey
James Schilling	“...crash and burn”	Life Journey
James Schilling	“Kamikaze”	Life Journey
Sean Dale	“...it’s a pretty good ride and so I’m still here.”	Life Journey
Sean Dale	“I feel like at some point you have to move on and continue your journey.”	Life Journey
Sean Dale	“My life peaked at about 15.”	Life Journey
Sean Dale	“...marketing is probably a stepping-stone.”	Life Journey
Stewart Limpus	“I feel much more engaged with my professional path.”	Life Journey
Stewart Limpus	“I’m about to hit a big milestone.”	Life Journey
Tyson Kornell	“Down the track, that might be something I would like.”	Life Journey
Tyson Kornell	“Like the grass might be greener somewhere else.”	Life Journey
Tyson Kornell	“I don’t wanna rock the boat.”	Life Journey
Tyson Kornell	“... the next big step.”	Life Journey
Yvonne Wheller	“...nursing was always going to be a stepping-stone to something else, it was like a good stepping-stone to many other fields like as a base layer of knowledge.”	Life Journey

<sup>36</sup> Repeated uses of the same metaphor used to describe the same circumstances or context are excluded.

Yvonne Wheller	"...it wasn't a straight path."	Life Journey
Tanya Hughs	"I sort of peaked early over in the UK and had to start again when we came here."	Life Journey
Tanya Hughs	"Sara was a bit of a rolling stone."	Life Journey
Tanya Hughs	"We've just gone down completely different paths."	Life Journey
Tanya Hughs	"Have those little baby steps of achievement."	Life Journey
Tanya Hughs	"...we recognize that they need their own wings."	Life Journey
Peter Ferris	"...when you're uncertain of your path."	Life Journey
Peter Ferris	"I don't have to hide and duck around the corner."	Life Journey
Siri Wheller	"There were lots of ups and downs. We needed to go with the flow."	Life Journey
Siri Wheller	"Sometimes you have to take sideways steps to pursue what you want to do."	Life Journey
Siri Wheller	"I wanted to fly"	Life Journey
Siri Wheller	"It set him on this course, and he's done well out of it."	Life Journey
Siri Wheller	"Our paths were quite different."	Life Journey
James Schilling	"...you look back at that light flashing on the horizon behind you in your wake."	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"I'm not sailing alone..."	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"...crash my ships on the rocks"	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"I have that shining star on the horizon I want to chase."	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"I discovered that land, I conquered that land, I moved on. Then I've discovered no lands."	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"I haven't had as big a project as that in my life again to give me the thrill of another mountain in my range of mountains I have climbed."	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	"...like a flag on the horizon to chase a concept."	Geographical Goal
Stewart Limpus	"I feel like I'm treading water like there's no great traction."	Geographical Goal
Stewart Limpus	"I can get stuck in a rut doing the same thing."	Geographical Goal
Tyson Kornell	"I'm just sitting there calmly and peacefully and thinking, "Wow, I did it," because it was such a big mountain for me to climb."	Geographical Goal
Clive Ferris	"...there is pitfalls they have to learn by themselves."	Geographical Goal

Clive Ferris	“It’s just vastness and so much water that separates the two continents of the time of passage.”	Geographical Goal
Siri Wheller	“You hope that they’ll be able to weather some of the storms that come up.”	Geographical Goal
Siri Wheller	“She tends to be a bit of a beacon.”	Geographical Goal
James Schilling	“...springboard off onto better things.”	Upward/Forward Progression
James Schilling	“I was on the rise, it was from here to here, chasing the green light like Gatsby.”	Upward/Forward Progression
James Schilling	“I could hold the fort whilst she lynchpins forward, or slingshots forward to the next thing.”	Upward/Forward Progression
James Schilling	“...you look back at that light flashing on the horizon behind you in your wake.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Tyson Kornell	“...move up the ranks.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Tyson Kornell	“I probably would stick with staying at the bottom of the totem pole.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Yvonne Wheller	“...when you are climbing the ladder and you change ladders, of course you’re got to sort of come back down and then start again.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Yvonne Wheller	“So of course, along like this slow and steady increase there would be steps that you do take up.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Yvonne Wheller	“I think society expects us also to be working towards our goals of you know moving up”	Upward/Forward Progression
Yvonne Wheller	“I don’t see horizontal as not progressing I think you know it’s like a slow steady incline.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Yvonne Wheller	“I think for him like climbing the ladder would be awesome.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Siri Wheller	“He’s way ahead of the game.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Siri Wheller	“You need to look forward to something.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Siri Wheller	“Keep going forward. Don’t look back.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Clive Ferris	“... So there is nothing else as a launch pad that I think I failed at.”	Upward/Forward Progression
Clive Ferris	“I really think they’ve got themselves a good launch pad through their life.”	Upward/Forward Progression

Spatial metaphor is used by participants to locate their goals and aspirations and situate themselves in relation to achievement of their goals and aspirations. Several of the research participants visualise life as a journey with “milestones”, “steps” or

“stepping-stones” that mark progress towards the end goal or aspiration. Others frame goals more abstractly as geographical landmarks such as mountains to be climbed, stars to be chased, seas to be crossed, lands to be conquered, and storms to be weathered. These interim markers are used as motivational goals that are typically time-bound and tangible, as well as temporally situated. Similarly, the spatial positioning of goals and aspirations ‘ahead’ or ‘upward’ specifies an orientation for progression that is acquisitive of social capital in the forms of resources (financial, status etc.) and experience. Spatial metaphor provides a functional mechanism by which progress can be ‘measured’ or ‘quantified’ against expectations. Accordingly, it mobilises the value-judgements of efficiency (how quickly a task is effectively performed) and effectiveness (how well a task is performed within contextual constraints) to derive a personal evaluation of being ‘on track’ or ‘off track’ versus expectations.

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So, whether or not he did actually have to climb down that ladder and start something new, I think where he was at that stage, I think if he was happy and content in that, I think that would be what I would consider successful, yeah yep. Yvonne Wheller (pre)

Sometimes you have to take sideways steps to pursue what you want to do.

Siri Wheller (p)

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*Autoethnographic Reflection*

Twenty years after graduating university I departed the neoliberal progress flight-plan and re-launched into academia. When my PhD programme comes to an end, so does the scholarship that has fuelled my academic journey. I must now declare my destination, but the seats on this flight of academic fancy are all taken. I am obliged to wait on stand-by without any guaranteed time of departure. My late arrival at the academy comes at stage of life where I cannot afford to be circling a holding pattern or indefinitely grounded. I am no longer flying solo and must take my partner into account when planning my travels. These checked-in allowances are blessings and burdens. I cannot take off to pursue a marketing lectureship in Perth, or sociological research in Antarctica. I am now planning for the long haul and short scenic flights that contribute little to my airmiles are unsustainable. I must chart a course and land somewhere, even if it is not at my chosen destination. I can afford no more delays.

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*Figure 4.7: Sherree Halliwell, Because I Was Inverted*

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**Act 5 Performance – “The Pretzelling of an Ex-Boomeranger” - a documentary chronicling the *temporal dysphoria* of James F. Schilling**

This Production spotlights the story of James Schilling, a 39-year-old man initially identified in this research as a ‘boomerang’ participant. I present James’ story as a case study, as it provides a unique lens on the intergenerational cohabiting experience and illustrates the utility of the anti-narrative approach when utilised across multiple interviews and changing contexts. I was fortunate to be able to interview James twice as a newly divorced man whilst cohabiting with his mother shortly after he was retrenched from his job, then again after he had secured full time employment and moved into his own residence with a new partner.

I first interviewed James in November 2020 at his mother’s home, to which he had recently returned to co-reside in what he characterised as his mother’s “garage.” This had been his home since early childhood until graduating university at 21 and taking up a position in TV production on the Gold Coast. James had remained employed with the same media company for the next 18 years. At age 22, he married his university sweetheart, and at 26, James and his wife bought their first home together.

James’ circumstances had undergone a radical change in the months directly preceding our first interview. Recently divorced, dispossessed of his home in the separation settlement and having been retrenched in September 2020, James was obliged to seek residential support from his mother whilst “rebuilding” his life and seeking new employment. James’ ‘boomerang’ story features in the previous collage. However, as James recontacted me to relate, his story continued to evolve throughout the period spanning my research project. Growing temporally backwards via a process of “backward birthing” (Stockton, 2011, p.7), realising sideways opportunities in a

new career adjacent to his previous employment, and looking forward to new possibilities with a partner to whom he is now engaged to be married, James' growth trajectory challenges the notion of a binary transition from childhood to adulthood as characterised by a linear progression of "growing up" regulated by time. His is an alternative narrative that troubles the neo-liberal notion of a successful (transition to) adulthood, instead advancing a way of doing adulthood that I call "pretzeling", a process that encompasses "growing backwards", "growing sideways", and "growing up." Furthermore, James' experience unsettles chrononormative linear conceptualisations of *progress* and *success*, demonstrating a reflexive attitude to personal aspirations and expectations and progress towards reimagined notions of success in his "own time."

As a former professional filmmaker James confides that he is drawn to character arcs that follow a "hero's journey" narrative, or as I characterise them in the context of this thesis, stories of "becoming" (Muñoz, 2009, p.26). As Vogler (2017) elucidates, the hero's journey begins with a great loss. Next, the hero encounters what they initially perceive as insurmountable challenges. After an internal struggle that includes grieving the loss of their (naïve/innocent) former self, they accept their fate. The hero then confronts their weaknesses and receives guidance and support from wise and experienced allies/angels. The hero is transformed by discovering their higher purpose, honing their strengths, and courageously overcoming all obstacles. Finally, they return, triumphant, vindicated, loved and able to restore peace and order to the world. As unfolds over the course of this documentary, James' story follows the hero's journey arc, which begins with the loss of his wife, profession and home. Next, he angrily grieves these "failures" and struggles to come to terms with the truncation of his "natural progression", eventually reconciling himself to a period of

residential/financial dependence on his mother. Seeking alternative ways to grow and succeed, he courageously strives to overcome a crisis of confidence, leverages his strengths to negotiate systemic barriers, forges a new career, and pursues a relationship with a partner whose guidance and support are essential to his “becoming” the “better man she sees.” With a renewed higher purpose, an affirming new career, a stable home “sanctuary,” and his partner's love, he can *re-emerge* with optimism and hope for self-actualisation and an enduring legacy.

James requested to film a studio-style interview with me as his last interview, which will testify to this pivotal moment of becoming in his life. I gladly assented to this request, reflecting on the “happy accident” and “serendipity” (Kilgard, 2009, p.17) of James’ proposal, considering the performative metaphor underpinning this project. We discussed the possible formats in which I might present his ‘testimony’, ranging from a traditional scholarly thematic analysis to a fully rendered documentary film. James’ inclination was towards the latter; he felt strongly that his story must be presented in a format that “people like [his] mum can understand” rather than being for the “exclusive indulgence of the academic Illuminati.” He also wished his “voice to be heard, unfiltered, untwisted and unobscured by academic wank.” James explained to me that amongst his friendship circle are renowned academics whose paths into Film/TV scholarship diverged when James entered the media industry. James’ perception of those friends is that they “look down” on him “intellectually and professionally” because he has made a career out of “doing rather than writing about doing.” His general perception of academia is that we scholars perpetuate an abstruse and insular system of knowledge production that “keeps out the little people”, precluding non-academics from hearing or being heard. This intellectual exclusivity he also views with some scepticism, concluding that “if the doers don’t understand

what's being thought and written by the academic Illuminati, none of their highfalutin thoughts are actually going to be implemented.” (J. Schilling, personal communication, 20 February 2022).

James also posits that much of the knowledge generated in scholarship derives from interactions with the very people that academia excludes. Quantitative and qualitative research, tests and experiments, all to a greater or lesser extent, rely on research subjects (including subject matter and material). The insights scholars generate from exploring and examining these subjects morally belong not exclusively to the academy but more broadly to humanity. Therefore, my commitment to decolonising knowledge production, particularly concerning knowledge generated in my interactions with James, is an obligation I attempt to honour methodologically, analytically, and representationally. However, respecting James' wish to remain anonymous, we agreed that I would have access to the film footage for my analysis (for my review of his body language), but only the audio transcript would form part of the formal data set available for presentation. Accordingly, when I arrived at the new home that James shares with his fiancée, I was welcomed into the open office/study, where two opposing chairs had been set and two cameras positioned at 45 degrees on tripods to capture our interview. A small table was situated between the chairs upon which there was a jug of water and two tumblers. I set my phone on the table and began audio recording, then awaited James' instruction that we were “rolling” before commencing the interview.

I present this chapter in the format of a scripted long-form (1.5 hours) first-person interview documentary (Table 3.1). I reproduce James' interview excerpts alongside a juxtaposed ‘commentary’ of the contextual analysis of James' first two interviews during his period of intergenerational cohabitation, analysis from email

correspondence between myself and James, and my reflections on James' present state of *becoming*. This is articulated in 'lay' terms per documentary convention. This also extends my commitment to "decolonising knowledge production, pedagogy and praxis" from the position of "betweenner" (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 19). It is unconventional for critical academic works to reproduce extensive interview excerpts (Lillis, 2001, 2008; Bitchener & Bastukmen, 2006; Lather, 1991). However, I invoke Lather's (1991) and McMullin's (2018) scholarship on the epistemological orientation of *tales* to support my choice to make visible the work done by James to account for himself over time and the methodological work of myself as interviewer in deploying an anti-narrative methodological approach to research as a "critical, reflexive process of undoing" (Riach et al., 2016, p.2077). Lather (1991) notes that the epistemological choices academics make when presenting interview texts profoundly impact the possible meanings and understandings generated. Whilst I fall short of agreeing with James that these epistemological choices render the work presented "academic wank", I acknowledge that often many of the analytical leaps made in scholarship may appear to be generated in a "black box" (Driscoll & Walker, 2014).

In *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*, Lather (1991) illustrates the textual possibilities that can be realised via different representations of the same dataset. Lather draws on a single dataset and tells "four different stories" (1991, p.123), naming them a "realist tale", a "critical tale", a "deconstructive tale", and a "reflexive tale" (p.p.129-151). Each story emphasises different meanings and leads to different understandings, reflecting and constrained by the researcher's perspectivisation. This is pertinent to this project's anti-narrative methodological framework that emphasises inclusivity, collaboration, reflexivity, multi-dimensionality, co-creativity, and ethicality. I acknowledge that my dyslexic

ways of knowing (McDonald, 2017) influence my meaning-making, and I, therefore, seek to ‘show my workings.’ I also make visible my operationalisation of the anti-narrative interviewing approach in the hope that fellow scholars interested in developing this approach further, or adopting it in their own inquiries, may critically view the lines of inquiry that I have pursued and judge for themselves which techniques most effectively promote participant-situated reflexivity.

Accordingly, I intentionally leave space for a “multi-layered narrative inquiry” (Yardley, 2008, Introduction section, para 1) and collaborative research participant/researcher/audience meaning-making. By reproducing excerpts of interview dialogue, reflexive emails and phone text messages alongside a ‘ringfenced critique’, I offer a compendium of stories - a realist tale generated within the interview as James accounts for himself; a reflexive tale produced by James in collaboration with myself through a process of co-reflexion on his transcripts; a critical tale chiefly through my juxtaposition of the “hidden structures” that “shape the social world” (Lather, 1991, p.128); and deconstructive tale where I seek to ‘undo’ the oppressive subjectivities and conditions and suggest ways in which they can be challenged and changed (Riach et al., 2016).

This first-person interview documentary format is best exemplified by the famous *Nixon-Frost Interviews*, which first aired in May 1977. David Frost’s interviewing technique of creating a comfortable space for the interviewee to answer expansively is one that I also intentionally deploy. Close adherence to an interview ‘script’ intended for guidance or generative discussion inherently constrains and curtails the interviewee’s agency and risks reproducing the interviewer’s interpretive paradigms. As Burkette (2022) argues, a formal and structured rendering of the research interview “freezes the event in time and space, concretising (and reducing) it

to frameworks which also limit its allowed constituents” (p.303). However, a narrowing of contexts is necessary for inquiry to be meaningfully directed and the knowledge generated to be intelligible and generalisable (Deener, 2018). Following Madison (2014), I adopt a “critical performance ethnography” (p.391), which balances the dual-tensions inherent in performance ethnography’s “on the ground” voice of the oppressed, and critical theory’s instructing the audience “what to do” by incorporating the “poetics” of performance (Madison, 2014, p.p. 391-392), that is, the contextual elements that are enacted and constrained by the political and societal normative structures regulated by time and space.

I ‘capture’ and visualise these contextual elements by presenting this analysis in a standard documentary 2-column format. My field notes inform the film production notes that accompany the dialogue, commentary and video footage captured by James to represent the exchange’s body language, tone, and context, which are often overlooked in qualitative scholarly analysis (Behar, 1996; Denzin, 2003). In agreeance with Burkette (2022), I suggest that non-dialogic ways of communicating interview data are needed to represent the performative elements of the interviewer/interviewee interaction:

Contextualisation becomes more than ancillary effort to capture the “ambience” of a setting or to situate imagery as amplificatory or informationally relevant to a textual data set. The aesthetic elements inhering before, during, and after textual utterance are, instead, constitutive within its meaning as they perform within the sample’s generative *and iterative*, instantiations... Context grounds the knowledge that subsequent analysis unveils (Burkette, 2022, p.301, emphasis in original).

In recognition of this “critical performance ethnography” (Madison, 2014, p.391), I respond to Holman-Jones’ (2008, p.p. 213-214) call for a “critical ekphrasis” to analyse and present the non-dialogic performative data generated in my interactions with James, thereby honouring the iterative process that exists within the anti-narrative qualitative inquiry. As Burkette (2022) notes, the dialogue generated in these interactions is produced “in conjunction with the performativity inhering within the interaction itself” (p.302.) The shot selection, camera angles, ‘B-roll’ footage (see Eastland-Jones, 2021) and narrative beats (where the interview gives way to commentary) are intended to convey mood and tonality, evoking a multi-dimensional characterisation that brings James to life for the audience (McAllister, 2018).

The script presented here has been prone to minor edits by James. To my knowledge, this script has not been rendered into a film format, nor does James wish to abnegate his anonymity by so doing. I, therefore, acknowledge James’ generosity in allowing a ‘performance’ of this script before my audience and hope that your viewing of his story through this intimate lens will unsettle, provoke, and inspire new readings of emerging and what I have characterised *re-emerging* adulthood, viewed through a queer temporality that challenges the chrononormative neo-liberal grand narrative of upwards growth.

VIDEO	AUDIO <sup>2</sup>
<p>HEADLINE BANNER The Pretzelling of an Ex- Boomeranger</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA OUTSIDE FRONT DOOR OF JAMES SCHILLING RESIDENCE, LONG SHOT</p> <p>ESTABLISHING SHOT TOOWOOMBA RANGE</p> <p>JAMES OPENS DOOR, FIANCEE BESIDE HIM; GREETES SHERREE, WELCOMES INSIDE, TWO SHOT (LONG)</p>	<p><b>OPENING MUSIC</b></p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> <i>"James Schilling is, by most people's accounts, a very successful filmmaker with over 50 broadcast credits to his name at just 39 years of age. Five years ago, James celebrated the international release of his first series of critically acclaimed political documentaries. Presenting his work at the Gold Coast Convention Centre with his university sweetheart wife of 15 years by his side, James' star was in the ascendancy.</i></p> <p><i>Fast forward (as they say in film parlance) to the present day; now newly affianced to the owner of a chain of health clubs, a one-time model 10 years his junior, and living in a sprawling two-tiered home with magnificent views over Toowoomba Range, James' life still has all the hallmarks of the "perfect" man his mother describes.</i></p> <p><i>But when I first met James just over a year ago, his situation was very different. Recently divorced, retrenched from his company of 15 years, and obliged to live in what he called his mother's "garage", James' star had fallen to earth. And the "inevitable" rise of a man whose future had seemed assured was suddenly cast into doubt."</i></p>

<sup>2</sup> Formatting Conventions: Within the Video column themes are split into 10 *segments*. Per the documentary filmmaking convention, citations that appear in the Audio column have visual 'supers' that show the full name of authors and the full name of their publications without cited page numbers. Page numbers for these citations are cited within the Introduction/ Methodology or Literature Review Acts. Within the Audio column direct quotations from interview and email correspondence are denoted by speech marks. Analysis is presented as italicised commentary within speech marks.

<p><b>SEGMENT 1</b></p> <p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "It's interesting to understand your perspective from this side of the fence now that life's changed."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Life has changed, and I've met someone who's utterly amazing and given me a better perspective as to what it takes to be successful because they in their own life have been successful."</p> <p>It was very much a— since our last interview, I was very much a selfish picture of, if I'm gonna crash and burn, I don't see much of my life existing beyond this last hurrah attempt. It is pin your hopes and dreams to an idea, and chase after it, and if it crashes and burns, then I don't actually see myself beyond that space. I would have to redefine my idea of success. I would have to redefine my idea of self. I would have to redefine all of that. You need a mark in the sand, like a flag on the horizon to chase a concept. Stick a flag on a hill and say that's the hill I'm gonna die on. That's how I saw it... I'm gonna make that thing, and I'm gonna chase after Hollywood as much as I can because it was just me. I didn't have to care about anything else. It was just me, and if I crash and burn, who cares? It's just me.</p>
<p>JAMES AND PARTNER INTIMATE MOMENTS IN THE HOME, TWO SHOT (LONG), OVER SHOULDER AND MEDIUM CLOSE UPS</p>	<p>In that time since, being reflective on what's going on, my perceptions of it... What is success? What is storytelling? What is worthwhile? The scope of what happiness is has changed since I got into a relationship, and it's not just me, there are other considerations going on. I've once again had to, after the</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>divorce, this is the first time in a long time I've actually had to take someone else into consideration as to my choices, and what I see my world looking like... Talking about that is, it's a consideration that is part and parcel of this. I can't make broad kamikaze Hail Marys without impacting us. It's not me settling, and it's not me giving up on, it's more of a, what's a more strategic, tactical way of making this dream come true without impacting us, does it have to be a blaze of glory? Do I have to go out in a blaze of glory if I don't? Do I have to crash and burn, or can I actually find happiness elsewhere?"</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Answer that question. Does it have to be?"</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "No, because - "</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Why did it have to be?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "No, Because I needed something bright and shiny on the horizon to chase after and give me hope when I'm stuck in a box. That's how I felt. I was in my parents' garage, even though it was a studio or whatever, it still is a box, and it's not my house, it's not my space. I had my own space when I was married, even though I had just an office in there, it was still mine. Being in someone else's space, it was like, well I need some flag on a hill to chase. I need something, some guiding light, some lighthouse in all this fog, in all this bullshit, to chase.</p>

<p><b>B-ROLL MOVIE MONTAGE:</b>  STAR WARS LUKE SKYWALKER/YODA;  DIE HARD JOHN MCCLANE RUNNING FROM EXPLOSION;  TOP GUN MAVERICK/GOOSE EJECTING</p>	<p>I like Hollywood stuff. I've discovered that I frame most of my life around narratives off movies and framing a lot of stuff like that 'cause that makes sense to me. I don't need to— yeah, there is some validity in the hero's journey. There is some validity in pushing yourself to chase that. I'm not holding myself back from that, but I'm doing it more tactically where I don't have to be so kamikaze about it, that if I fail, crashing and burning does not have to be an option. The do or die thing. The stakes have changed. I still have hope about what I want to achieve. I still have hope about the things I want to make. I still have hope about my passions. I have not given up on my passions, but I've got someone else in my life to take into consideration now, and also my life's great at the moment. I want this to continue. Why would I jeopardize this?"</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Would it?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b>  "I think so. If I crash and burn and become a liability, 100 per cent."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Why?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  "Contributing equally. Or contributing like a partner rather than being carried. Being carried by your parents or being carried by your partner, you're still being carried. There is some inherent need within myself to actually contribute... You could do your absolute best and things can go wrong. It doesn't mean I don't still want to try, but there are other ways of doing it without</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>burning myself out and burning out my last chance or any of my savings or things like that... I don't know if I have to do that... Yeah, what's changed is my perspective of if I fail. That was very much a nihilistic part of "I don't care if I fail" before..</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>I am feeling worth saving again, whereas before I didn't. It was all or nothing, do or die... Yeah. Dreams sometimes don't come true for a reason. You have to find other ways to make yourself happy, and whilst I still have that shining star on the horizon I want to chase, if I see that that horizon and that star is going to cause my more damage, I'm not gonna pursue it."</p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MOVING MEDIUM LONG SHOT, PICNIC POINT</p> <p>SUPER: LEE EDELMAN NO FUTURE: QUEER THEORY AND THE DEATH DRIVE (2004)</p> <p>SUPER: JOSE MUÑOZ CRUISING UTOPIA (2009)</p> <p>SHERREE FULL TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p> <p>SHERREE CLOSE UP</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, SEATED, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, PICNIC POINT</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b></p> <p><i>"In the 14 months since I first interviewed James Schilling, his circumstances and outlook on life have changed considerably. My first impression upon meeting James was that he personified Lee Edelman's 2004 seminal work, "No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive." With a future orientation that he now characterises as "nihilistic", James was blazing a "kamikaze"-like trail towards a Hollywood "Hail-Mary." It was the "hill" he would "die on" if he crashed and burned – quite literally a death drive. Evoking another eminent queer theorist, Jose Muñoz, James was unable to see a future within the "broken-down present." In order to achieve some semblance of "validity" he needed to chase "something bright and shiny on the horizon" – his "lighthouse" of hope in the "fog" and "bullshit" of his untenable present. He had <b>no future</b>, and <b>nothing to lose</b>.</i></p> <p><i>During our first two interviews in November 2020, I was struck by how tightly wound and agitated James appeared. On several occasions he can be heard in the transcripts drumming his fingers on his desk to punctuate his frustrations. I'd sensed an insecure bravado in his assertions that his ex-colleagues revered him as "Spielberg" and his mother publicly lauds him as "literally perfect", the "perfect child, the perfect man, the perfect everything." This veneer appeared to me to be at odds with his sustained self-criticism and characterisation of himself as having "failed" to live up to his own expectations. I journaled his repeated clenching of his fists and raising of his voice when recalling details of his "failed" marriage – this embodied tension I</i></p>
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<p>SUPER:  DULCE ET DECORUM  EST PRO SOMNIIS  IN COLLE MORI... IT  IS SWEET AND  FITTING TO DIE ON  A HILL FOR ONE'S  DREAMS</p>	<p><i>described as "castigatingly implosive."</i></p> <p><i>The change in James' demeanour today is remarkable. The relaxed, confident, and assured man that is reflecting on his past experiences with steady candour is now secure in himself and striving to maintain that same security in his new home and relationship with his partner.</i></p> <p><i>James' dreams, aspirations, notions of success and possibilities have shifted beyond the first horizon. He now aspires beyond that horizon to a future with his partner that he was unable to see when pinning his hopes on a "Hail Mary" somewhere beyond his foggy liminality. Time, responsibility, security, and a reframing of his future dreams have changed James' notion of happiness and self-worth. He declares himself "<b>worth saving now.</b>" However, accompanying this increased sense of worth is a corresponding burden. The higher the "worth" derived from the relationship, the greater the obligation to "contribute."</i></p> <p><i>Recalling the Great War poet, Wilfred Owen, it's no longer a case for James of "dulce et decorum est pro somniis mori" - it isn't sweet and fitting to die on the hill for your dream if you have <b>everything to lose.</b></i></p>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 2</b>  JAMES/SHERREE  INTERVIEW  SEATED, TWO SHOT  (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Consider this provocation, when you were sitting there with virtually nothing and no equity, in your mother's garage, <i>studio</i>, and considering sinking everything you owned into a project, which would leave you broke, that was where you saw your hope, that was what you were getting your sense of success from—"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b>  "A lottery ticket"</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Now you're in a situation where you've got a safety net, and you could in fact invest everything you have in a project, and you don't die on that hill."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  "Mm-hmm. I don't want to take that—I don't want to take my relationship for granted. It's nice to be told that you have a safety net. I don't want to lean into that because I don't want to test it. It shouldn't be needed. I don't want to lean on that. I can be smarter."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Why? Why <i>shouldn't</i>? Shouldn't, what, who? Where are you getting that idea from that it shouldn't be tested?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  "I don't want to test it. I don't want to be a liability to my partner. I was a potential liability to my parents. Now I don't want to be a liability to my partner... I've had someone be a liability to me. I do not want to be that for someone else...   I'm not giving up on my dream, but there is a way to do it where I</p>

don't lose everything I have... The whole "put your money where your mouth is" was kind of what I was buying into. It's like if you're that fucking good and you think you're that fucking good, back yourself with your whole heart so there's no choice but to win, which works for some people.

I was on a pathway of loneliness, but I thought that was self-imposed loneliness because I can't take on any baggage because I didn't want to be tied down. That was my whole thing. Plus, I was still figuring myself out. I was still fairly angry. I saw myself as a liability... Even if I was living in a unit the centre of town earning what I earn, probably a lonely existence, which is not good for mental health, and with the pressure of what I'm doing, potentially it could've broken me, and had no one to turn to because I wouldn't want to turn to my parents again as to, "Help, I'm in trouble again," I'm not doing that."

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MOVING MEDIUM LONG SHOT, BACKGROUND INDISTINCT TOOWOOMBA CBD</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> <i>"In my first interview with James he lamented that he was not self-sufficient enough to carry his own weight and felt "embarrassed" about becoming a "liability" to his mother and stepfather. Notwithstanding this precariousness, James was willing to risk all his savings on a high stakes "Hail Mary" film project that would see him "crash and burn" without a safety-net if he didn't succeed.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: DEBORAH TUDOR SELLING NOSTALGIA: MAD MEN, POSTMODERNISM AND NEOLIBERALISM (2012) WENDY BROWN NEOLIBERALISM AND THE END OF DEMOCRACY (2003)</p>	<p><i>Just now I put it to James that his new financial, professional, residential and relationship security provide just such a safety-net, allowing him to take a risk on his Hollywood dream. I was surprised to find that this sense of security has, somewhat paradoxically, caused him to adopt a more risk-averse mindset. I'm reminded of Deborah Tudor and Wendy Brown's scholarship on neoliberalism in modern culture, which contends that today's "entrepreneur of the self" has elevated economic value to the level of moral value "whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for "self-care" – the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions." In acquiring professional and relationship responsibilities that require his time and financial contribution, James has become <b>accountable</b> for himself. He now perceives the <b>cost of failure</b> as personal <b>"liability."</b></i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL MOVIE MONTAGE:</b> JAMES ON SET OF HIS DOCUMENTARY SERIES, JAMES FILMING ON</p>	<p><i>James' idea of success has been reframed by the neoliberal responsabilisation paradigm. His past achievements in film and documentary mark a zenith in his maximisation of social capital and habitus. When he had nothing to</i></p>

<p>LOCATION, CLIPS FROM JAMES' ACTION FILM</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, BACKGROUND INDISTINCT TOOWOOMBA CBD</p> <p>SUPER: JOSE MUÑOZ CRUISING UTOPIA (2009)</p>	<p><i>lose, he was free to spend his skills, experience, time, and money on a "Hail Mary" dream that would fully capitalise on his resources. This former notion of "success" was predicated on proving his claim that he was good enough to achieve Hollywood success. He didn't feel that he stood to lose anything of material significance in the attempt, even if he crashed and burned trying. In backing himself with his "whole heart" and putting his "money where his mouth is" he accepted failure as a possible outcome. For James, the act of failing whilst wholeheartedly pursuing a "Hail Mary" dream was akin to Jose Muñoz's conceptualisation of the act of failing as an "impossible reality" where misfiring is simply the enactment of something other than that intended.</i></p> <p><i>James' Hollywood dream is still a driving ambition, but he will not pursue it at any cost. The resources required to back himself wholeheartedly are presently standing surety for his future, a material future stretching beyond that first horizon, which he now values more highly than his dream.</i></p>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 3</b>  JAMES/SHERREE  INTERVIEW  SEATED, TWO SHOT  (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  “You have talked about three changes in your life since we first chatted. One is permanent job. Another is now a residential independence, away from your parents. The third is a new relationship. How do each of those affect your view of yourself?”</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b>  “Okay. The permanent job gives me— I feel a bit more self-respect about what I'm doing. It's different from my previous career. It does feel like an advancement...”</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  “Why is it an advancement?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  Higher pay packet. It's just straight-up cash advancement compared to my previous job. Amount of effort into this new job versus the amount of money I'm getting back is completely different. I'd work long, long hours at my other job and get paid very little. It was more about the prestige of what I was making, but that wasn't giving me direct cash and improving my life. It was more about the fact I was involved in the media industry and that I had credit to my name, blah blah blah, which is flag-waving. That's nice. It's pretty on the CV. It hasn't changed my life for the better..</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  “Sitting where you are right now, what does success mean to you?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  “Calm. Success means lack of stress.. it doesn't have to be done, done, onto the next one, done, done, onto the next one kind of workload. Success to me is investing my time and energy into</p>

<p><b>B-ROLL HOLLYWOOD MONTAGE:</b>  HOLLYWOOD  VISTA/SIGN,  CELEBRITY RED  CARPET, PAPARAZZI</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p>some place that is appreciated. The relationship that I have with my partner that it can flourish and explore and appreciate the time that we have together.</p> <p>Success doesn't have to be the creative, flag-waving success of Hollywood anymore... Looking at the people that are in that shark tank, that's a lot of stress. I'm not settling, I'm actually trying to reduce the drama so that I can enjoy my passions rather than seeing it as a Hail Mary saving line, to be a lottery ticket, golden ticket... Success to me now is a stable relationship, calm, sanctuary and getting enjoyment out of what I'm actually working on with my life currency. Where I'm spending it. Am I getting good value back for, like heart value, good resonance, and getting good money?"</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Do you measure your success against time?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b>  "The film thing, I used to hold myself to. I want to make a feature film by X age... I had a self-expectation that I would make it. And that was confirmed in the fact that I got good marks at uni, that was then confirmed by the fact that I got straight into industry, it was then confirmed by the fact that my own project got a national broadcast, international broadcast off my own merits. So yes, I expected that the next step was to then end up in Hollywood by then doing a film project or something like that. It was a natural progression in constantly going up. And that didn't happen.</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  "Why?"</p>
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JAMES INTERVIEW  
SEATED, CLOSE UP

**JAMES:**

"Because I got stuck in a marriage, and with low money to actually invest in making a film, because making a feature film is all-consuming. Because my ex-partner didn't actually work a fulltime job at that time we couldn't stop, I couldn't stop and take myself out of the workforce for 2 or 3 months to make a feature film on a punt. On a maybe and have her carry the load... I realised how much it was going to cost to make and there was just no way I could do that with the current lifestyle I was living with the mortgage and the life I had, that's when I started to feel like a failure."

JAMES/SHERREE  
INTERVIEW  
SEATED, TWO SHOT  
(MEDIUM)

**SHERREE:**

"You were judging yourself against the expectation you set?"

**JAMES:**

"I didn't think I was trying hard enough... I didn't succeed, so perhaps I wasn't trying hard enough, I didn't sacrifice enough..."

**SHERREE:**

"But you described earlier that that failure was a result of claims on your time with family and paying the mortgage and not having money to invest in it, so those aren't- "

**JAMES:**

"They're external factors."

**SHERREE:**

"But you still describe that as a *failure*."

JAMES INTERVIEW  
SEATED, MEDIUM  
CLOSE UP

**JAMES:**

"Yeah, that I wasn't smart enough to side-step those draws upon my time... I couldn't step around it or find another way... I failed because

<p><b>B-ROLL RIDLEY SCOTT:</b> ON SET <i>GLADIATOR</i></p> <p><b>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</b></p>	<p>I wasn't smart enough or didn't try hard enough to get around those... Things that stop you only stop you for a little time, you've got to pick yourself up and go around it or - there's always a way round. It just depends on how hard you work on it. Part of it is luck, but the other part of it is timing, and I often assess the timing of my life... And if it didn't work, well then it will work next year."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Yeah, a different time."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Ridley Scott made his first feature film when he was in his 40s. There's all that material out there, like, write your book when you're 61, make your film when you're 70, blah blah blah, whatever it is. Don't put a time limit on things. There is some truth to that..."</p> <p>I don't put time limits on myself anymore because that can lead to disappointment. I will make my first feature by the time I'm 30 - didn't happen. I will make my first feature by the time I'm 35 - didn't happen. I don't live like that anymore... It's more like if I get there, I get there, as long as I finish it, and that's the time limit I place on myself, is if I start something, I have to finish that, otherwise once again, I'm just doing a hair-brained scheme."</p>
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<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, USQ FILM AUDITORIUM</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> <i>"It's interesting to see how James' notion of success has changed over the last year. His valuation of his new career as an "advancement" remains predicated on deeply entrenched neoliberal ways of thinking – he now receives more money for less effort; accordingly, his time is now worth more, which directly correlates to his increased <b>self-worth</b>.</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL HARD WORK MONTAGE:</b> HERITAGE FOOTAGE OF NAVVIES AT WORK ON THE RAILWAYS, FAST MOTION 1.5 X TEMPO</p> <p><b>SUPER:</b> GROW UP. WILL GROW UP. MUST GROW UP. JACQUELINE ROSE <i>THE CASE OF PETER PAN</i> (1992)</p>	<p><i>Similarly, James' notion of "natural progression" holds to the neoliberal progress paradigm that a sufficiency of skills, hard work, and perseverance will eventually guarantee success. The idea that progression is natural, sequential, accumulative, and unrelenting is a pervasive one in our modern neoliberal society, so much so that those who eschew this regulating force face what Jacqueline Rose describes as "the trauma of growth... a crescendo of insistence and anxiety, 'grow up, 'will grow up, 'must grow up.'"</i></p>
<p>LAUREN BERLANT <i>CRUEL OPTIMISM</i> (2011)</p>	<p><i>As Lauren Berlant explains, this is a particularly cruel trauma for young people today, whose "fraying fantasies" of "upward social mobility, job security, equality and durable intimacy" are increasingly out of reach, irrespective of their skills, hard work and determination.</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, USQ FILM AUDITORIUM</p> <p><b>SUPER:</b> ZYGMUNT BAUMAN <i>THE INDIVIDUALISED SOCIETY</i> (2001)</p>	<p><i>Despite acknowledging the external factors that have prevented him from realising his career expectations, James assumes <b>personal responsibility</b> for his "failure" to maintain his "natural progression" towards an ultimate goal of Hollywood success. In the words of renowned socio-economic theorist, Zygmunt Bauman, the individual "only has himself or herself to thank or blame."</i></p>

<p>SUPER:  ZYGMUNT BAUMAN  <i>LIQUID MODERNITY</i>  (2000)</p> <p>SHERREE TO  CAMERA, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP, USQ  FILM AUDITORIUM</p> <p>SHERREE TO  CAMERA, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP, USQ  FILM AUDITORIUM</p>	<p><i>Attributing outcomes, whether failures or successes, to external factors such as family undermines the illusion of individual agency and autonomy that is a key pillar of modern neoliberal society. James reflects on the barriers that he was unable to overcome to get a feature film project off the ground – his lack of financial resources, time, industry connections and luck – but remains self-critical. He responsabilises himself for not being smart enough or not working hard enough to overcome these obstacles. In his ground-breaking work, “Liquid Modernity” Bauman explains that “individualisation is not a fate, not a choice” and eschewing the “individualising game is emphatically not on the agenda.” The circumstances of individuals’ lives, their choices, experiences, and outcomes, are now entirely “down to the individual.” This is a philosophy that James has unequivocally retained. However, he has also adopted a strategy that subverts the unrelenting pace of the neoliberal progress paradigm; James’ Hollywood aspirations are no longer time bound. Declaring a time by which goals must be reached necessarily risks failure if the goals are unrealised within that frame. However, “failure” isn’t a possibility if there’s always infinitely more time to achieve the goal.</i></p> <p><i>The change in James’ circumstances has also prompted him to reconsider his notion of success. He has reframed success to encompass quality of life. For James, this is a secure, calm, and stress-free personal and professional life where he spends his “<b>life currency</b>” on things that pay back in what he characterises</i></p>
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**"heart value."** Juxtaposing the value he derives from these quality-of-life factors with the ego value conferred by the "flag-waving" status of Hollywood, James acknowledges that his motivations for making a Hollywood feature film have now changed. He explains that the ego value he's gained from his successes to date in the media industry hasn't changed his life for the better. But it's still a dream of his to make something of the social capital and habitus that he's invested in growing over the course of his career."

<p><b>SEGMENT 4</b></p>	
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "What if you had got a full-time job and the relationship but still been living with your mum?... Would it even have been possible to be in a committed full-time relationship and be living in that studio?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Possibly, for a short period of time, because if it went on longer than six months and it was under the guise of I need to save up more money, that would be the only logical reason why if I had a full-time job and a relationship and was still living in that space, it would be to, I'm going to try and knuckle down and save up as much money for six months before I move out, if this relationship is still going after six months, then say: "would you like to live together?" Yeah."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "So, it could only ever be temporary. And could only be defended on the grounds that you were saving money to be moving out?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah. There had to be a benefit beyond shelter. It would have to be a- for my own brain... - not living in my mother's garage, even though it was my mother's studio, but it's a <i>garage</i>, I put it in there because I thought it was less, it made me less. Being in that space, being beholden to their routines. All that made me less... I'd be able to save up enough money to buy a unit, and therefore I could actually have a relationship and have them over to my place, or I go to her place, but I would never feel comfortable about her coming over to the</p>

<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>studio or garage to have relations."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Why? It's your space. Your house."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah, but the walls are thin. It wouldn't feel comfortable. It wouldn't feel like my own. It wouldn't feel comfortable enough to have sexual relations with someone in that space at all. No... Because of the lack of intimacy space, it would not be a viable intimacy space for her to come over to that. I don't think my partner ever came over. I don't think I ever allowed her to come over to stay over."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "When you were living with your parents the first time when you were a child, and then an adolescent and then early adult, did you never have intimate relations in your room?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah, I had—yeah, but it was usually if someone wasn't home."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE</b> "How would that have been different to if someone wasn't home, with your current partner?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah. If she had've accepted the fact that I was living in a garage and wasn't looking down on me."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Would you have felt that?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Potentially. It's not exactly conducive to the picture of a well-put-together person that they're living in the garage. The</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Potentially. It's not exactly conducive to the picture of a well-put-together person that they're living in the garage. The</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Would you have felt that?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Potentially. It's not exactly conducive to the picture of a well-put-together person that they're living in the garage. The</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Would you have felt that?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Potentially. It's not exactly conducive to the picture of a well-put-together person that they're living in the garage. The</p>

<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>caveat is get a full-time job, saving up money to buy my own place. That would be enough of a shield from the scrutiny of, "Why aren't you out of here yet?"</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "That's what the "less" is about then, and perceiving that she would think you were less- "</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yes, because of that, yes, true."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "-and not wanting to put her in the space that- "</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "She viewed me as less."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Which outside of that space was not clearly visible."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "No, it's not apparent. She was judging me on the merits of me as my character, my interactions, not within that space where I feel less because it's not my space, I am living on the goodwill of my parents."</p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, IN JAMES' ROOM AT HIS MOTHER'S HOME</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> <i>"Throughout our interviews, James frequently evokes spatial and monetary metaphors to characterise his <b>self-worth</b>. Reflecting on the months that he spent cohabiting in his mother's home, he describes himself in that situation as <b>being less</b> – not just <b>feeling less</b>. His dependency on his mother for residential and financial support materially diminished him, reducing his appraisal of his own self-worth such that he believed he was of less worth as a son and potential intimate partner.</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, LONG SHOT, IN JAMES' ROOM AT HIS MOTHER'S HOME – PANNING WIDE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT</p>	<p><i>This is also manifest in the language James uses to diminish the accommodations he occupied whilst living with his mother. The room I am standing in was converted from a garage to a studio a month before James returned to cohabit. It is 4 by 5 metres, incorporating a workstation, double bed, and separate dressing area, opening up onto the garden via double patio doors. It bears little resemblance to the "garage" from which it was converted, but as James explains: "even though it was my mother's studio... it's a garage, I put it in there because I thought it was less, it made me less."</i></p> <p><i>It was not only James' disparaging self-appraisal that contributed to his diminished self-worth; living with his mother also rendered James sexually impotent as a consequence of feeling unable to be sexually expressive in his mother's home. His reticence to engage in intimate relations was as a result of both practical considerations – "thin walls" and a lack of "intimacy space" – and more fundamentally, concerns at being <b>seen as less</b> by a partner <b>looking down</b> on him in that space.</i></p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p> <p>SUPER: JUDITH BUTLER PRECARIOUS LIFE (2004)</p>	<p><i>It is clear from James' testimony and the visible discomfort he embodied when confiding these self-insights, that he felt a deep sense of shame in being bound to cohabit with his mother.</i></p> <p><i>Pioneering queer theorist, Judith Butler, explains that we are compelled to seek recognition of ourselves as intelligible, viable individuals; and conversely, this places us in a position of great vulnerability when our situation is precarious, and we risk misrecognition by others as a failure.</i></p> <p><i>The risk of being judged as "less" and being misrecognised as a failure prevented James from making his co-residence status "visible" to his partner early in their courtship. He restricted their dates to her home, where he was comfortable giving an account of himself on the strength of his character and interactions.</i></p>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 5</b> SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "James, I have a recording of our last interview here, and there are some passages I'd like you to listen to and comment on. You're describing your feelings about moving back in with your mum. I'm interested in your thoughts, because to me, it sounds like you're in a very different place, with a very different mindset. Okay?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Sure." -----</p>
<p>[REPLAYING INTERVIEW, MOTHER'S HOME] SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "You said in your previous interview: "I should be self-sufficient enough to carry my own weight, so this is a lull in my expectations of my career, yeah I actually feel embarrassed about it to an extent." And that was talking about?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Living at home."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Living at home. You then said: "But I find a lot of people are actually living at home with their parents, whether they're getting a house built or they're doing studies again, or they've lost their jobs." So, you acknowledge that this is actually quite a common phenomenon."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "It's a common phenomenon, but I'm better than that."</p>
	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Why?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Because I feel I'm better than that. I shouldn't be at home."</p>

<p>[GESTURES 'L-SIGN' ON FOREHEAD]</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Who are the people who are at home then?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Like I said, people getting houses built or hit on tough times or... losers"</p>
	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Losers? But you're doing this for a practical reason."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah, I know, but I still feel like a loser because of it."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Why?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "It shouldn't have had to come to this. I should be able to... advance the next level without living at home..."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "How do you live with that paradox then that you're a successful - "</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Oh, life is a paradox... We're surrounded by paradoxes, so yeah, I suffer it, but it's almost with a childlike glee going "here, I'm living at home, oh isn't that embarrassing?" but at the same time the reality is it's ok, but at the same time then going, needling myself going I shouldn't be happy with this. Like really, it works, but anyway."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "But if I framed this and say it's practical?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yes, logical."</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Logical. It would be illogical for you to be living in the same suburb – "</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "And spending too much money. Yes, yes. It would be illogical, hence why I'm doing the logical thing, despite the emotional part of me going "fucking hell." How do I resolve that? I've always been, tried to be as logical as possible, so I'm sacrificing to be logical and get ahead.</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Sacrificing what?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "My own dignity, in my own head."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Why does this situation have any impact at all on your dignity?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "I should, I feel I should be better than this... my ego is sitting there and lambasting me for the fact that I'm here. Like you should have not needed this. Should have been better... I feel weaker because of it. That's the paradox that I'm living with is that it's logical and I'm a logical person, but the emotional tied up into it that I didn't want it to come to this... I ended up here with my own emotions picking on me going "I failed slightly to be living at home. I should be better than this." That's where it's at."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "The interesting thing is that you've talked to me about responsibility, and you've taken responsibility throughout your career for your successes and failures. And yet here you're</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>taking the most responsible step you could financially to set yourself up for financial success in the future. And you're lambasting yourself for it."</p> <p><b>JAMES</b> "Yes. There could be other options that gave me my dignity back without living with my mother and stepfather."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Is that an internal concept, this 'dignity' or is it one that you're framing yourself in society as someone who doesn't want to be living with parents at your age or time in life?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Both. It's an internal benchmark that I've set myself that I've failed that I'm now living with my mother. I'm a grown man that doesn't need mummy. The fact that I do, or am, is, feels weakening to me. But I'm not stupid. I know it's a good idea. I know it's logical. To me, maybe it's the old thing of failed in the real world, have to go back to live with mummy and daddy.</p> <p>I feel I haven't achieved what I set out to do. So that's probably as close as I can articulate feeling like a failure. I'm not a failure compared to other people... But the internal picture in my head and story I've been telling myself for so long that I was going to achieve these things, the fact that they didn't come true, that feels slightly like a failure.</p> <p>It's the internal emotional things that says this is stupid, failure, silly, you couldn't make it... the creative side of me is going, I didn't quite make it, I'm not good</p>

<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p>enough. But the practical side of me says I'm saving money. I'm doing just fine. Stop picking on yourself."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "So, here's another passage that's really interesting to me. I asked you how different it was living with your parents now versus 20 years ago - "</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Nothing's changed."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "And you did say that. And then you said: "It's a mug of Milo before she goes to bed with a biscuit. She's started making my lunches for work again as she did 20 years ago. No time's passed. I have to stop her from doing my washing because that self-sufficiency of my own I need to do it -"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "It didn't stop... sometimes I come home late from work and I've found my washing's been washed and folded and put away, and like, I'm fucking 16 again... It's a sense of agency of being able to look after yourself that I have developed over, since leaving home that exists when you do. You become self-sufficient and proficient at all the things you need to do to live, to be professional, wash your own clothes, make sure that they're ironed, blah blah blah. Good presentation. And I've gone straight back into the power relation dynamic of my mother doing the same thing I did when I was 16."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "But is that sense of care... does that automatically create a regression back to childhood just</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>because somebody's caring for you?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "In those manners. I like washing my own stuff so I can claim some power back, that I am still my own person rather than a 16-year-old child in that dynamic. But that care is lovely and amazing and feels wonderful and human and connecting, but at the same time it feels disempowering and like... I can do my own things. I'm not a child. But yes, it makes me feel like a child. Still happened today. Made me feel like a child."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Did it? What happened?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Took my washing basket and washed everything. Right ho. I could have done that tomorrow. I've got time allocated to do it... It's the way she was raised. The way her mother did it. Her mum looked after my grandfather the exact same way: lunches and clothes washed, so that they could go do it. Oh my god, gender roles."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "No, I'm detangling <i>care</i>, or trying to. In that, you said previously your father wouldn't be doing your washing, wouldn't be making your lunches, but your mother is - "</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "No dad would probably throw my shit in with his and then I'd have to hang it up on my own, whereas mum actually hangs mine out, which yeah."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "So why is that more troublesome to you? That that care from your</p>

<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>mother is creating this sense of regressive childhood —”</p> <p><b>JAMES :</b> “Boundaries. Internal adult boundaries of looking after my own fucking underwear on the line... I didn’t expect my wife to do it either. She used to lambast me for having to do it. That my mother mothered me that much that I left it to her. That I had to grow up.</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE :</b> “But when your wife did it, did that make you feel childlike?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES :</b> “She made a point of making me feel childlike, the fact that she had to do it and I wasn’t doing it myself.”</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE :</b> “Really? So, this sense of ‘care’, being contra to independence and adulthood is something that’s run through not just your relationship with your mother, but also with your other relationships in life?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES :</b> “Yes, she said that I wasn’t a fully developed adult because my mother mummied me the whole time, so I didn’t actually know how to wash my clothes or hang them up or blah blah blah.”</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE :</b> “Is care infantilising then?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES :</b> “Depends on what the power dynamic of the relationship is. To a point, a little bit, yeah, I guess I would say so. Depends on the relationship as well. My ex-wife saw it as a weakness that I didn’t know how to do it... ‘Cause I didn’t know how to do it, ‘cause my mother had done it, growing up.</p>

<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p>But yes, I do, I do feel like it is somewhat infantilising to have that kind of care. I don't mind the acts of service or the lunch or the milos before bed or the hugs or touch or whatever. But I want to be able to look after myself as an adult. Yes.</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "As an adult? To reinforce adulthood?"</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah, you should be able to stand on your own two feet, that's what being an adult is all about. Independence, responsibility, all that."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Independent of care?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "You shouldn't need to be cared for. You should be able to do it yourself."</p> <p>-----</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "I shared that transcript with you after our interview and you've had some months to reflect on it- "</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> I have reflected on the anger I felt at that time about how my mother was caring for me. In the time since the interview, I've come to realise that my ex-wife weaponised her care toward me and used it to bludgeon me with the fact that my need of care from her meant I wasn't fully grown up, a mummy's boy... This made me feel less, made me feel small, and when mum looked after me, I was reacting more to the wounds of my ex-wife's words to me than the care my mum was showing me. I could see that on reading the transcript and reflecting on my</p>

<p><b>B-ROLL LIFE MONTAGE:</b>  JAMES BOXING UP BELONGINGS AND LOADING THEM INTO A UTE/TRAILER</p>	<p>feelings at that time. My mum's love wasn't really infantilising, she just wanted to help... It actually makes me sad now to realise those feelings back then were bitter leftovers.</p> <p>To put it into perspective, when I divorced, I had to reduce all of my stuff... I couldn't afford a place as big as my former home, and then when I lost my job and had to move back, I had to reduce my belongings to fit in a ute and a trailer. Constant reductions... less and less.</p>
<p>DRONE FOOTAGE OF UTE DRIVING UP TOOWOOMBA RANGE  IN-CARE FOOTAGE OF JAMES AND JANE</p>	<p>My mother drove me to her place in that ute, and as we approached the outskirts of the town I grew up in, that wave of feeling as I crossed that threshold... That space, that double imagery of a past life, having escaped the space and now having to return to that space... It was a total time warp... That return trip made me less and less, and then when I hit the outskirts of town, that place made me feel small again. Whipped dog with tail between legs... small and insignificant.</p>
<p>JAMES STARING OUT OF THE CAR WINDOW DRIVING THROUGH TOOWOOMBA</p>	<p>It's like a fear of the past meshing with the present, a sort of nostalgia memory made vivid in the moment, and I pass judgement on the present, yet I don't want to impact the present. I judge the time, the years, the choices, how it's all folded in on itself, wrapped and warped. I try to create a sense of separation, and then that feeling just digs its teeth into my soul for having to come back here, that feeling of failure and shame that I needed to be here to start again...</p>
<p>JAMES WALKING PENSIVELY IN QUEENS PARK, TOOWOOMBA</p>	<p>JAMES ENTERING HIS MOTHER'S HOME</p>
<p>JAMES DRIVING UP TO HIS NEW HOME AND GREETING HIS PARTNER AT THE DOOR</p>	<p>There was a lot of anger about that, and I could see that re-reading the interview. I'm in a</p>

<p>DOMESTIC SCENES OF JAMES AND HIS PARTNER IN THEIR HOME</p>	<p>much happier place now. A much better headspace too. There's hope and happiness and I'm not small anymore... I'm extremely happy and satisfied in this new space, and driving through areas that memories are attached to is not as heavy because I'm enjoying my current period of life... I want clear separation of memories, no duality, a forging of a new life in new spaces... No poisoning of hope, no darkening of a horizon... I</p>
<p>JAMES LEANING IN TO KISS HIS PARTNER</p>	<p>seek the lighthouse now... I am free of this place. I will be free of pain, my failure, my lack. I am rebuilding my light, my world, and I will discover new life over the horizon, guided by a star of hope, an angel of warding, the rocks of this place can't sink me."</p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' NEW HOME BLURRED BACKGROUND</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> <i>"It's clear from James' fraught body language and emotionally charged responses that revisiting his interactions with his mother whilst cohabiting is personally challenging for him. The circumstances of his "failed" adulthood are a deep source of embarrassment and shame. This is evidenced in my earlier interview with James by his denigration of intergenerational cohabitators, such as himself, as "Losers." In this earlier interview, which was recorded whilst James was still cohabiting with his mother and stepfather, he acknowledges that returning to the family home to save money on rent and bills is the most logical and pragmatic course of action for someone in his circumstances. In Barbara Mitchell and Rebecca Lennox' words, "it's the least lazy, loser-ish thing a person can do." However, he feels that he ought to have been able to "advance to the next level without living at home." Governed by the hegemonic neoliberal progress paradigm, James looks for a fault in himself to explain his "failure" to make the expected progress in life.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: MITCHELL &amp; LENNOX, YOU GOTTA BE ABLE TO PAY YOUR OWN WAY (2020)</p>	
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' NEW HOME BLURRED BACKGROUND</p>	
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MOVING MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' NEW GARDEN</p>	
<p>SUPER: KURT LÜSCHER (2002)</p>	<p><i>James is struggling with a responsabilisation paradox: the most financially responsible course of action is for him to reside with his mother and stepfather and focus on advancement of his career objectives, but he is confronted by a sense of self-paradox, simultaneously feeling "less" and "better than that." This <b>vacillation</b> between polar opposites – of intelligible and unintelligible self – is an example of what preeminent sociologist, Kurt Lüscher, frames as ambivalence. For James, this is</i></p>

<p>SUPER:  ZYGMUNT BAUMAN  GLOBALIZATION:  THE HUMAN  CONSEQUENCES  (1998)</p>	<p><i>mirrored in a vacillation between emotion and logic. At stake is James' sense of "dignity", which he feels he is sacrificing in pursuing the logical course of action in cohabiting with his parents. Zygmunt Bauman explains that neoliberal productivity is not an individualistic concept, but a social value conferring dignity and status within one's community. Therefore, James concomitantly suffers his "lambasting" ego that judges his "failure" against society's regulating progress paradigm, and consoles himself with the logic that he is charting the most responsible and pragmatic course of action.</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO  CAMERA, MOVING  MEDIUM CLOSE UP,  JAMES' NEW GARDEN</p>	<p><i>James characterises success and failure as performative, that is, realising his aspirations through purposeful action, setting a goal, and achieving it. He differentiates between "feeling like" a failure or having "failed to achieve" and "being" a failure.</i></p>
<p>SUPER:  JUDITH BUTLER,  GIVING AN ACCOUNT  OF ONESELF (2005)</p>	<p><i>Evoking Butler's performativity theory, James describes his feeling of success or failure as coming into being as a result of his intentions made manifest. But maintains "I am not a failure compared to other people."</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL JAMES  INDEPENDENCE  MONTAGE:</b>  FOOTAGE OF JAMES/  JANE AT  RESTAURANT</p>	<p><i>James also experiences significant personal ambivalence in the renegotiation of his relationship with his mother. James first moved out of his family home after graduating university. Via a process that leading psychological theorist, Jennifer Tanner, calls "recentering", James established financial and residential independence and transitioned from a parent-child to an adult-adult relationship with his parents. For the next 15 years he maintained a hierarchically bi-directional</i></p>
<p>SUPER:  JENNIFER TANNER,  RECENTERING  DURING EMERGING  ADULTHOOD (2006)</p>	<p><i>For the next 15 years he maintained a hierarchically bi-directional</i></p>

<p><b>B-ROLL DOMESTIC CARE MONTAGE:</b>  JANE WASHING CLOTHES/ COOKING FOR JAMES</p>	<p><i>"power dynamic" in his intergenerational relationships.</i></p> <p><i>Upon returning to the family home, James reverted "straight back into the power relation dynamic of my mother doing the same thing I did when I was 16." This caused James to undergo an experience that I shall refer to as "decentering" – a destabilising of his self-identity as a successful, upwardly-progressing, financially independent family man. Confronting this degradation in his power and status caused James to view all acts of maternal care directed towards him (financial, residential, and domestic care) as a reinforcement of his "failure" and weakness.</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL JAMES REFLECTIVE MONTAGE:</b>  JAMES WASHING HIS CLOTHES, SITTING ON THE BENCH IN HIS MOTHER'S GARDEN, JAMES AND JANE HUGGING AND HAVING DINNER</p>	<p><i>Within the context of his financial and residential dependency, James' mother's care imposes a "power dynamic" that implicates his deficiency of capability and erosion of agency. James experiences ambivalence in simultaneously conceiving care as "lovely and amazing and feels wonderful and human and connecting, but at the same time it feels disempowering." James' sense of disempowerment stems from his conflation of care with <b>infantilisation</b>. As he explains, "I like washing my own stuff so I can claim some power back"; the reversion to a parent/child care dynamic makes him feel like a <b>child</b>. On several occasions James infantilises his situation using the lexicon "mummy" and "daddy."</i></p> <p><i>Reading the audio transcript from his earlier interview prompted James to cogitate on the frustration and anger that he was experiencing at the time of his cohabitation with his mother. Although precipitated by his</i></p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' NEW HOME, BLURRED BACKGROUND</p> <p>SUPER: LÜSCHER &amp; HOFF, <i>INTERGENERATIONAL BEYOND SOLIDARITY AND CONFLICT</i> (2013)</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' NEW HOME BLURRED BACKGROUND</p>	<p><i>mother's acts of care, James reflected that his frustrated outbursts decrying his mother's laundering of his clothes were evincive of his diminished sense of self-worth, his powerlessness to maintain residential independence and his regression to childlike dependency. For James the notion of adulthood is inconsistent with needing to accept care. Adult independence and personal responsibilities construct "internal adult boundaries" which his mother unknowingly transgressed when she reverted to caring domestically for her son. James felt unable to articulate his frustrations to his mother, acknowledging that his mother's acts of care were natural, loving, and well-meaning. As explained by Kurt Lüscher and Andreas Hoff, this "struggle over ambivalence which often cannot be expressed adequately in words", holds the parent/adult child relationship in a reluctant state of "captivation."</i></p> <p><i>In retrospect, James notes that his visceral response to his mother's care was a result of verbal abuses visited on him by his ex-wife. As James elaborates, his ex-wife "weaponised" her care exchanges, insinuating that his inability to care for himself was a sign that he "wasn't a fully developed adult because [his] mother mummied [him] the whole time." James recalls that his ex-wife often made "a point of making [him] feel childlike" and admonished him to "<b>grow up.</b>" The legacy association of care with infantilisation provoked him to react "more to the wounds of [his] ex-wife's words" than to the care directed towards him by his mother. James' new insights about his traumatic triggers are the</i></p>
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<p>SUPER: BERGGREN, GOTZÉN &amp; BORNÄS, QUEERING DESISTANCE: CHRONONORMATIVITY , AFTERWARDNESS AND YOUNG MEN'S SEXUAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (2020)</p>	<p><i>product of retrospective meaning-making that scholars, Berggren and colleagues, characterise as "afterwardness." The process of reviewing his interview transcript prompted James to reconsider his reactive emotions and behaviours. His altered perspectivisation has transformed the meaning he ascribed to his mother's care, causing him to look back with sadness that the "bitter leftovers" of his ex-wife's abuses coloured his view of the "love" that informed his mother's devotion to helping her son.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: ELIZABETH FREEMAN, TIME BINDS: QUEER TEMPORALITIES, QUEER HISTORIES (2010)</p>	<p><i>The 'temporal dysphoria' of his traumatic relationship with his ex-wife obtruding upon the present is evocative of what Elizabeth Freeman conceptualises in her seminal work, 'Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories' as "temporal drag." James extends this feeling more broadly to his return to Toowoomba. He describes the car journey with his mother back to his childhood hometown as a "time warp" with the years since his young adult departure folding back on him, his "fear of the past meshing with the present." This 'pretzeling' of space and time appears to collapse the intervening years, causing James to reflect on his dreams and aspirations upon leaving, and judge himself harshly for his shameful failure and need to "start again." However, by choosing to adopt a future-oriented mindset, James has found emancipation from the spatial and temporal echoes of his past. He confidently asserts: "I will be free of pain, my failure, my lack." By focusing on his new career, relationship and home, he hopes to "discover new life over the horizon, guided by a star of hope" and "an angel of warding."</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL OPTIMISM MONTAGE:</b> JAMES LOOKING OUT TOWARDS THE HORIZON AT PICNIC POINT JAMES AND HIS PARTNER WALKING TOGETHER AT PRESTON PLAINS AT SUNSET</p>	<p><i>(This section is empty in the original image)</i></p>

**SEGMENT 6**

SHERREE INTERVIEW  
SEATED, MEDIUM  
CLOSE UP

**SHERREE:**

"So, this period which you yourself described as the "in-between period"... in between you being employed, being in a marriage and having this goal about what your life looked like, to then in between the next thing, whatever the next thing was, there's a time limit on that, is there? In the in-betweenness before you have to sort it out?"

JAMES INTERVIEW  
SEATED, MEDIUM  
CLOSE UP

**JAMES:**

"Yes, for my own mental health, I would've put a limit on it in there of being *viable*. An allowable mental amount of in-between before I would start thinking less of myself, lose confidence in myself, see myself worthless because I'm still there. There would be a window of, it's *viable* to be less, to be smaller, because you're going to springboard off onto better things, get over the horizon, 'cause there is a horizon. If you were there for longer, that lighthouse on the horizon starts to dim and you become less and then, well, why are you there? You're not escaping. You can't escape because you don't have these other things to get you the ability to escape, so you're trapped.

JAMES INTERVIEW  
SEATED, CLOSE UP

There's a two- year period in my head. That was my line in the sand... If that failed, then it's like back out into industry, all bets are off... This was my window of I will accept in between here now for this period, and if I fail beyond that, I am out and I'm going to try something else. The only reason I'd come back again would be if everything failed if I was a complete failure, 'cause that's how I would see myself is

<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p>that I had no other option but to come back and go do, what, I don't know, landscape gardening or some shit."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Would you have been <i>viable</i>? You keep using that word. Would you have been viable if you'd failed and come back and done the landscape gardening?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "No, god no."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "What does it take to be viable?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Income gives you choices. Choices that you can do, where you spend your time, who with, and how."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Would it have been viable for you to be in a committed relationship, living independently with your partner and not have a full-time job?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "No. Not indefinitely. Once again, there would be a time period there that I'd have to go, I'd be chasing the full-time work whilst I get the qualification... possibly menial, so that I would feel like a contributing partner, an equal, yes. Being carried by your partner... Viable, once again, small window. Valid, I'd feel less until I got a full-time job. If it wasn't in the area that I actually wanted it to be my dream job or the higher paying job. Literally, if everything failed, I would go get some menial job because I want to contribute as a partner to the sanctuary..."</p> <p>I could potentially go work freelance for some people to stay</p>

	<p>afloat, but that's a gig economy. You are jumping from company to company to be valuable, forging those relationships, and that's a lot of work. I don't think— you can't get a house loan off that. You can't, yeah, at my age, gig economy terrifies me.”</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> “If you don't need to buy a house, does that matter, or is it just the principle that you couldn't?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> “Just the principle that it's not even an option when you're just flip-flopping around being.. The film idea would probably fall by the wayside if I went into a gig economy, and it would literally be to get an asset, I would not burn it on a film, because that's not viable. That dream would be on the horizon.”</p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT OUTSIDE JAMES' HOME</p> <p>SUPER: MITCHELL &amp; LENNOX, YOU GOTTA BE ABLE TO PAY YOUR OWN WAY (2020)</p>	<p><i>"For James, the period of cohabitation that he characterises as <b>in-betweenness</b> can only be defended on the grounds that it is transient and contingent upon <b>progressing</b> towards a productive career goal. This echoes Mitchell and Lennox's observation that intergenerational cohabitation can only be defended in neoliberal society is pursued as part of a strategy of attaining or progressing towards financial independence. Cohabitation is framed by James as a progress strategy, which temporarily mitigates financial and residential <b>un-viability</b>.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: CHRISTIAENS, NELEMANS, MEEUS &amp; BRANJE, IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO TERTIARY EDUCATION (2021)</p>	<p><i>However, there is a time limit which James imposes on feeling and being <b>less</b>. As Annabelle Christiaens and colleagues explain, a "prolonged identity mortatorium" whereby one's sense of self is constantly in flux, can lead to instability, less clarified values and purpose, and result in decreased happiness and wellbeing. James conflates in-betweenness with not being "<b>viable</b>." For James, viability mandates financial and residential independence, not being "carried" by a parent or partner. Living a life that is not viable for an extended period of time is not conscionable for James. He would prefer to defer his dreams and aspirations and engage in menial work to pay his way, rather than live as a ghost haunting the liminal space in-between failure and fulfilment."</i></p>

<p><b>SEGMENT 7</b></p> <p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Describe for me the ways in which you feel you've grown, what was the "from" at the start date, and what have you grown "to"?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> Okay, so that start date was after the failure of a marriage, failure of a career, failure of aspirations, so I felt very small. That start date, I felt small, not very confident in my goals. Very much a self-flagellating, "Am I good enough, can I be good enough?"... I felt unsure and small.</p>
<p><b>B-ROLL GROWTH MONTAGE:</b> FOOTAGE OF JAMES PRESENTING HIS DOCUMENTARY AT THE GOLD COAST CONVENTION CENTRE</p> <p>JAMES ON LOCATION WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN LEARNING MEDIA PRODUCTION</p>	<p>The word "grow", yes, I think I feel I've grown in confidence. I had a lot of confidence in my previous career. There's very much... get back to who I was, get back to myself, you are good at this... I'm not small in that space. I'm very good in that space. I can be me, getting back to me. So, I've grown, but also grown back into me, the confident person to continue chasing my dreams without feeling small. With the help of my partner, I've seen that I was actually making myself small with other people...</p>
<p>JAMES RETURNING HOME</p>	<p>I've discovered a joy in my new job that I didn't realize I'd get. It was just a more attractive pay packet that I thought I was getting involved in, so I was going to jump through the hoops to get that pay packet... I do actually enjoy it... New job, getting out of the box, and then the new relationship has given me an amazing home life and somebody to talk to and share with, and my life has calmed down significantly on so many fronts. I've been told I'm trying to inject too much drama into parts of my life that don't need to be there."</p>
<p>JAMES AND HIS PARTNER TALKING OVER DINNER</p>	

<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Where did that observation come from?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "From my relationship. A course-correction from the relationship because it's a reflection as to what's going on in my life and sharing, which is what I thought a relationship should be; sharing what's going on in your life, and.. course-correct each other because you are not backfilling gaps but helping, supporting, and lifting."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "How does that relate to your growth or--"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Being held to account."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "--the difference you see in you?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Well, the indifference to-- so, you said the <i>difference</i> that I see in me, but the <i>indifference</i> I saw in myself for crashing and burning has faded away.. I want to be whole enough to continue working and being a partner. I don't want to break myself on the rocks of hopes and dreams. I want to logically and strategically see if I can achieve my hopes and dreams with the perspective of my partner pointing out rocks in the surf.. but I'm not sailing alone.. The difference is the fact that she's in this boat, too. I can't crash this on the rocks looking for a lighthouse that I don't know where it is.</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>It is about forging forward, building hopes and dreams, but we spot the weaknesses in our movement forward and build together. A relationship should</p>

	<p>last longer than a project. A project... they have cycles. It's still a thing you look back at that light flashing on the horizon behind you in your wake... but is no longer guiding you, driving you, and is transient. A relationship I'm hoping is not transient. I want to spend the rest of my life with her, so I don't see smashing myself on the rocks of a hope of a project that is not permanent makes logical sense, because it doesn't..."</p>
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<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' SUNROOM, BACKGROUND BLURRED</p>	<p><i>"Earlier James confided that one of the most hurtful of his ex-wife's verbal abuses was her admonishment to "grow up." Her accusation that he was a childish "mummy's boy" who had not progressed to proper adulthood diminished James' self-worth and rendered him emotionally "small." The process of being emotionally weakened or materially reduced runs counter to the neo-liberal paradigm of upwards growth, which paints human growth, progress, and success as accumulative and linear. James returned to the home of his childhood feeling "less" than when he left fifteen years earlier. When first setting out he had a secure partner, profession, and lease on a rental unit. Driving back up the range to Toowoomba, a "whipped dog with tail between legs", he felt keenly that he had <b>failed</b> to maintain residential independence, professional employment, and relationship security - <b>the three normative markers of a successful adulthood.</b></i></p>
<p>SUPER: THOMSON &amp; ØSTERGAARD, <i>OPEN- ENDED TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD: METAPHORICAL THINKING FOR TIES OF STASIS</i> (2021)</p>	<p><i>Prominent social theorists, Rachel Thomson and Jeanette Østergaard, argue that society needs to develop new approaches to understanding adults whose non-linear growth trajectories fall outside the '<b>correct order</b>' mandated by the neo-liberal progress paradigm. Society's rendering of adults who are unable or unwilling to "deliver reproductive futurism" as "outsiders, failures or rebels" risks disenfranchising generations of emerging adults whose lack of professional, residential and relationship security is largely a result of more challenging societal conditions rather than personal deficiencies.</i></p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' SUNROOM, BACKGROUND BLURRED</p>	<p><i>Emancipation from these regulating narratives demands new narratives that validate alternative ways of growing and progressing. James describes how he was able to reclaim the confidence that he had lost, after his partner highlighted that he was making himself small with other people. By challenging his self-flagellating narrative and constructing a scaffold from his past strengths to his future aspirations, James <b>grew backwards to progress forwards</b>, as he explains: "I've grown, but also grown back into me, the confident person to continue chasing my dreams without feeling small."</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL NEW CAREER FOOTAGE:</b> JAMES AT SCHOOL TEACHING HIS CLASS</p>	<p><i>James also describes a change in his personal growth orientation. The career path that he is now following is adjacent to his previous profession. Primarily attracted by the higher salary, James notes his surprise and delight in finding that this new career in teaching is also enjoyable and less stressful. This sideways growth experience has widened his notion of a successful career trajectory. Prompted by his having, in Kathryn Bond-Stockton's words, "<b>simply nowhere to grow</b>" after his retrenchment and dissolution of his marriage, he has charted a new adjacent career trajectory leveraging his professional skills and experience. The "shining star on the horizon" that represented James' dream of making a Hollywood feature film remains an aspiration, but he is now cognisant of its potential cost.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: KATHRYN BOND STOCKTON, <i>THE QUEER CHILD: GROWING SIDEWAYS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY</i> (2009)</p>	<p><i>Being held to <b>account</b> by his new partner is a bulwark against James' indifference. The kamikaze approach to achieving his dream is no longer an option. James</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' SUNROOM,</p>	<p><i>Being held to <b>account</b> by his new partner is a bulwark against James' indifference. The kamikaze approach to achieving his dream is no longer an option. James</i></p>

BACKGROUND BLURRED	<i>explains that his partner's advice and "course correction" has given his growth direction and purpose. She has helped him grow into a partner and professional that have substance and permanence. His sense of responsibility to her makes his own position less precarious."</i>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 8</b>  JAMES/SHERREE  INTERVIEW  SEATED, TWO SHOT  (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  “So what's changed here is, investing in this calmness inner sanctuary, as we call it, is a priority to me.”</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b>  “What are you doing to invest in it? What is the work of the investment?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  “Domestic duties that I want to take on so that it remains a calm space because I'm a very messy person, so doing the dishwasher regularly, cleaning up after the coffee machine... My amazing partner pointed out the fact that just because I want a pat on the head just because I put the rubbish out doesn't mean that it's of quality or equal contribution, that's me looking for a reward because I did a basic entry-level thing, and that rocked my world. It was like, "Holy shit!" I've been conditioned for a good boy pat on the head from my previous relationship... you shouldn't need a pat on the head, just do it... I don't have to wave the flag of, "Hey, look at me, I did a thing." Just get on with it, and everything's calm. Rather than help contribute to someone else's effort, it's an equal contribution to help around the house, help fight the world, help to fight to keep sanctuary.”</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b>  “It's not “helping” your partner? Was that how you viewed it?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW  SEATED, MEDIUM  CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b>  “You shouldn't need a pat on the head. It's not <i>help</i> if it's just part of what it is to be a homeowner. It's not a good boy pat on the head... It's not helping <i>me</i>; it's helping <i>us</i> or helping the</p>

<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>house or helping yourself live a kind of life. Not that it was put in those words, but that's how I interpreted it, is to help the lifestyle, help the sanctuary, help the peace."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "It seems to me to connect to this idea of responsibility and whose responsibility it is, and in a partnership, it's both of your responsibilities, and there's a mindset shift between living with mum and helping mum because it's her responsibility to look after the house, and you help because you're living there versus being a partner and just doing."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Potentially, because the previous relationship I was in, it was held very much if I didn't help... it was you're not a good enough man for not helping. A man should help around the house... Yet, I was looking at it going: "I'm paying the mortgage, that's my help."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Right, because you presumably would not have flipped it and said that your wife helped around the house?"</p> <p><b>JAMES</b> "No."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "It was her responsibility to sort out the house, and you helped..."</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yes, because the way I saw it was that I was working a full-time job five days a week and there was long hours... and she was working a part-time job. The days that she was not actually working and I was, it was life currency and hours spent, so it was her</p>

<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p> <p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>responsibility if she wanted to contribute to the partnership that I expected her that she would be doing something on those days off for us, considering she didn't have a full-time job and refused to get a full-time job. That's where that whole <i>equality</i> and <i>equity</i> thing sort of fall apart there. It was seen as too domestic. You should be committing, helping out with the domestic because it shouldn't just be a woman's job. I'm like, that's nice if we were both working a full-time job. It would then have to become a divvy up of actual contributions of what the hell we're doing."</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Was there any of that legacy thinking in the way in which you originally partnered around this property? Was that just a blind spot?"</p> <p><b>JAMES:</b> "Yeah, it was a revelation when it was pointed out to me. "Why do you think it's help? Are you not responsible as an equal partner of this? Where's your responsibility lie? Are you helping? Do you want a pat on the head?" That was revolutionary to me. Revelatory to me. The sky, like being hit on the head by an apple, thank you, blah blah blah. Oh shit, I've been viewing this perception completely wrong. I felt like I'd come in here and I was helping because I had come into a pre-existing space. It was like, are you going to step up and take space, because essentially whatever was given to me as a partner, an equal partner, takes space, which means responsibility. Shit just gets done, you don't get a pat on the head for it, it's part of being a</p>
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<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>partner of this. Yeah, it changed my perception.”</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> “Do you think you’d have felt the same way about domestic responsibilities if the roles were reversed in your marriage, and you earned less?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> “I don't think it matters if it's less, if I don't earn as much as my partner. There's that masculinity thing. I've never bought into that, because I have earned less than my partner for a period of time that I was doing casual work early on in our relationship when we were like 18, 19... It eventually got to the point where I was earning good money and she dropped back to part-time work for a lot longer than two years, I can tell you. That didn't feel equal to me.”</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> “Does it have to be equal, or as close as possible to equal?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> “No. I've gotten over that. I think that's a little bit of toxic masculinity that they feel not having enough balls to go get a bigger and better job. It's not about that. It's more about what can you do to contribute to the best of your ability.”</p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' KITCHEN, BACKGROUND BLURRED</p>	<p><i>"It's interesting to note that James extends the notion of <b>accountancy</b> for oneself to time invested in domestic work performed around the home. The underlying neoliberal ideology of "time is money" informs his view of his time as "life currency." Taking a cue from his ex-wife's censure of his failure to offer domestic help, James interprets feminism's claims to gender "equality" as a universal edict that domestic duties should not be wholly undertaken by the female in a male/female relationship. For James, the principle of <b>equity of contribution</b> to the home usurps his ex-wife's mandate of equal gender division of domestic chores.</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL TIME INVESTMENT MONTAGE:</b> JAMES' PARTNER TRAINING CLIENTS AT HER HEALTH CLUB</p>	<p><i>Notably, in seeking to determine equity of contribution to the home, James converts the time invested in performing domestic chores into <b>life currency</b> at the <b>same exchange rate</b> as time invested earning income external to the home to pay bills, mortgage and living expenses. Therefore, for a marriage to be equitable in James' estimation, the dollars earned by each partner need not amount to the same financial contribution, however the hours that each party invests contributing to the home (via external income generation and/or a combination of income generation and domestic work) must equate.</i></p>
<p>JAMES AT SCHOOL TEACHING HIS STUDENTS</p>	
<p>JAMES COOKING JAMES' PARTNER HANGING LAUNDRY</p>	
<p>SUPER: EVA COX, A FEMINIST PROPOSAL FOR A FAIR UNIVERSAL SOCIAL DIVIDEND (2020)</p>	<p><i>As leading Australian feminist, Eva Cox, recounts, second-wave feminism paid little concern to quantifying the value contribution of women's unpaid work in the home, as their focus was directed towards equality of opportunity for women in the paid workforce. Feminist campaigns for the recognition of the contribution of</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM</p>	

<p>LONG SHOT, JAMES' KITCHEN</p> <p>MARILYN WARING, <i>IF WOMEN COUNTED</i> (1989)</p> <p><b>B-ROLL WOMEN'S DOMESTIC WORK MONTAGE:</b> FOOTAGE OF 1960s HOUSEWIFE</p> <p>FOOTAGE OF 1980s/1990s WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROTESTS</p> <p>MODERN DAY WOMEN JUGGLING PROFESSIONAL WORK, DOMESTIC WORK AND CARE</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' KITCHEN</p>	<p>women's domestic and care work within the home were perfunctorily dismissed by the neoliberal governments of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. Some debate was prompted in New Zealand in the late 1980s by political scientist, Marilyn Waring's analysis of unpaid domestic work and its exclusion from the New Zealand GDP. However, the feminist movement's goal of enacting a redistributive social policy that would secure "<b>wages for housework</b>" ensured that this debate was short lived within a hegemonic neoliberal market model. The notion of social payment for a non-economic form of production that at the time was regarded as a personal, rather than societal benefit, was summarily dismissed.</p> <p>Cox asserts that in patriarchal societies domestic work and care work are given a much lower status than paid work. This explains why in developed societies where gendered pay gaps and workplace discrimination are still prevalent, the feminist agenda remains focused on "the crisis end of the system": the systemic issue of paid work equality. However, as Cox elucidates, in 2019 women in Australia still invest more than twice the amount of time as men in unpaid domestic work; and when women and men first begin to cohabit the amount of domestic work that women perform increases, whilst men's decreases, regardless of their professional workloads. This unpaid domestic work and care is still grossly undervalued in societies that perpetuate the neoliberal "macho paradigm."</p> <p>James' time-based accounting method of determining equity of contribution somewhat counters the prevailing neoliberal macho</p>
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<p><b>B-ROLL HELPING MONTAGE:</b>  JAMES AND HIS PARTNER COOKING TOGETHER</p> <p>JAMES AND HIS PARTNER DOING YARD WORK</p> <p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, JAMES' KITCHEN</p>	<p><i>paradigm. James emphasises the economic value of <b>time invested</b> in work, whether paid or unpaid. Whilst this overlooks the social and cultural value of domestic work and care, it addresses a central feminist concern: that of <b>fairness in valuing</b> unpaid work contributions alongside economic contributions earned external to the home.</i></p> <p><i>However, despite his assiduous insistence upon equity of contribution in his relationship with his ex-wife, James was abashed to discover that he had subsumed the patriarchal conceptualisation of domestic work as <b>women's work</b> and the <b>women's responsibility</b>. When he began cohabiting with his new partner, he recounts that he expected to receive "a good boy pat on the head" for "basic entry-level" work such as taking out the rubbish. His partner neglected to respond with gratitude to his domestic efforts, prompting James to reflect on why he expected a "reward" for performing work that was required to be done to maintain his and his partner's home. James' Newtonian moment of insight, which he describes as "like being hit on the head by an apple" was when his partner challenged his framing of his domestic work as "help" rather than simply <b>his responsibility</b>. She further questioned whether he would similarly characterise her undertaking of domestic duties in their home as helping him. This role-reversal of the notion of "help", James realised, appeared to him quite absurd.</i></p> <p><i>A person rendering domestic "help" does so to assist another person in the execution of their work. Of key importance here is the</i></p>
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<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, CLOSE UP, JAMES' KITCHEN</p>	<p><i>possessive determiner, <b>their</b> work. It is assumed and implied by the notion of "help" that the helpee is responsible for the work and the helper is voluntarily (and possibly even magnanimously) assisting in the work of the required task. James' implicit assumption that the work of maintaining his home is his partner's responsibility, notwithstanding their equal status as full-time paid employees, provides some insight into why women still undertake the lion's share of the domestic work in male/female cohabiting relationships. I suggest that the legacy gendered domestic roles of women as <b>homemakers</b> and men as <b>home-helpers</b> still determine the 'normal' division of domestic labour."</i></p>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 9</b> SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "What do you need from your relationship, specifically from your partner, for that relationship to be successful?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "What I need from my relationship with my partner is, well, there's the physical, straight off the bat, because yes, my sexual relations in the past were not to this level. I am the happiest I've been ever in the bedroom intimately than I have in my entire life. That's a success if you want to look at it through that metric. The touch and the sex is incredible, so that's a good foundation, but as with any relationship, that should not be the only foundation.</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>The intellectual discussions we have, I need. The insight into my world and my choices and my attitudes and my behaviours I need. I need that feedback cycle. A good partnership should be mirrors to each other without being critical mirrors and pointing and castigating and flagellating mirrors. We should be— supportive expectations, as my partner has said, she knows I can do better, she knows I can be better, so be the better man that she sees, and that is an amazing thing to hear and feel.</p>
<p><b>B-ROLL SUPPORT MONTAGE:</b> JAMES' PARTNER SPOTTING HIM AS HE LIFTS WEIGHTS AT HER HEALTH CLUB</p>	<p>That course correction from the reflection and that feedback. I need that feedback. I need that intimacy. I need that advice. I need that stimulation, that mental stimulation. Touch, the time... I need all of it. I guess that's built on the foundation of sexual respect, mental respect, physical respect and insight into each other that creates a cycle of</p>
<p>JAMES AND HIS PARTNER HAVING IN DEPTH DISCUSSION AT BREAKFAST BAR</p>	

<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>healthy progression and calm. It's an amazing combination, actually.”</p> <p><b>SHERREE:</b> “That is quite different to what you said back in that time when you were in that in-between space. You specifically didn't want that, specifically didn't want that relationship. You wanted that freedom.”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> “Yeah, because my previous experience of a relationship was that it stopped my dreams. It stopped my movement, because my ex-partner... stopped me from moving on, stopped me from taking risks, stopped me from moving forward.. I was worried that any potential relationship could do the same. That's because my ex-partner became a liability.”</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> “Why did you take the leap of faith if that was your belief?”</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> “No, that was my fear. It wasn't my belief. I didn't know if the person was or was not going to anchor me... Plus, I also, as I said, felt less. I was smaller and unstable, and with the whole not having a job, living in a garage, did not feel like a viable partner as well. It was like, in this state, I don't think I am a viable partner or partner material because I was living in a garage, and I didn't have a full-time job, and I was a liability to a relationship in my own eyes there.</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>I took the leap because the person seemed to indicate after much consideration and back and forth on my part, that I wasn't going to be a liability, and they would let me know if I even started heading</p>

	<p>down that road. There was reassurance that I wasn't going to destroy their life and they weren't going to destroy mine, and they were like, "We can make this work." So, yeah. I was not less. She did not see me as less, even though I saw myself as less. She reassured me that I was not less, and I could be me with her. As time went on, she showed that I could be a better me with her."</p>
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<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, JAMES' SUNROOM, BACKGROUND BLURRED</p>	<p><i>"James' instinctive response "straight off the bat..." to my question of what he needs from his relationship with his partner underlines another important aspect of a successful (male) life. Male sexual potency is a primal signifier of a successful <b>manhood</b>, and an essential marker of transition from childhood. As James explained earlier, his ability to initiate sexual intimacies was precluded whilst cohabiting with his mother. This he equated with feelings of shame and un-viability. Having achieved residential independence with his partner, he is now able to exert control over his sexual functions and engage in "incredible" sex with his partner. He also reinforces the importance of intimacy and sexual respect when detailing the emotional benefits that he derives from his relationship with his partner. Intimacy for James is a combination of the physical and emotional.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: BURNS, MAHALIK, HOUGH &amp; GREENWELL, ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGES IN SEXUAL FUNCTIONING FOLLOWING SPINAL CORD INJURY (2008)</p>	<p><i>As Shaun Burns and colleagues explain, boys are conditioned from an early age to associate 'manhood' with the sexual use of their genitals. Furthermore, <b>sexual potency</b> is a masculine script that confers <b>power, status and prestige</b> on men who exert complete control over their sexual functions and are acknowledged as accomplished lovers. Conversely, owing to these social pressures, men who are unable to perform sexually, through physical disfunction or lack of opportunity, often construe themselves as unmasculine and unsuccessful. This, Burns and colleagues demonstrate, precipitates "depression, shame, decreased self-worth, low self-confidence, and poor self-esteem."</i></p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUMCLOSE UP, JAMES'SUNROOM, BACKGROUND BLURRED</p> <p><b>B-ROLL LEAP FOOTAGE:</b> JAMES AND HIS PARTNER ON A SEASIDE CLIFF OUTCROP RUNNING HAND IN HAND, LEAPING INTO THE SEA</p>	<p><i>No academic studies have focused on the impact of situational impotence on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of emerging adults. However, I observe, based on my interviews with James and other men cohabiting with their parents, that situational impotence generates feelings of shame and decreased self-worth, which I hypothesise negatively affects male emerging adults in particular.</i></p> <p><i>Picking up on another earlier thread, James juxtaposes his experience of his ex-wife as an anchor and liability, explaining that his reticence to enter into another relationship was a result of his fear that he might once again be "stopped" by his partner from pursuing his dreams. However, having eventually taken "the leap", he characterises his new relationship as one that propels, course-corrects, and affirms the man that he is striving to become. His relationship is now a catalyst in his growth towards the dreams he aspires to achieve."</i></p>
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<p><b>SEGMENT 10</b> SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "How do you feel your life might have turned out if you had 20 years ago met your current partner, been living in your current house, and been doing your current job?"</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "If I had another 20 years with the two perspectives of behaviour and skills and skillsets and plans, another extra 20 years, I reckon I probably would've been in Hollywood by now... I think 20 years I probably would've made it to Hollywood by the time I was 30 if I was getting the feedback of "You are wasting your time here. You need to be focusing more on that over there." That extra perspective of what's going on in your life, that feedback, healthy feedback rather than negative feedback which I have experienced...</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, CLOSE UP</p>	<p>Yeah... if I had the time to experiment and risk a bigger result than if now if the risk outweighs the potential good result, probably not worth investing in if things are gonna fall over. Whereas you can recover when you're 20 or 30, you could potentially recover by the time you're older or had less of an impact because you've still got more working life in you to achieve more, but then in saying that Ridley Scott started when he was 40."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM)</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Projecting forward to you as a 60-year-old, what do you hope will be your growth trajectory?"</p>
<p><b>B-ROLL HOPES FOOTAGE:</b></p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Okay. As I said, my hopes and dreams of my feature film, I could potentially do it on a lower</p>

<p>JAMES ON SET OF A MOVIE</p>	<p>budget. Whether it's successful or not, I don't know, but at least I've made it, and I hope it hasn't broken the bank... I want to be smarter and approach this smartly. Still have my sanctuary, still have my amazing relationship. That's what I'm forward projecting.</p>
<p>JAMES AT HOME WITH HIS PARTNER BOTH QUIETLY READING IN SUNROOM</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "You talked about that period of time where you were less, or you felt <i>less</i>. I'm just wondering what it feels like to feel <i>more</i>, and what more it is you're looking for."</p>
<p>SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>JAMES:</b> "Well, human growth comes from experiences and knowledge, and by doing the film, I increase my knowledge, I increase my experiences, and that's where the growth would come from. That's what my projects sort of are. They are my legacy. My docos are my legacy... That's why I'm hoping that the feature film I make would be my next legacy that would tide me over for the next 20, 30, 40-odd years of my life.</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p>Yeah, legacy would be the knowledge I pass onto others, and hopefully, that passion project, even if it doesn't get to Hollywood, at least I can say I made it, but I need to make it smarter where I don't bankrupt myself or ruin my relationship."</p>
<p>JAMES INTERVIEW SEATED, MEDIUM CLOSE UP</p>	<p><b>SHERREE:</b> "Right."</p>
<p>JAMES/SHERREE INTERVIEW SEATED, TWO SHOT (MEDIUM) [SHERREE NODS]</p>	

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, TOOWOOMBA USQ</p>	<p><i>"The evolution of James' notion of a successful life is one that is informed by a <b>pretzeling</b> of his growth trajectory. At age thirty-five James was a successful filmmaker, financially independent, and long-term happily married. A highly productive and progressively successful man, James was a poster boy for the neoliberal progress paradigm. But owing to a perfect storm of challenging personal circumstances – the breakdown of his marriage, retrenchment from his employment, and loss of his home – James found himself in a situation where he was obligated to start over. Returning to his childhood home and the town he left behind 15 years earlier, James' sense of failure was acute. He had failed to achieve the goals that he had telegraphed he would accomplish and fallen short of his high expectations.</i></p>
<p><b>B-ROLL REBUILDING FOOTAGE:</b></p>	
<p>JAMES WALKING DOWN THE MAIN TOOWOOMBA HIGH STREET</p>	
<p>JAMES PLAYING VIDEOGAMES IN HIS ROOM AT HIS MOTHER'S HOME</p>	
<p>JAMES ATTENDING UNIVERSITY AND BEING INSTRUCTED IN A CLASS</p>	<p><i>The limited period of time that James allowed himself to remain in this state of "in-betweenness" was to be invested in financially and professionally rebuilding. With the unanticipated love and support of his new partner, James <b>grew backwards to progress forwards</b>, growing back into a confident and proficient filmmaker and scaffolding these strengths towards a <b>sideways career</b> in media teaching.</i></p>
<p>JAMES TEACHING SCHOOL CHILDREN MEDIA STUDIES</p>	
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, TOOWOOMBA USQ</p>	<p><i>James emancipated himself from the regulating neoliberal progress paradigm by adopting an <b>enrichment mindset</b> in his pursuit of success. Expounding the view that "human growth comes from experiences and knowledge", James has evolved his criteria for a happy life and successful realisation of his dreams, observing that the <b>experience</b> of making a feature</i></p>

<p>SUPER: GAELYNN LEA, <i>WHY I CHOOSE ENRICHMENT OVER PROGRESS</i> (2017)</p> <p><b>B-ROLL LEGACY (A) FOOTAGE:</b> JAMES DIRECTING HIS SCHOOL KIDS</p>	<p><i>film is more valuable than the prestige and status of taking it to Hollywood. As social influencer, Gaelynn Lea contends, in neoliberal society you are "regarded as less valuable if you can't achieve goals", but a reframing of success as enrichment rather than progress "allows people to pursue desirable experiences just because they make living a richer experience." Liberated from the upwardly progressing <b>right way</b> to achieve self-actualisation and meaning in life, James has achieved a calmer and more fulfilling personal and professional life, no longer stressed by the perpetual, unrelenting pressure to progress.</i></p>
<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM LONG SHOT, TOOWOOMBA USQ</p>	<p><i>James has also reframed his vision of the future. His notion of pursuing <b>legacy as a lasting currency of success</b>, contrasts starkly with the "nihilistic" man blazing a "kamikaze"-like trail towards a Hollywood "Hail-Mary" that I interviewed a little over a year ago. James had no sense of what life could be like beyond his obscured and hopeless present. Gambling his future on a "lottery ticket" that would most likely see him "crash and burn" held no risk, with no future and nothing to lose.</i></p>
<p>SUPER: JOSE MUÑOZ <i>CRUISING UTOPIA</i> (2009)</p> <p><b>B-ROLL LEGACY (post) FOOTAGE:</b> JAMES ON SET OF HIS FEATURE FILM</p>	<p><i>However, his new imagining of his futurity is scaffolded by his strengths, his partner's support, and opportunities for enrichment in the present. It extends out beyond the first horizon carried by what Jose Muñoz calls "educated hope." This concrete and strategic hope promises a future with his partner that he was unable to see when pinning his hopes on a "Hail Mary" lighthouse somewhere beyond his foggy liminality. Time, responsibility, security, and a</i></p>

<p>SHERREE TO CAMERA, MEDIUM CLOSE UP, TOOWOOMBA USQ</p> <p><b>CREDITS</b></p>	<p><i>reframing of his future dreams have changed James' notion of happiness and self-worth. They have also ignited a desire to create a legacy to inspire future generations. Reflecting Muñoz's manifesto for "a doing in and for the future", James has charted an enrichment-fuelled course that will achieve his dreams, maintain his sanctuary, and create and enduring legacy... all in his own time."</i></p> <p><b>OUTRO MUSIC</b></p>
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## **Act 6 Performance – A Crisis of Identity: A Collage of the Emerging Scholar in the Crucible of Academe**

This chapter examines the intersecting higher education experiences of myself and research participant, Stewart Limpus. This project grew *sideways* out of the reflexive process of interviewing and co-analysing Stewart's accounts of his intergenerational cohabitation experiences. A central theme in Stewart's story is the vacillating crisis of identity that his changed residential, financial and 'employment' circumstances continue to produce, circumstances which are in conflict with Stewart's need for stability and predictability that is a defining characteristic of his Asperger's Syndrome.

A key strategy of the anti-narrative approach deployed in my research – researcher autoethnographic reflections and invitations to participants to question - provided the opportunity for Stewart to explore my PhD experience, thereby juxtaposing his Master's Degree learning experiences with my accounts of 'imposter syndrome', financial insecurity, dyslexic struggles to meet deadlines and produce quality work, and an increasingly foreboding sense that I had 'failed' to transition from 'student' to 'scholar.' This knowledge-tangent grows sideways from the dominant branch of inquiry presented in this thesis, insofar as it takes as its central concern the identity development of Higher Degree by Research students engaged in distance learning/online modes of study. This Performance explores how residential vulnerability (intergenerational cohabitation), spatial organisation/designation (online engagement with 'work'), and financial insecurity, are correlates of 'academic' validity and viability. In presenting this essay as the third of my Performance Acts, I attempt to demonstrate the personal growth 'value' in fostering enriching sideways

trajectories, subverting the neo-liberal progress, growth and status trajectories<sup>37</sup>. I suggest that a process of following a research participant's deviations tangential to the initial research objectives might yield sideways knowledges that provide valuable and insightful contexts that offer new possibilities for reading the primary inquiry. Accordingly, this Act draws out the narratives that have informed Stewart's and my own ideas of personal success as we return to unremunerated 'career' in academia.

We present a collaborative autoethnography (CAE)<sup>38</sup> in the form of a collage. Our essay is rendered as an assemblage of co-constructed autoethnographic reflections, pieced together with poems, illustrations and multivocal analyses that draw on Butlerian (1990) performativity, queer temporalities and interpretive disability studies. We identify and explore how our respective cognitive impairments and shared situatedness as mature-aged, ex-professional, non-economically productive students have informed our identity development within academe.

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<sup>37</sup> In particular reference to Research Question 1b: How are ideas of personal 'success' informed by neo-liberal progress, growth and status trajectories?

<sup>38</sup> As this collage is intended for development into a standalone paper for publication, I discuss the specific methodological and ethical implications of the Collaborative Autoethnographic (CAE) method in this Performance Act rather than in the Methodology Act (to avoid repetition).

## Collage and Writing the Self

Sherree Dawn Halliwell and Stewart Limpus<sup>39</sup>

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Collage as a mode of writing is the assemblage of distinct and often disparate evocations, which might include texts, images, and symbols to create a larger picture. There is space for multiple readings and multiple meanings in the gaps between the parts (see Yardley, 2008; Kilgard, 2009). Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) advocates performative writing in the form of collage to reclaim queer and dyslexic ways of multi-dimensional meaning-making and knowing. She draws heavily from Yardley (2008) and Kilgard (2009) in her deployment of collaging as a research presentation method to challenge the normative structures of academic writing. In proposing a queer/dyslexic epistemology and methodology, Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) emphasises the legitimacy of multivocal ways of knowing, echoing Yardley (2008), Diversi and Moreira (2009), Kilgard (2009), and Granger (2010). Granger (2010) goes further, presenting a manifesto for the decolonisation of knowledge production in the academy and arguing for “new ways of talking about and approaching learning disability or even the ‘bad student’ as politically situated, not just medically / biologically situated in a category” (Final, Very Important, Distracting Thoughts, paragraph 8).

The notion of presenting a dynamic composition of ideas to facilitate multi-dimensional meaning-making is well-established within the post-structural and postmodern traditions. Deleuze and Guattari’s seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (French edition, 1980; English translation, 1987),

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<sup>39</sup> For the purpose of doctoral thesis examination, a formatting convention has been applied to distinguish between the writings of the authors. Writings by the second author, Stewart Limpus, are italicised.

presents what they describe as a “assemblage” in “rhizomatic thought”, structured as “plateaus” that can be read in any order, rather than a linear succession of “chapters”:

We call a “plateau” any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome. We are writing this book as a rhizome. It is composed of plateaus. We have given it a circular form, but only for laughs. [...] Each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau. [...] All we know are assemblages. And the only assemblages are machinic assemblages of desire and collective assemblages of enunciation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 22).

Deleuze and Guattari’s collective assemblages challenge the epistemic authority of the “majority”, which they characterise as a “state of domination” that is responsible for “the determination of a state or standard” (1987, p.292). Collage similarly ekes out a space for queer thinking and meaning to ‘become’ in the “in-between, the border or line of flight running perpendicular” to the academic/non-academic binary (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 293). Queer theorists and disability scholars have claimed this space to exist betwixt and between the majoritarian academy’s regulating subjectivities, flourishing in a multiplicity of new possibilities where new subjectivities emerge.

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Stewart Limpus and I coalesce at the intersection of disability, queer temporality, financial and academic precariousness, suspended in a liminal life stage that I characterise ‘re-emerging adulthood.’ I recruited Stewart in August 2021 to my doctoral research study of adult-offspring cohabiting with parents. Through our interactions I came to understand that Stewart and I share a situatedness as mature-

aged, ex-professional, non-economically productive “students.” Stewart is a 28-year-old man (he/him) residing with his parents, having recently returned home after a period of residential independence following the retrenchment of his employment. He is enrolled in a Master’s Degree by distance (online) at a university in New South Wales, Australia, pursuant to aspirations to a PhD and career in academia. Stewart was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at age seven. I am a 42-year-old woman (she/her) residing independently in a ‘downsized’ home, having retired from my corporate career to pursue a Doctoral Degree by distance (online) at the University of Southern Queensland. In addition to my doctoral programme, I have undertaken various casual academic research contracts within my university over the past three years, aspiring to a full-time permanent position in academia. I was diagnosed with dyslexia at age 14.

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Brockelman (2001) connects the multiplicity of possible readings and meanings of collage to postmodernism, arguing that the assemblage of elements from different worlds into a single composition demands “a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element”, which calls to attention the “irreducible heterogeneity of the ‘postmodern condition’” (p.p.10-11). Each word, phrase, paragraph, section, image and symbol may have discrete meaning, but once assembled in a collage, they resonate with each other and the whole, such that each element and the whole may produce multiple possible knowledges. The stories (or story) presented here are intentionally “in crisis” (Brockelman, 2001, p.35) constantly colliding with each other to form a new work that is greater but also incomplete and insecure (Kilgard, 2009). As Brockelman elucidates:

In collage, sense is something to be *made* rather than secured: in the final analysis, the experience of collage both insists that we learn to live

without guarantees of meaning (the reality of “knowing our place”) and opens the possibility for a kind of meaningfulness that we ourselves produce through a process of judgment. And in doing this, it fights precisely the obsessive and paralysing tendencies of modern culture. This skill, this ability to negotiate richly within a universe no longer answering to medieval demands for metaphysical security, is the ethical bequest of the collage tradition (Brockelman, 2001, p.37, original emphasis).

Drawing on the notion of collage as something that is “made”, this assemblage was constructed via a kinaesthetic technique of rendering the data and analysis into tactile format. Having completed a process of co-reflexive analysis, we next set out to produce a physical representation of our entire dataset. Guided by Kilgard’s (2009) method, each discrete ‘bit’ (autoethnographic reflection, analysis, poem, photograph, sketch and painting) was printed and laid out across the floor and rendered with sticky dots to denote themes. To each theme we assigned multiple questions and provocations, possible meanings and implications. We questioned what characteristics of our identity were intersecting and how intersectionality was being conceptualised and mobilised. With these multiple possible meanings in mind, we deployed Shields and Kepke’s (1996) “Gallery Theatre” approach, striving to present “multiple texts juxtaposed within a prepared environment as a context to prompt multiple mediations, multiple readings and meanings” (p.p.73-74).

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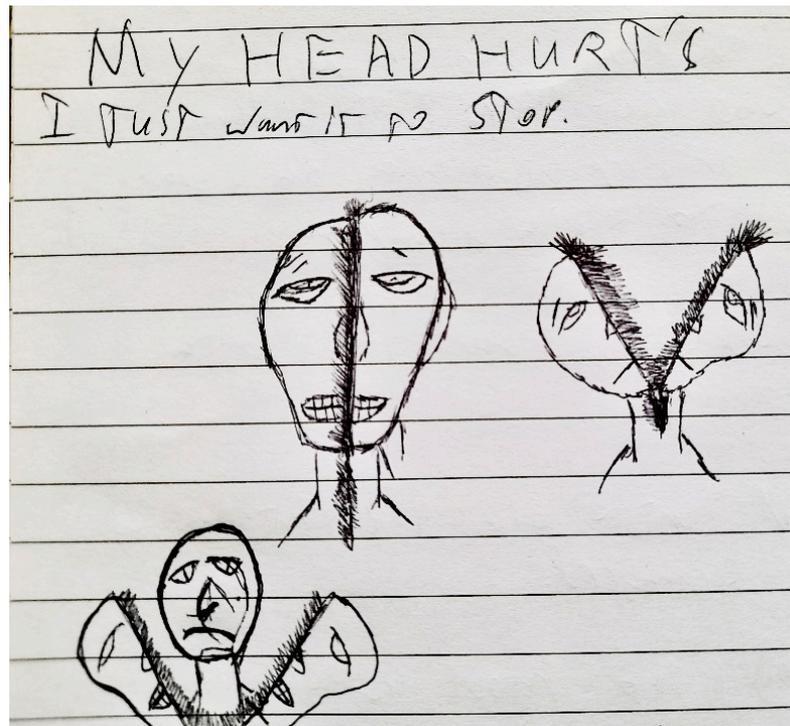


Figure 6.1: “Inside My Head”, Stewart Limpus

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Data collection and analysis for this collaborative autoethnographic essay occurred over the final 6 months of my PhD project, and immediately following Stewart’s Confirmation of Candidature for his Master’s Degree program. It originated from an email conversation post my visit to Stewart’s home to interview him for my doctoral research in which I congratulated him on confirming his candidature. Stewart surprised me by confiding that this “big milestone” achievement felt “muted” and “distant from [his] lived reality.” Feeling a strong personal resonance with these sentiments, I invited Stewart to elucidate these feelings:

The best way I can describe my lived reality is as being an unemployed single man living with his parents. This lived reality kind of clashes with my goals, like, what I am 'Doing' doesn't quite match with what I am 'Being.' Like 'Being' an academic for me would be immersing myself more and more into the field of research, and building my social

and professional connections around that field of interest which would align with the 'Doing' of academia. I think this issue didn't really exist while I was living alone in an apartment because I had total control/dominion over the that space... This means that because I was 'Doing' academia, that space, for me, became a space in which I am 'Being' academic... my current 'Being' is trying to function within a space that previously housed a past and very different form of 'Being' (undergraduate, unemployed, child). And perhaps there is some kind of psycho-social tension in that clash. In my apartment space I could 'shed' the old restrictive social roles and ideas that formed my then-identity, whereas [this space] has lingering habitual behaviours and social roles associated with it that kind of 'press in' on me (S. Limpus, personal communication, 28 February 2022).

In further email exchanges and telephone conversations, Stewart and I reflected on our mutual sense of vulnerability and precariousness in seeking to perform as academics within our respective institutions. This prompted us to engage with the emerging scholarly discourse pertaining to students' identity development as scholars and led us to conclude that spatial and disability contexts have been largely overlooked in the scholarship to date. We also noted that an underlying sense of financial and residential precariousness has precipitated our respective feelings of invalidity and insecurity as emerging scholars. Such factors as intermittent casual research contracts, unpaid participation in research project teams, requirements to engage with government job-seeker programmes, and a necessity to depend on parents for residential and financial security contributed to our sense of un-viability as 'professional' academics. In sharing and reflecting on these experiences we acknowledged a deeper level of insight into

our own identity development as scholars. We also appreciated the support and solidarity that has transcended disciplinary and institutional boundaries, and in some way mitigated the isolation felt at times in being ‘distant’ from the academic community as online learners (Oswald et al., 2022). With the intention of sustaining our scholarly solidarity, and mindful of what Stewart terms “the dictate of the almighty dollar”, we initiated a ‘side-project’ that would afford us the opportunity to essay a collective autoethnographic methodology that appealed to us epistemologically as early career qualitative ethnographic researchers within the humanities, and co-author a paper that would be of recognisable ‘value’ within the neoliberal academy.

Acknowledging the duality of this paper as the third of my doctoral thesis Findings chapters, and a manuscript that Stewart and I hope to submit for publication, I assumed the role of first author, guiding, curating and collaging the first draft of analysis. We focused our initial reflections on the first stages of our identity development as scholars (Pifer and Baker, 2016). This produced over twenty pages of data, shared over several emails and text messages, that we questioned, clarified and refined over a period of weeks. Through an iterative process of reflexive reading of each other’s work, we independently extrapolated common threads, then collaborated to contextualise them within our shared situatedness. We met several times to analyse the data from multiple perspectives (Fine, 2017) and through an intersectional lens (Moradi, 2017). Stewart patiently indulged my ‘messiness’ of thought, whereby I headed along tangents and whirled in eddies, often producing nothing of ‘use’ to our essay. Still his openness to my approach was immensely valuable to me in fostering a sense of peer support, acceptance and recognition that I found profoundly empowering.

There were places in Stewart's autoethnographic writings where truncated reflections hinted at deeper insights beyond his immediate grasp ("...If that makes sense...this idea may need clarifying, but I will leave it at that for now"; "I'm not exactly sure what I mean by that..."; "I'll probably have more clear ideas and thoughts tomorrow.") Having visited Stewart at his home when first interviewing him and spoken at length with him about his creative hobbies, I was aware that he is an accomplished multi-media communicator. Accordingly, I invited Stewart to elucidate his autoethnographic reflexions using a broad scope of creatively expressive modes of communication. Stewart shared sketches, poetry and paintings to evoke the feelings that were most difficult for him to elucidate through 'academic' prose. Drawing on Shalmani and Sabet's (2010) findings that "the combination of textual and visual definitions might help learners better decipher the meanings of keywords in reading passages, and hence arrive at an even deeper comprehension of the texts", we present a selection of Stewart's pictorial representations, in addition to photographs, poetry, autoethnographic reflections and analysis. These represent the textual and pictorial components of the paper.

Following the "assemblage" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 22) of our data, we conversed via telephone and email, overlaying our initial analyses with multiple possible interpretive readings. These multiple possible readings were brought into dialogue with the literature, overlaid, juxtaposed, intersected, and assembled into a collage. We intentionally created space for multi-layered readings and multiple possible meanings (Yardley, 2008) to allow the final meaning-making stage to remain 'undone' and 'unfixed.' Our objective was to unsettle the dominant narratives pertaining to the "right" way to perform as "good" scholars within academe, by

making visible our different perspectives and experiences of developing a scholar identity.

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### ***In-Sight***

*What mysteries are revealed in your eyes,  
the mysteries of me that I cannot see.  
What glories await beneath this haze of doubt  
that I cannot pierce with word or thought.  
Works unwritten and unpraised, worthy of such disgrace.  
Yet you considering them great, worthy of the world's embrace.*

*You who delve into the solemnity of self,  
and the paradox of personhood.  
What brilliant facets can I shine for you,  
what maddening modes of thought.  
Reflective is the mind most obtuse,  
tempered by solitude and vice.*

*In this you are the bulwark of genius,  
and I a simple polishing clerk.  
But one cannot shine without the other.*

*Stewart Limpus*

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At the outset of this inquiry, we were drawn to Chang and colleagues' (see Chang, 2013; Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013) collaborative autoethnography (CAE) method. Our shared sense of precariousness and desire for solidarity resonated with CAE's co-constructive approach to meaning-making, with its roots in the autoethnographic tradition of recognising researchers' lived experiences as *valid* and true lenses through which to view sociocultural phenomena (Choi, Brunner & Traini,

2021). As defined by Austin and Hickey (2007, p.371), the “shift of the ethnographic gaze from something outside and exotically ‘over there’ to that which is Self [...] is the fundamental point of delineation” between ethnographic and autoethnographic methods. Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013) elaborate that the autoethnographic approach leverages the power of story to interrogate hegemonic theories and paradigms to reconnect “social science to social purposes” and decolonise the academy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.1117).

However, heeding Lapadat’s (2017) caution that autoethnography risks falling short of its social justice aims on account of its complicated relational ethics whereby the participant/researcher subject may struggle to achieve reflexive distance, we turned our attention to recent developments in autoethnographic methods that deploy multivocal approaches. As Lapadat (2017) explains: “Using a team approach addresses a weakness of autobiographic data that entails from the researcher being too close to the experience to see it in a holistic or nuanced way, metaphorically the blind spot at the centre of the eye (Lapadat, 2017, p.598). This blind spot was of particular concern to Stewart and me, and we surmised that multi-dimensional perspectives would be of utility when writing from the non-normative margins. Aspies<sup>40</sup> are typically considered ‘siloe’d’ thinkers and dyslexics ‘fragmented’ or ‘tangential’ thinkers. My seeking to adopt multivocal approach, we aimed to broaden the autoethnographic gaze beyond the solitary struggles of Self, and “locate them within categories of experience shared by many” (Lapadat, 2017, p.599).

In Chang et al.’s seminal book, *Collaborative Autoethnography* (2013), we found a comprehensive methodological framework that particularises each stage of

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<sup>40</sup> Colloquial term sometimes used to denote individuals who have Asperger’s Syndrome. Used here due to Stewart’s self-identification as ‘Aspie.’

the CAE inquiry, which we adopted for this project. Drawing on ‘performance collaborative autoethnography’ (Chang et al., 2013) to integrate kinaesthetic data generation and presentation in the form of collage, we honoured our Aspie and dyslexic ways of knowing and knowledge production. We created a safe space for scholarly self and communal reflexion, bringing our unique and intersecting stories into juxtaposition with each other. At times this has been challenging, but through a multiplicity of possible readings and meanings, we believe we have created a work that gives voice to our lived experiences without tending to narcissism or self-indulgence.

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The vulnerabilities faced by higher degree students, including factors such as physical and mental health stresses, isolation, insecurity, fluctuating motivation, suicidal ideation, and poor supervisory relationships are well documented in the scholarly literature (Andal & Wu, 2021; Barry et al., 2018). In addition to these directly related vulnerabilities, Golde and Walker (2009) and Maki and Borkowski (2006) have also called for further research that considers students’ holistic circumstances, including their social and economic contexts and their different perspectives, including “their knowledge, abilities, habits of mind, ways of problem solving, and dispositions” (Maki & Borkowski, 2006, p.4). This paper seeks to contribute to this emerging field of inquiry through making visible the identity work of two emerging scholars in performing a higher degree by research via distance learning. Acknowledging that our academic life is a journey, and that “knowledge is constructed and reconstructed through experience” (Andal and Wu, 2021) we explore how our lived realities as emerging scholars within the neoliberal academy are enmeshed with our identities as ex-professionals, financial dependents, home-based students and *differently-abled*

learners. We demonstrate how our Aspie and dyslexic ways of knowing position us to overcome the challenges and embrace the opportunities of academe. And we offer experience-based reflexions that we hope will create solidarity with fellow emerging scholars as they negotiate their own “identity metamorphosis” (Stanley, 2015, p.114).

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*I consider ‘student’ the appropriate term for my current reality. Comparing it to the previous time that I was a student (pursuant to an undergraduate degree) my Master’s Degree ‘student identity’ is more self-fulfilling and ‘academic’, largely owing to the nature of my studies. My undergraduate degree covered a very broad field of scholarship and lacked depth of understanding; my higher degree research project focuses on a subject that engages me theoretically and empirically, and contributes to a greater depth of understanding within a field that closely aligns with my interests. However, I am living a stereotypical ‘student lifestyle’ which is antithetical to my conception of a professional, recognisable ‘scholar.’*

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A Finder.com.au survey conducted in May 2020 found that close to 330,000 adult children in Australia moved back in with their parents due to the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. Finder’s personal finance expert, Kate Brown, commented:

From young professionals who have lost their jobs, to expatriates returning from overseas, COVID-19 has had a negative financial impact on many Aussies. Some have no choice but to move back in with mum and dad [...] Many adult kids are returning to their childhood bedrooms, setting up workstations in the dining room and asking, ‘what’s for dinner?.’ While some parents will be delighted to have kids

move back in, whether they can handle an increase in the energy, water and food bill remains to be seen (Brown, 2020, p.p. 38-39).

At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Stewart Limpus was retrenched and became dependent on the jobseeker allowance for income. Consequently, he decided to return to live with his parents.

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Sometimes erroneously characterised as a mental or cognitive disability, Asperger Syndrome is named after Hans Asperger, who first described the condition in 1944. Professional consensus places Asperger's at the high-functioning end of the 'autistic spectrum.' As elucidated by Lord et al. (2000) the primary diagnostic criteria of autism are difficulties in social interaction and social communication, and restrictive behaviours such as a limited repertoire of interests, and insistence on sameness (reliance on routines, adherence to rituals and resistance to change). However, in contrast with most presentations of autism, IQ is average or higher in those with Asperger's, as is ability to assimilate over time to social norms (McClure, 2002). Neurologically and psychologically, Asperger's is described using the pathologising language of deficiency. Typically diagnosed in childhood, the process of recalibrating the social, emotional and mental lives of society's "youngest citizen" (Rose, 1999, p.123) commences with alacrity within the jurisdiction of private (family) and public (educational) spheres. Programmes of normalisation reform the Asperger's child in line with dominant ways of being and knowing in the world, often through violent and coercive approaches that valorise an unquestionable, natural "tyranny of the normal" (Silvers, 1994, p.154). As Henri-Jacques Stiker argues, "there is no better way to escape the fear of strangeness than by forgetting aberrancy through its dissolution to the social norm [...] the disabled should always adapt to society such as it is" (Stiker,

1999, p.p.136-137). The “dissolution” of autistic ways of being and knowing forecloses the possibility that those with the condition might have unique perspectives that are valuable to our understanding of the human condition (Titchkosky, 2007).

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### ***Memory-skin***

*You step into a familiar place,  
Into a web of old relations.  
Like a habit long abandoned  
It clings to you like oil.*

*In the vaporous recesses of the mind  
Lingers the time worn memory of youth.  
As the old motions take hold,  
You begin to remember that youthful self  
And that part of yourself that was that youth  
Pulls you back towards the familiar pattern.*

*But you are not that youth,  
You outgrew him long ago.  
Like a shell that held you in  
While you continued to grow.  
You cannot replace a broken shell,  
To try is to suffocate yourself in the  
Memory-skin of self.*

*Stewart Limpus*

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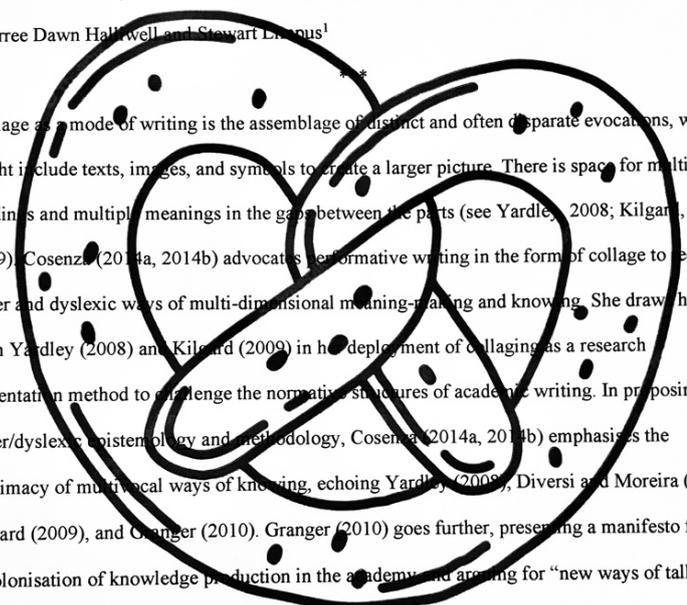
Lack of empathy is considered a central characteristic of Asperger syndrome (Lord et al., 2000) and is often erroneously conflated with lack of concern for others and an unwillingness to engage or intervene in issues that affect others’ wellbeing (Titchkosky, 2007). Over the course of our face-to-face interactions, Stewart has

demonstrated an inability to ‘read’ my emotional responses - anxiety, distress, boredom and frustration all go unregistered unless telegraphed verbally as such. My exposure to persons ‘on the spectrum’ had previously been limited to those with very pronounced autism. As a result, prior to meeting Stewart I also misrecognised lack of empathy as narcissism. However, Stewart’s solidarity and care throughout our collaboration has surprised, educated and humbled me. Reading of my excessively long hours of study, crippling anxiety over my ‘imposter syndrome’, and chronic insomnia, Stewart initiated a daily check-in via text message to offer acknowledgement and encouragement. He has sustained this regular communication schedule for over 18 months without missing a single day.

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#### **A Crisis of Identity: A Collage of the Emerging Scholar in the Crucible of Academe**

Sherree Dawn Halliwell and Stewart L. Granger<sup>1</sup>



Collage as a mode of writing is the assemblage of distinct and often disparate evocations, which might include texts, images, and symbols to create a larger picture. There is space for multiple readings and multiple meanings in the gaps between the parts (see Yardley, 2008; Kilgarriff, 2009). Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) advocates performative writing in the form of collage to reclaim queer and dyslexic ways of multi-dimensional meaning-making and knowing. She draws heavily from Yardley (2008) and Kilgarriff (2009) in her deployment of collaging as a research presentation method to challenge the normative structures of academic writing. In proposing a queer/dyslexic epistemology and methodology, Cosenza (2014a, 2014b) emphasizes the legitimacy of multivocal ways of knowing, echoing Yardley (2008), Diversi and Moreira (2009), Kilgarriff (2009), and Granger (2010). Granger (2010) goes further, presenting a manifesto for the decolonisation of knowledge production in the academy and arguing for “new ways of talking about and approaching learning disability or even the “bad student” as politically situated, not just medically / biologically situated in a category (Final, Very Important, Distracting Though

Figure 6.2: Pretzelling the Emerging Scholar

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*Returning to live in my parents' home has been unexpectedly stressful. In the years that I lived independently I experienced a lot of personal growth. I was residentially and financially independent and had a full-time job with potential for career progression. Moving back into the environment where I was a kid, where I struggled with the challenges of growing up, and where I made a faltering start to emerging adulthood, I was confronted by a mass of emotional and spatial baggage. One of my anxieties is about falling back into regressive habits. When I graduated university and was unemployed for two years, I developed a lot of unhealthy habits. I had nothing to do and had yet to discover what I was passionate about. I was just malingering about, playing video games all day, and not achieving much of anything. It feels like to move forward in life I have had to go backwards. I'm studying at my parents' place again. Great. This is where I was five years ago. If I had been asked back then to imagine myself in five years, "Stewart, where are you going to be?" Not here.*

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The aspect of academic writing that I find most challenging is the laying of subterranean pipes between sentences, paragraphs, sections and chapters to produce a plumbed-in account that flows without diversionary eddies, abrupt blockages or gushing leaks. The English language is intended to be read vertically from top to bottom, and horizontally from left to right. The normal convention of syntactic plumbing connects the end of one vertically and horizontally constructed sentence, paragraph, section or chapter to the beginning of the next by way of connected ideas or logics (such as segues and signposts). However, this is not how I read, assimilate and acquire knowledge. When reading blocks of prose (as opposed to short headings, labels or signs) I "fix" upon the centre of the line of text and scan my eyes left and right from centre to keep the peripheral words from "jumping about." If I encounter a

particularly complex construction that interrupts my scanning, I “mark” the “gap” in my comprehension and attempt to scan onwards down the page to the next coherent sentence. If no further progress can be made down the page without attending to the gap, I re-read the prose in reverse sentence order from the gap upwards, “reverse-engineering” the site of the incomprehensible logic. This renders sequentially connected plumbing obsolete, and to me, often invisible. The task of constructing and installing invisible plumbing is therefore especially laborious.

In my corporate life I was renowned as a creative and innovative businesswoman. In the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated concepts, I often found solutions to unsolvable legacy problems and new opportunities for growth. My dyslexic “un-plumbing” of ideas produces the conditions for multi-layers, insertions, deletions and gaps that dismantle reified concepts and subvert “it’s the way it is”, “it’s how it’s always been”, and “there’s nothing we can do about it.” Through the juxtaposition of unrelated or distantly related ideas, I generate new meaning and possibilities by friction, fracture or fusion. Juxtaposition is, by definition, unplumbed.

As qualitative ethnographers concerned with interpreting and representing a view of the world seen through the eyes of our subjects, we constantly review our processes of meaning-making, questioning and requestioning our claims to knowledge. We construct methodological telescopes, sharpening our insights through multiple different lenses to deconstruct our own research biases and mitigate epistemological concerns over how we come to understand or represent another person’s ‘world view’” (Riach, 2009, p.357). As a scholar with dyslexia whose primary lens is inherently ‘different’, I call for the academy to legitimise dyslexic ways of seeing and knowing as valuable alternative lenses on the human condition.

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The inclusion here of many kinds of text acknowledges that there are multiple ways in which human cognitive networks process information and make creative leaps. This contribution directly presents the case for multi-layered narrative inquiry as a paradigm of ethical activity. (Yardley, 2008, Introduction section, para.1).

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An emergent area of academic concern is the development of early career researchers' identities as 'scholars' (e.g., Choi, Brunner & Traini, 2021; Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; Pifer & Baker, 2016; Noonan, 2015). The development from 'student' to 'scholar' calibrates to the neoliberal progress paradigm in that it reflects the identity transition from non-economically productive consumer of knowledge to economically productive professional knowledge creator. Accordingly, Pifer and Baker (2016) identify the three stages of doctoral student identity transition as knowledge consumption, knowledge creation and knowledge enactment.

Within the first stage of knowledge consumption, students are positioned within the academe as novice learners. As Austin et al. (2009) explain, this stage can be particularly challenging for students entering academia from a professional career, such as myself, as we must first undergo an identity moratorium, shedding our experienced, professional identities in order to assume a new novice positionality. At the second stage of knowledge creation, whereby coursework, dissertations and oral examinations are completed, students typically experience anxiety, self-doubt, and an imposter syndrome concerning their emerging identity from 'student' to 'scholar.' Such insecurity may be significantly exacerbated for those exhibiting 'different' ways of knowledge production (Baker, Pifer & Flemion, 2013). In the third stage of identity transition, knowledge enactment, students seek to leverage their academic skills and

writings to obtain employment as scholars. As Pifer and Baker (2016) explain, this precarious period of oscillation between ‘student’ and ‘scholar’, often characterised by casual and contract employment and unpaid research work, can be stressful and isolating for scholars. These studies of identity development mobilise a progress paradigm whereby students progressively acquire skills, experience and academic achievements to effect their ‘student’ to ‘scholar’ identity transition. Their ‘success’ or otherwise in fully transitioning to ‘scholar’ status is configured as a product of personal and relationship dynamics such as ability, work ethic, confidence, resilience, supervisory and institutional guidance, and a supportive home life. We suggest that this underplays the role of broader socio-political contexts, specifically the neoliberalisation of academia (Choi, Brunner & Traini, 2021; Brooks, Franklin-Phipps & Rath, 2018).

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*I am trying to remind myself that it is okay to be at home. I am feeling that pull back into the old familial roles that I broke out of when I was living on my own. It is like the haunting spectre of my university years and all the associated anxieties is lingering at the back of my mind as a result of just being in the same space again.*

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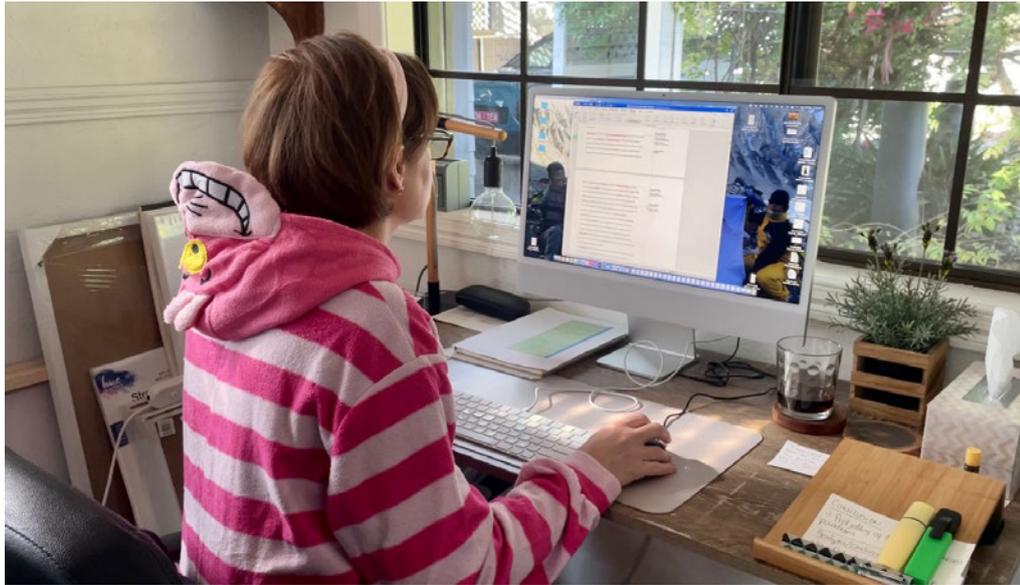


Figure 6.3: Sherree Halliwell, ‘student’ at home.

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Casting off the designer pinstriped corporate suit and assuming the perpetual onesie of the home-based online doctoral student was for me, emblematic of my regression from successful adult to childlike novice. For the first time in twenty years, I became a net knowledge-consumer with no economically quantifiable ‘output’ and a cache of skills and experience founded on ‘industry’ knowledge that the academy deems invalid as not sufficiently ‘scholarly.’ Furthermore, as an online student, I spent much of my first year of candidature feeling that I was beavering away in isolation on a self-indulgent ‘passion project’ of little interest or value to anyone besides myself and my supervisors, rather than facilitating academic connections and knowledge intersections, and scaffolding a career in academe. I sought to address this sense of ignorance, insularity and insignificance by joining a cross-disciplinary project team of scholars that recognised my professionally acquired analytical expertise and offered opportunities to collaborate on journal articles and book chapters that represent tangible scholarly currency on my skinny academic resumé. However, the low hourly rates of pay for infrequently offered casual research contracts, and expectations of

significant unpaid time contributions for regular meetings, analysis, ethnographic research, article writing and revisions, also produced a vacillating sense of invalidation. My sense of childlike regression remained, as I struggled to re-emerge as a fully-fledged, recognised, viable ‘scholar.’

Allocation of resources to productive effort is a key tenet of neoliberal society. As Foucault (2008, 2012) explains, neoliberalism is a political ideology that merges the social and economic spheres to reduce state investment in state provisions, shifting the responsibility for economic and financial viability onto the individual subject body “in the sense that subjects are increasingly conceived and conceive themselves as entrepreneurs of the self, who attempt to maximise their human capital.” (Oksala, 2015, para. 17). In their provocative paper, *Governmentality and academic work: Shaping the hearts and minds of academic workers* (2010) Davies and Bansel contend that over the previous twenty years the *liberal* academy has evolved to become a *neoliberal* academy, where academics must resist the enticements of meritocratic individualism to avoid becoming “the auditable entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism” (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p.18). They ask:

How might we understand both our historical embeddedness in a new set of coercive practices, engage in pragmatic acts of survival, and also re-open the distance between the subject and management, or government, and ask how am I and my work being constituted and with what effect? (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p.18).

As Brooks et al. (2018) explain, academic institutions are increasingly characterised by neoliberal values such as hierarchies of status and power, individualism and competition for finite resources whereby everyone in academe, from departmental heads to doctoral candidates must negotiate a system that is “sustained by practices

that enforce scarcity and precarity” (Brooks et al., 2018, p.133). Higher degree students receive no social welfare support in Australia. We must compete for publicly and privately funded scholarships and grants, or depend on personal means to fund our study and living expenses. We are encouraged to forgo paid work opportunities outside academe, and instead dedicate ourselves to our studies and enhance our academic resumes by publishing in quality research papers, travelling and presenting at conferences, and participating in research project teams. However, as Brooks et al. (2018) note, very few of us, and even those in receipt of scholarships, are funded to a level that facilitates a ‘full-time’ engagement in unpaid academic enrichment activities.

Brooks et al. (2020) argue that the neoliberal academy is constantly engaged in self-reproduction in the form of a steady supply of unpaid or lowly paid graduate labour, which is disciplined into “always working towards the *right signifiers* of the auditable academic entrepreneur” (Brooks et al., 2020, p.135, emphasis added). Lack of financial payment for my research output in lieu of the currency of ‘achievement’ of published research papers and ‘experience’ of scholarly collaboration simultaneously confers academic validity on personal and relationship dimensions, and invalidity at the institutional dimension. The production of quality, peer-reviewed published work is a recognised ‘output’ of the neoliberal academy (Brooks et al., 2018). The mantra: “there’s a paper in that” is repeated so frequently by my supervisors that I have taken to inserting post-it notes throughout the printed drafts of my chapters noting possible future publications. Such contributions by individuals increase the reputation of their respective institutions, in turn increasing the individual’s scholarly value to the academe (Brooks et al., 2018, 2020). Similarly, as

Inouye and McAlpine (2019) demonstrate, positive reinforcement from scholarly colleagues is a correlate of students 'feeling like an academic.'

However, within the context of an institution regulated by neoliberal market conditions, it is difficult to see how the individual that provides scholarly services for free, whose 'contributions' go unmonetised and produce no security of future employment, satisfies the economic conditions at an institutional level for identity transition from 'student' to 'scholar.' If their emergence as an 'scholar' is contingent on their securing paid employment at a rate commensurate with their skills and experience, this may entail a further period of scholarly exploitation/volunteerism, good fortune, underwritten by an independent source of financial security. In the case of second-career students who enter higher degree programmes after a period of professional employment, this precarious subjectivity may be significantly at odds with the competent, confident, independent identities that they cast off to join the academy (Brooks et al., 2020).

Throughout my PhD journey I aspired to convert my academic 'capital' into full-time permanent employment within the academy post-doctorate. I sought to follow Deleuze and Guattari's advice:

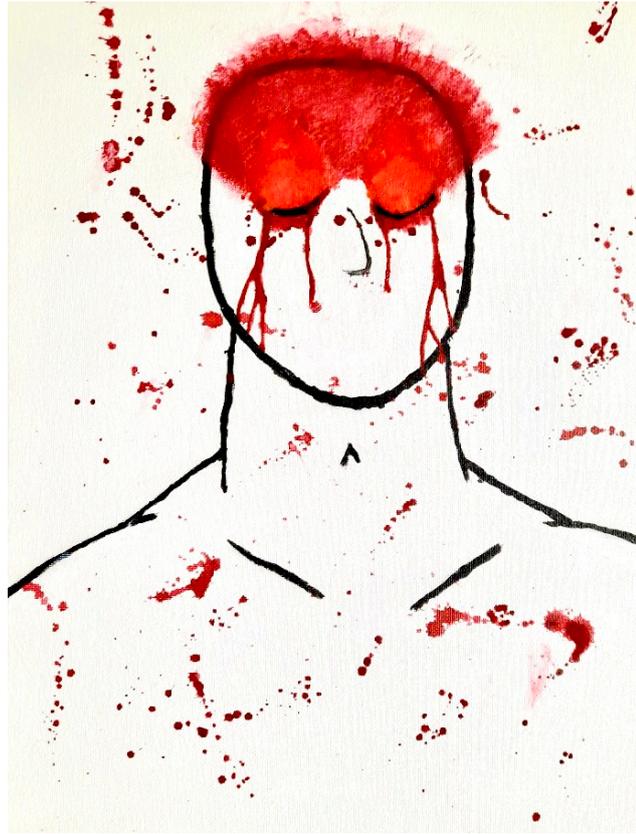
Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161).

I invested my time in scholarly endeavours outside of my doctoral programme that enhanced my academic skills, experience, connections, publications and reputation. A

little over half the time that I invested in these activities was unremunerated. Without any guarantee of future employment, I initiated a strategy of personal scholarly development and strove to balance my investment in producing a quality PhD deliverable with the fortification of my academic resumé.

Our collaborative ethnography project has provided the opportunity to look back over the last three years of my academic journey with a critical appreciation of the privileged position I have occupied as a member of a community of scholars. I acknowledge the personal growth and the ‘life currency’ of enrichment that this PhD candidature has afforded me. However, viewing my journey through Stewart’s additional lens reveals how I have come to be invalidated as a scholar whilst paradoxically performing as a “successful” doctoral candidate. The financial precariousness of my position inside and outside the academy has undone my pretensions to a scholar identity. The paucity of full-time permanent academic opportunities at my institution has prompted me to return to the corporate sphere for employment. Reconnecting with my former peer group of business executives and recruitment network, I have come to comprehend that the three-year ‘gap’ in my corporate advancement, whereby I deviated to gain an unprofitable and inutile academic qualification, is regarded by the custodians of neoliberal progress paradigm as a ‘waste’ of time, a backwards an erosion of the relevance of my knowledge (fears that I may be out of touch with recent developments in media, marketing, governance and risk management, and unable to recall my leadership skills and best-practice knowledge), and an injudicious deviation from my previously ‘successful’ linear career trajectory.

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*Figure 6.4: “Self-portrait”, Stewart Limpus*

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Our lived experiences raise questions about how we as emerging scholars relate to space, and what stories we tell ourselves about ‘student’ and ‘academic’ places of work. Stewart and I both experienced isolation, disconnection and crises of identity relating to our home-based studies. The university spatially situates scholars within a community of professionally recognised academics. For scholars assigned a desk within the university campus, spatial separation of leisure and work conforms to the normative trope of going out to work, and coming home to play (Andal & Wu, 2021). As home-based students our professional lives blur with our personal lives. The ‘professional’ is rendered ‘informal’, ‘casual’ and ‘optional.’ This is reflected in our flexible hours of work, casual attire, and external assumptions that on any given day or time we will be “free” to prioritise more important, urgent or appealing activities.

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Normative clinical, psychological and sociological approaches characterise disability as an objective and deviant condition that is situated within subject bodies. Lurking on the edge of humanity, these stigmatised, spoiled identities must be subjected to coping, management and correction strategies to neutralise the threat to the “normals” and fit within the acceptable parameters of human experience. Sara Ahmed (2000) evokes the notion of a “stranger” to elaborate how societies fear, categorise and govern the “unknown”, explaining “the stranger is not *any-body* that we have failed to recognise, but *some-body* that we have already recognised *as* a stranger, as ‘a body out of place.’ Hence the stranger is somebody we know as not knowing, rather than somebody we simply do not know” (Ahmed, 2000, p.55, original emphasis).

Proponents of the social constructionist model of disability, which was developed by UK-based advocacy organisation, Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), in the 1970s (see Barnes, 1991; Oliver, 1996) take a similar approach to Goffman’s (1963) ‘social’ framing of the *stigma* of disability. As Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) explain, advocates for a social framing of disability take issue with six key tenets of the normative conception of disability: the physical situatedness of disability ‘within’ the individual; the minimisation of the role of social factors in producing disability; the taxonomic categorisation of types of disability; the medical pathologising of disability as deficiency in want of cure/prevention; the paternalistic and patronising attitude of disability services in respect to their clients; and the stigmatisation of people with disability (see Barnes, 1991; Oliver, 1996).

A social constructionist framing of disability proposes that disability is not a product of bodily pathology, but is produced by the exclusionary practices of social and economic structures (Barnes, 1991). This allows for the possibility that what

constitutes (sub)human is produced in the social interactions between people. Freeing the disabled subject from the normalising and regulating pathologies of deficiency, such a framing makes possible an alternative reading of disability that recognises that which we previously viewed ‘strangers’ as *differently-abled*. There is nothing ‘wrong’ with disabled subjects that needs to be managed and corrected; the change required is a correction of a societal view that defines disabled people as victims of a tragic accident or circumstance (Oliver, 1996).

However, as Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) contest, if there is no inherent predicament to be addressed and no deficiency of agency to be accommodated, and if the physical and mental impairments attributed to disabled subjects are arbitrary imaginings of societal institutions with the power to designate them, then there is no logical need for additional disability support. Anastasiou and Kauffman elucidate that a danger in applying a social constructionist framework of disability at the institutional level is that it “separates people with disabilities from people without them who could help to maximise functioning or overcome much of their disablement” (2011, p.377). Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) further contend the empirical implications of the social interactionist model in contexts such as special education is a policy of “unconditional support to inclusion” (p.380) which overlooks the practical requirements that such a mandate for universal inclusion requires.

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### ***Academic in Crisis***

*Like a face that shifts, melts into a different one.*

*It's a malleable thing that shifts and changes*

*Depending on the situation and the surrounding social climate.*

*At some points it feels like the academic is an echo,*

*A shallow memory that is clawing at the back of my mind,*

*Trying to be free of this conceited place, to think and live.*

*At other times it feels like a cage.  
“Unemployment” they call it, burring you in chains of bureaucracy.  
This triggers in the mind a search for solidity, meaning, permanence.  
You search for knowledge that may help ease this discomfort.  
The deeper the discomfort, the deeper you dive into the recesses of human knowing.  
It is in this hole that once finds conspiracy and existential threats.  
Plastic, climate, politics.  
Youth seeks to latch onto these greater ideas  
Because they lack the solidity of true expressed identity.*

*Stewart Limpus*

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The social constructionist project of seeking to extrapolate and extend personal truths derived from individuals’ experiences of disability to a public and universal mandate risks usurping biological determinism with an equally overly simplistic and reductive frame of cultural determinism. People sometimes inappropriately generalise that which they experience personally (Anastasiou and Kauffman, 2011). I choose to internalise my slow reading, writing, and double processing of complex linguistic and numerical ideas as thoughtfulness, rigour, and fastidiousness. These interpretations of my coping strategies allow me to emphasise the ‘positive’ adaptive characteristics that I prefer to identify with as an aspiring scholar. However, I do not deny the reality of my cognitive impairment. I am objectively slower in my reading, and my mistakes take additional time to check and correct. As Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) explain, the impossibility of quantifying a disability’s subjective deviation from the norm - how much slower I am than ‘normal’ readers – is not sufficient reason to reject an objective account of disability. Evoking Butler (2004), I acknowledge and allow for my corporeal vulnerability and precariousness. However, the point is not to accept a truth imposed on me by the normalising structures of the academy but to be willing

to undergo an experience (Vlieghe, 2014), which, as Butler explains, “has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (Butler, 2004, p.21, original emphasis).

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*I personally resonate with the post-positivist perspective because it allows for a solid foundation to reality that exists independent of human conscious perception that is interpreted and understood through a biologically limited human perception and cognitive/social constructions. My Master's Degree research adopts a social constructionist perspective, as it takes as its focus neo-pagan social constructions of ritual, identity, religious ideas and expression, all of which exist primarily as manifestation of the human social world. As such, I am comfortable approaching that task from a social constructionist perspective. However, I am not comfortable applying that perspective to a universal notion of how things are. As a person with Asperger's, I would start running into problems where my sometimes-limited understanding of the meanings of social interactions would conflict with my understanding of objective reality. This for me would produce unresolvable cognitive dissonance... something deeply uncomfortable.*

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Queer and dyslexic epistemologies are predicated on anti-essentialist foundations that disrupt assumptions about the world and subject knowledge about social and organisational structures to critical examination. Different ways of *seeing* produce different ways of *knowing*. Queer and dyslexic knowledges are inherently unstable and unfixed, whether experientially through an anticategorical approach to identity and difference or perceptually via linguistic instability (letters, numbers, and words

‘jumping about’). The queer and dyslexic project to advocate for anti-normal practices and identities rather than assimilating to the hegemonic normalising constructs binds them to a common activism based on ‘true recognition’ that Parker (2001) describes as ‘sheer difference’ (see also Halperin, 2003; and Warner, 1999). Queering *seeks to* “make strange... what is considered known, familiar, and commonplace” (Seidman, 1997, p. xi). Dyslexia *inherently* makes strange what is known, familiar and commonplace. Both epistemologies are critical of traditional claims of ‘objectivity’ and destabilise the “grand narratives that are produced by foundationalist approaches to research” (McDonald, 2017, p.135). At their core, both queer and dyslexic epistemologies assert the claim of antinormative and non-normative ways of knowing in opposition to the hegemonic and taken-for-granted ways of reading the world (McDonald, 2017).

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### ***On the Know-ledge***

*Knowledge has a way of binding to the soul.  
In my mind it solidifies, condensing into clarity and mastery.  
But soon the images and words melt away into obscurity.  
As memory fades, I am left yearning for a memory.*

*Knowledge has a way of solidifying into a cage.  
In its beginning it is a free-flowing torrent that drowns the directing mind.  
Combative schools of thinking, built upon the hollow husks of dead thoughts.  
They coagulate around all thought of exploration and lock the paths to truth.  
One can get lost in this place, a maze of thought-constructs.*

*Stewart Limpus*

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Disability studies scholars writing from diverse perspectives and across multidisciplinary fields have done much over the past decade to unsettle the dominant conception of disability as a ‘natural’ category framed in the language of deficiency. Disability scholarship has increasingly focused on the phenomenology of disability made manifest in the social spaces *between* people, as Titchkosky (2007, p.38) explains, the “defining feature of disability studies is establishing a tradition of inquiry that problematizes the ways in which disability is figured against a ahistorical apolitical and even asocial background.” The field of interpretive disability studies recognises the otherness of lived experiences that exist in the between spaces. As Henri Jacques Stiker posits: “We are always other than what society made us and believes us to be” (1999, p.51). Bringing queer theory into dialogue with disability studies generates a new site of discourse and critical purchase that unsettles the institutionalised power and subjectivities that regulate disabled subjects. Here at the intersection of interpretive subject and power, ‘dis-ability’ is reframed as ‘differently-abled’, and disabled subjects are viewed as sources of knowledge rather than rogues to be corrected.

The project of framing disabled subjects as differently-abled opens up the space for multivocal scholarly dialogue that disrupts the dominant totalising definitions of disability that reduce and restrict disabled bodies Titchkosky (2007). No longer cast as “deviant” or a spoiled identity that contravenes the correct and direct relation between the world and subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1995), disability is freed from the unrelenting coping, management and correction strategies obtruded on it by the “majority” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 292). Julie Cosenza’s stage and film production, *Where's Queerdo? Disabling Perceptions!*, first performed in 2012, explores the intersections of disability and queerness. She introduces the notion of the

“betweener frame” (Cosenza, 2014c) to situate her knowledge production in the liminal space between cognitive impairment and kinaesthetic intelligence. In the position of “betweener”, Cosenza (2014c) explains that she finds herself neither socially/organisationally intelligible nor unintelligible, akin to what Diversi and Moreira (2009, p.19) describe as “representative blurriness.” Pushed to the “peripheries of sociological meaning-making by hegemonic rules of language use, theoretical sophistication, and representational authority” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p.21), the position of the betweener scholar is neither outside, nor either side of the academic/non-academic binary. Through this collaborative autoethnography, Stewart and I have explored our strategies for negotiating feelings of ‘in-betweenness’, which at times has impacted our identity, agency and sense of belonging (Choi, Brunner & Traini, 2021). This essay seeks to make visible the ‘work’ involved in reconciling the tensions inherent in honouring our ways of being and knowing, accepting the precariousness of our financial and residential/spatial circumstances, and ‘becoming’ the scholars we aspire to be.

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*I have been feeling a little lost, behind time, and lacking direction, which is strange because I am about to hit a big milestone in my academic career – confirmation of candidature for my Master’s Degree. However, I think because I am not physically at a university the achievement feels muted and distant from my lived reality. In part this feeling is due to my perception that people are not thinking of me as having a ‘real’ job, which in turn makes me doubt whether I am actually going anywhere professionally. My sense of professional precariousness is reinforced by my dependency on the Jobseeker system which does not recognise scholarship beyond school-age as being of ‘value’ to society. Therefore, in order to receive any*

*government financial assistance, I must constantly apply for 'real' jobs and subject myself to the unemployment grind by dictate of the almighty dollar. Dealing with Centrelink<sup>41</sup> makes me spiral into misanthropic rage.*

*I understand the requirement for economically productive citizens at the societal level; our society is funded by economically productive endeavours, and as a student you are not actively contributing to that economic ecosystem. However, I take issue with Centrelink categorising all non-economic activities as 'unemployed.' As a full-time higher degree by research student, society's expectation is that I must 'work' a full-time job in addition to pursuing my studies in order to pay my way. Paradoxically it is the academy's expectation that I invest a full working week into study time. I am not anti-capitalist. I believe it is generally a good thing to have some kind of occupation and contribute to one's society and community. The issue is that at this early stage in my academic career, unremunerated research study is my 'occupation.' So, I experience a crisis of scholarly identity when I am obliged to drive an hour to a meat-works factory at 5am to interview for a potential meat-packing job when my Literature Review deadline is looming. I legally cannot refuse any work that is offered to me, and I am required to apply for any job that I am qualified for.*

*I feel anger at the world around me and I start picking apart all the stupid little conceits of civilization. I start doubting my life goals: do I even want to have a house? How will I afford it? I could just live in the woods away from the restrictive structures of civilization and contemplate the way things are. I wonder if I would feel any less 'academic.' It is hardly any different to my lived reality today, excepting a change of geography. I would still be unpaid and disconnected from the scholarly community and bricks and mortar of my patron university. On particularly bad days my thoughts*

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<sup>41</sup> Australian social welfare system.

turn more destructive, not to myself or to other people around me, but towards the concept of destruction. It may be infantile and regressive to think that way, but it happens at times, and somehow government websites have a way of triggering it in me more surely than anything else.

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Figure 6.5: “Carnivorous Thing Inside Government Letter”, Stewart Limpus

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Through our collaborative autoethnography, Stewart and I have reflected on our academic journeys, and the physical, social and institutional subjectivities that we have struggled to overcome to transition from a ‘student’ to ‘scholar’ identity. Marked with the *wrong signifiers*, we have revealed our ways of transgressive knowledge-making, fearing that they may go unrecognised and un-legitimized by the academy. We seek “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161) that do not limit what is knowable or what we can know. Brooks et al. argue “some bodies are schooled into a

sense of at-home-ness and schooled out of any resistance to these mechanisms of assimilation: to express a sense of non-belonging invites being disciplined or expelled” (2020, p.136). We worry that by conforming to the neoliberal pressure to be productive and press for publication, we may expose our work as incoherent and the ‘wrong’ sort of knowledge, rendering ourselves unintelligible and unsuitable for academia. Nevertheless, we agree to “*submit* to a transformation, the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (Butler, 2004a, p.21, original emphasis) for to exist outside the subjectivities of academia is not to exist as ‘scholars’ at all.

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## **Act 7 Concluding Thoughts – The Only Way is Up... Or is it?**

### **A Question of (Re) Emerging Adulthood**

As foreshadowed in the Methodology Act, I have sought to maintain a critical, reflexive and performative approach across this thesis, extending the methodological ‘undoing’ (Riach et al., 2014, 2016) to the Methodology, Literature Review, Performance and Concluding Thoughts Acts in an intentional effort to avoid fixing, crystalising or concretising knowledge production prior to its reading by my audience. The ‘conclusions’ that this thesis draws in this final Concluding Thoughts Act are therefore exploratory, provocative and brief, encouraging multiple possible readings and meanings and avoiding methodological enclosure and, consequently, epistemological foreclosure. I return to the central Research Questions posed at the outset of this project, noting that the ‘answers’ to these inquiries are located throughout my thesis and not limited to my Concluding Thoughts - they accompany my journey of discovery through the literary field; they are revealed in my methodological exploration of performative realities, queer and dyslexic ways of knowing, and anti-narrative possibilities for meaning-making; they are performed by this project’s subjects; and they are critiqued in this Final Act by the researcher, research participants, and hopefully, by the audience.

The central Research Questions that have driven this inquiry are:

1. What discourses inform a successful ‘adulthood’ in contemporary Australia?
  - a. How do chrononormative subjectivities shape the experience of emerging adults?
  - b. How are notions of personal ‘success’ informed by neo-liberal progress, growth and status trajectories?

- c. How are intergenerational ambivalences generated, experienced and negotiated in ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang’ families?
2. In what ways can an anti-narrative mode of enquiry contribute to the field of intergenerational studies?

In striving to answer these questions, I have adopted an anti-narrative methodological approach inspired by Judith Butler’s performative ontology (1988, 1990, 2004a), which seeks to ‘undo’ organisational subjectivities and better understand the consequences of a (hetero)normative life course. The ideas presented in this Final Act and throughout this thesis are intended to contribute to the burgeoning body of queer scholarship, which seeks to unsettle dominant societal power relations, to undo structural (macro) and family (meso) subjectivities to understand the lived experiences and aspirations of ‘failure to launch’ and ‘boomerang children’ and their parents. This research has drawn extensively from Riach et al.’s (2016) anti-narrative approach and employs queer/dyslexic epistemologies to further legitimise queer ways of knowing and being. It adopts an emancipatory critical theory perspectivism (Moon & Blackman, 2014) that mobilises the emancipatory power of *performativity* to “liberate agency from its conceptual confines as a human-generated force” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2013, p.61) and allow ‘adult’ identity to emerge through enacting agency in interactions and activities.

In this Final Act, I outline how a performative reproduction of neoliberal culture maintains normative discourses that inform a successful ‘adulthood’ in contemporary regional Australia. I discuss how emerging and re-emerging adults strive to perform their appropriate and expected roles in an effort to inhabit these roles and take their place in society as culturally intelligible and viable subjects (Butler, 2004a). I suggest that emerging and re-emerging adults are motivated to pursue

progressive pathways to *personal growth* as a way of recalibrating themselves (Sharma, 2011) to society's chrononormative, neoliberal *expectations*. I find that the teleological narratives of personal growth are experienced at micro (personal), meso (family) and macro (structural) levels, i.e., via a compulsion towards grand narratives of upward growth at the structural level, via duty or desire to meet familial/generational expectations of progress and success at the family level, and via an aspiration to achieve 'happiness' (success and fulfilment) at the personal level. I posit that generational differences in the notions of 'success' and 'happiness' complicate emerging and re-emerging adults' conception and performance of a 'successful adulthood', which in turn generates intergenerational, and what I will term 'interspatial' and 'intertemporal' ambivalence. I demonstrate how these multi-dimensional ambivalences are experienced and negotiated at the structural, family and personal levels, suspending emerging and re-emerging adults in relational, spatial and temporal liminality.

In Act 4 I present my research participants' stories in the form of collage. These "bits" (Brummett, 1991, p.70) represent the myriad ways in which emerging and re-emerging adults are undone as they perform their identities into existence in against a neoliberal societal narrative that renders them failed adults. As Gordon Dale, father of Sean Dale explains, the pervasive consumerism that is generated at the societal level and reified subconsciously within families produces a compulsion towards grand narratives of upwards growth. Tanya Hughs (post) observes that this in turn produces unrealistic expectations that she believes society imposes on young adults. She further suggests that the societal and parental *expectation* that "everybody" will pursue a higher education trajectory and progress to graduate jobs is creating a generation that is condemned to failure. This weight of societal expectation is evident in the stories of

Peter Ferris (post), Sean Dale (pre) and Stewart Limpus (post), who felt pressured to ascend to higher education immediately after finishing high school in order to continue their upwards growth trajectory without “losing time.” Similarly, James Schilling (post) expected to continue his “natural progression” to Hollywood, and was devastated by his personal “failure” to achieve this aspiration. Yvonne Wheller (pre) is concerned that society views her “horizontal” career path that progresses at a “slow, steady incline” as “pretty stagnant”.

These stories indicate expectations are intrinsically situated in space and bound by time, in that they concern a specific happening, which a person expects to occur or have occurred within a particular time period. This research reveals that opportunities exist to liberate emerging and re-emerging adults from Western society’s unhelpful neoliberal and chrononormative ‘upward’ growth narratives, which render liminal relationships, spaces and times non-productive, and their inhabitants unintelligible. Evoking Butler’s notion that identities are performed into existence, emerging “as effects of connections and activities” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2013, p.53), I suggest that an alternative characterisation of ‘adult’ could manifest through “practical ontology and performativity” (Jensen, 2010 p.7) which unsettles the chrononormative schedule of attainment of adulthood markers of success. Furthermore, I propose a queering of the Grand Narrative of Upwards Growth by reframing progress and success. I suggest an alternative growth trajectory that privileges enrichment over progress, and empowers emerging and re-emerging adults to grow multi-directionally and multi-temporally. I hope my provocations will inspire further theoretical and empirical scholarship, deepening society’s understanding of the ‘work’ that emerging and re-emerging adults perform to maintain intelligibility in liminal cohabiting circumstances.

### *Scene 1: A Performative Reproduction of Neoliberal Culture*

Throughout this thesis, I have referred to the chronologically progressive, upwardly acquisitive, individualistically motivated Western culture as ‘neoliberal’, in line with definitions of that political and societal ideology advanced by theorists such as Bourdieu (1998), Bauman (1998, 2000, 2001), Giroux (2004), Tudor (2012), Oksala (2015) and Brooks et al. (2020). In recent decades, performance scholars, such as Conquergood (1995), Carlson (2004), Schechner (2006) and Fischer-Lichte (2014a) have contended that a society’s culture – broadly conceptualised as its rituals, beliefs, narratives, artifacts and modes of belonging - manifests through performance. In her article, *Culture as Performance: Theatre History As Cultural History* (2014b), Fischer-Lichte explains that this shift in the conceptualisation of a society’s culture has profoundly impacted how culture is experienced and enacted. The tradition of conceptualising culture in performative terms stretches back to Dorson’s (1972) contextual approach to folklore scholarship. The group that Dorson identified as “Young Turks” in his seminal *Folklore and Folklife* (1972) have come to be perceived as initiating the “text|context controversy” (Gabbert, 1999, p.119), which called for a behavioural approach to folklore that emphasised folklore as communicative and performative (experiential), rather than textual (extractable). Drawing on Dorson (1972), Carlson elucidates that when it is viewed as a contextual approach, culture functions as “a performative and communicative act” (2004, p.14). Furthermore, Carlson (2004) and Fischer-Lichte’s (2008, 2014) postmodernist conception of performative culture deconstructs the relations of power between performer, audience, and societal context; it highlights the instability of cultural performance as a site of complex, contested liminality where “aesthetic experience and liminal experience coincide” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.177).

Viewed through this lens, the performative subject not only manifests its own identity, per a Butlerian ontology, it potentially also makes and remakes the culturally informed subjectivities within which it is constrained. As Newton suggests, “any performance has the potential to create liminal experiences which liberate participants from conformity to the general norms of society as manifested in terminal cultural binaries” (Newton, 2014, p.5). I suggest that for emerging and re-emerging adults, liminality may offer a performative ‘line of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) whereby societal context viewed as performative space creates the potential for a kind of liminal metamorphosis where both subject and subjectivities undergo a process of iterative transformation. As Butt explains (2004), “when people are the object of study, the subject and object merge into one” (p.94).

While I have suggested that liminal performance holds emancipatory potential if pursued as a ‘line of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), this research indicates that this liminal time in emerging and re-emerging adults’ lives is more commonly regarded as ‘wasted’. Indeed, as Cuzzocrea (2019) notes, unproductive time spent waiting for the transition to adulthood disadvantages those individuals who enter the employment market with less social capital than their more productive and industrious peers. Therefore, within the present neoliberal context, liminal performance may also reify unhelpful normative narratives if these subjectivities are performatively reproduced. Turner argues that “people can ‘be themselves’, it is frequently said, when they are not acting institutionalised roles” (1964, p.50). Cronin proposes that the “ideal of the voluntaristic will of the individual is paradoxically framed through ‘compulsory individuality’” (2000, p.277). Evoking Butler (1988, 1990), Cronin (2000) describes ‘choice’ as a performative enactment of Self. As illustrated in the accounts of emerging and re-emerging adults in this study, the chrononormatively

progressing neoliberal culture in Western societies shapes structural-level beliefs, narratives and modes of belonging, which emerging and re-emerging adults strive to reproduce to gain recognition as successful adults. As Cosenza (2014) argues, these “chronological structures ‘naturalise’ power inequalities, control, discipline, and other factors that contribute to progress or productivity” (p.156). Indeed, Kenworthy Teather proposes “consumerism” (1999, p.21) as an alternative rite of passage for young adults, framing financial independence as a critical marker of adulthood.

### *Inquisitive and Acquisitive Pathways to a Successful Adulthood*

Individualistic success ideals contribute to the social segregation of emerging and re-emerging adults. Those who strive for independence goals via personal growth are marked as progressing towards successful adulthood, whereas those who engage in *unproductive* exploration or inert ‘waiting’ (Cuzzocrea, 2019) are considered to be falling behind. As seen in the literature and reinforced in the accounts of several parents in this study, the neoliberal progress paradigm appears to implicate two valid success pathways for emerging and re-emerging adults. I conceptualise these as an *inquisitive* pathway and an *acquisitive* pathway. The inquisitive pathway defers financial independence in order to undertake self-capitalisation – that is, increasing one’s monetisable self-worth through focused education and training that increases cultural and social capital, leading to either higher paid, higher status, or more stable/reliable employment opportunities. This is typically advocated as the path of upwards social mobility, variously exemplified in this study by Gordon and Harriet Dale’s encouragement of their son, Sean, to attain a university degree to access well-paid graduate professional opportunities in the corporate sphere; Diane Hughs’ acknowledgement of her grandson, Jez’s investment in theatre training pursuant to a

professional job in the arts sector; Chris and Andrew Limpus' accommodation of their son, Stewart's return to the family home to retrain as an academic; and Jane Schilling's advice to her son, James, to return to undertake further training to pivot his professional career into a tangential career better aligned to his skills, experience and interests.

Alternatively, the *acquisitive* pathway privileges immediate financial independence via the accumulation of financial, residential, and employment capital. This pathway implicates a parsimonious approach to saving, investment in personal housing, and engagement in full-time employment. Tim Wheller strongly endorses his daughter Yvonne's decision to pursue a career in nursing that offers paid employment whilst Yvonne completes her higher nursing qualifications; similarly, Don Kornell is supportive of son Tyson's choice to enter the aged care sector directly after high school and Tyson's request to remain in the family home to save for a deposit for his own home.

This research also highlights that emerging and re-emerging adults may feel pressured by their (grand)parents to pursue inquisitive and acquisitive pathways simultaneously. Stewart Limpus explains that he is grateful to his parents for accommodating his return to unpaid academia, however he is frustrated at their frequent encouragement of him to re-enter the workforce to remain economically productive whilst completing his higher degree course; Peter Ferris' decision to combine work and study was influenced by father, Clive's encouragement of Peter to maintain his paid employment whilst undertaking a Bachelor's degree; and Diane Hughs suggests that her grandson, Jez ought to "get a job" whilst continuing his acting training waiting for his big break. Interestingly, this research also finds that a further condition is imposed on each pathway which limits the range of enrichment or

employment choices that are considered ‘valid.’ In addition to being financially accretive (either immediately or in time), the pathway must optimise cultural capital, social capital and habitus. This is most eloquently expressed in the account of Diane Hughs, whose second grandson, Warren, graduated from university three years ago with an Economics Degree from a top-tier university at a financial cost to his mother of “thousands”, but is considered a “disappointment” at age 24 because he appears to have settled for a bar job when “he could be doing more with his life.”

I suggest that in Westernised societies that are ideologically, and culturally neoliberal, inquisitive and acquisitive pathways are positioned as the means by which emerging and re-emerging adults “recalibrate” (Sharma, 2011, p.442) and synchronise themselves to the chrononormative progress paradigm, thereby escaping the unproductive liminality of in-betweenness. Emerging adults are compelled to hasten their transition out of liminality and towards *independence* via *personal growth* progression along inquisitive or acquisitive success pathways. Re-emerging adults who have lost ground or failed to keep up with peers are compelled to catch up via an accelerated re-focus on inquisitive or acquisitive progress pathways.

This research also finds that emerging and re-emerging adults are keenly aware of the structural constraints that may prevent them from pursuing inquisitive and acquisitive success pathways and attaining the status markers of successful adulthood, but that this awareness is ‘undone’ by the hegemony of neoliberal individualistic discourses. Despite an illusion of agency, emerging adults are propelled by societal, family and personal *expectations* to progress productively and accumulatively in time. Those who prolong their unproductive and dependent liminality into their mid-twenties sense that they are “behind” or “off track.”

Feelings of guilt and shame are mobilised when expectations differ from experience. In their study of older parent/child relationships, Rappoport and Lowenstein (2007) explicate the relationship between intergenerational ambivalence and experiences of guilt and shame: “Shame is well-suited for representing structural ambivalence, which has to do with social norms, while guilt is better suited for representing subjective ambivalence, which has to do mainly with personal feelings and thoughts” (Rappoport and Lowenstein, 2007, p 14). This research also finds evidence of guilt and shame, which are experienced alongside relief and gratitude (Hallwell & Ackers, 2022) for the financial and residential ‘safety net’ provided by intergenerational cohabitation. Guilt is experienced at the family (meso) level as emerging and re-emerging adults perceive the financial and residential burdens that precipitate from their dependence on their parents. However, guilt may be mediated through affirming sentiments of parents, typically expressed as encouragement or enjoyment of quality time with their offspring. Shame is experienced at the structural (macro) level, and is internalised as a sense of personal failure to live up to societal expectations, status markers of a successful adulthood, and neoliberal ideals of happiness. This research finds that such pervasive discourses can only be resolved by unsettling the dominant societal progress paradigm.

### *In Pursuit of Happiness*

I suggest that the significant ambivalences generated and experienced at performative sites of liminality are exacerbated by emerging and re-emerging neoliberal conceptions of *happiness*. This research suggests a significant generational difference exists in emerging/re-emerging adults’ and their parents’ notions of “happiness” versus “success.” Emerging and re-emerging adults in this study endorse a “you can

have it all” conception of happiness that combines economic success and emotional wellbeing – the successful realisation of status markers of successful adulthood, together with the emotional wellness derived from individualistic privileges such as affirming relationships and fulfilling enrichment pursuits. Status markers are considered to be time-bound and binary, as is demonstrated by emerging adults’ impatience to progress to full independence and re-emerging adults’ sense of being “off track” or “behind” their peers as they lose their status markers of adulthood and are forced to “start again.”

Conversely, emotional wellness through enrichment can be pursued and achieved throughout life and is inherently fluid – there is no end point that one must reach to attain or acquire enrichment. This creates a vacillating dichotomy in emerging and re-emerging adults’ pursuit of happiness. They are always chasing a terminal binary timed to meet a chrononormative schedule that regulates and binds them (Freeman, 2011). For those who fall behind this schedule, the consequences of ‘failure’ are a sense of unintelligibility (Butler, 1990) and precariousness, as clearly demonstrated in the stories of James Schilling, Tyson Kornell, Stewart Limpus, and Peter Ferris. However, the opportunity to seek enriching and fulfilling experiences that sharpen their vision of the future they envision for themselves produces ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that allow them to maintain intelligibility and a sense of self-worth whilst embodying a ‘between-er’ identity.

The motivation to explore possibilities, constrained by the chrononormative drive to progress, is a hallmark of the ambivalence experienced at the ‘in-between’ site of emerging and re-emerging adulthood. I suggest that this is a product of the neoliberal responsabilisation paradigm. The realisation of a state of ‘happiness’

(economic success and emotional wellbeing) is conceptualised as a product of individual endeavour, achieved through hard work and focused personal development. This individualistic ideology emphasises personal agency, positing that irrespective of structural disadvantage, one's happiness can be optimised by making *choices* that optimise economic success and emotional wellbeing. Ideologically framed as a state of being for which one is personally responsible, the neoliberal conception of happiness demands a great deal of work to perform successfully. Yet, as a parental aspiration, happiness is frequently spoken of as a low and achievable benchmark: "I *just* want him/her to be happy." Parents in this study juxtapose status indicators of success with happiness, implying that the project of *striving* for success is challenging and exclusive, whereas *settling* for happiness is easy and universal. Perhaps this generational difference in the idea of happiness provides further insight into why emerging and re-emerging adults view periods of unhappiness as "failure."

### ***Scene 2: Intergenerational, Interspatial and Intertemporal Ambivalence***

The concept of ambivalence is of significant utility in describing emerging and re-emerging adults' experiences of liminality. Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) established ambivalence as addressing the interconnection between the interpersonal and the structural, and first introduced the idea of *intergenerational ambivalence* to acknowledge the coexistence of contradictory sentiments, perceptions, and forces in family relationships. Viewed structurally, Lüscher and Pillemer's (1998) original intent was for this framework to reflect the multilevel nature of ambivalence generated at the structural (societal), family and personal levels of interaction. Viewed processual, their initial conception of ambivalence characterised subjects as maintaining simultaneously contradictory positions towards the same object, such as

gratitude and shame in the case of cohabiting emerging and re-emerging adults. However, as Lüscher and Haller have (2016) since elaborated, a more nuanced theorisation conceptualises ambivalence in dynamic terms, as referring to:

the experiences of vacillating between polar contradictions of feeling, thinking, wanting, and social structures in the search for the sense and meaning of social relationships, facts and texts, which are important for unfolding and altering facets of the self and agency (Lüscher & Haller, 2016, p.p.3-4).

This also hints at an important evolution in ambivalence theory, whereby the concept might be utilised to describe how individual identity comes to be (per)formed in the vacillation between alternative subject positions and options for action. This is further extrapolated to a societal understanding of collective identity by considering how individuals coalesce through a dynamic process of citation, questioning, reforming, and rejecting collectively upheld subjectivities. This framing of ambivalence aligns with queer theory's "attitude of unceasing disruptiveness" (Parker, 2002, p.158), which is similarly dynamic and resistant to definition and fixedness.

I suggest that this conception of ambivalence has the theoretical potential to bring Butlerian performativity into dialogue with Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology. In my review of the literature, I argued that Butler's performativity draws on Merleau-Ponty's (1995)'s conception of the body as both a structuring force and site of meaning (Vlieghe, 2014). This notion of the situatedness of corporeal meaning-making provides further opportunity for the evolution and application of the concept of ambivalence. In addition to the *multilevel* conceptualisation of ambivalence generated and experienced *at* the structural, family and personal levels, I propose a *multidimensional* theorisation of ambivalence situated *within* intergenerational,

interspatial and intertemporal dimensions. Specifically, I posit that ambivalences are experienced within the social and cultural fields of tension, upheaval and trauma that are relationally situated within family relations, relations to place, and relations to time.

By seeking to understand emerging and re-emerging adults' experiences of ambivalence and exploring queer alternatives as a mode of unsettling ontological assumptions about the *right* way to *do* adulthood or *be* an adult, I suggest that individual and collective ways of negotiating liminality emerge. This disruptive project is mindful of Edelman's counsel that "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (2004, p.17). I therefore neither seek to define nor offer alternative identity categories, but instead pose a "philosophical challenge to normatively prescriptive ways of being and doing characterised by a politics of parodic critique and an analytical orientation towards a perpetual process of 'undoing'" (Rumens & Tyler, 2015, p.234.) Specifically, I explore queer growth trajectories in terms of alternative conceptions of space and time, which in turn unsettle the grand narrative of upwards growth, representing growth alternatively as avoidable, undesirable, static, multi-directional, diminishing and erratic.

At this juncture, I also briefly note the utility of an anti-narrative approach in assisting to develop concepts such as ambivalence. Unlike key concepts commonly referred to by research participants, such as 'success', 'failure', 'growth', 'progress', 'child(hood)', 'adult(hood)', 'on track', 'off track', 'responsibility' and 'independence', *ambivalence* is not a term that is emergent from the data. The ambivalences generated and experienced by emerging and re-emerging adults are typically identified by the researcher and 'overlaid' as a conceptual lens through which to understand the vacillating feelings that subjects experience towards an object of

paradoxical tension. Much of this conceptual work of the researcher takes place during the analysis and meaning-making phases of the project, subsequent to, and acting upon the participant-generated data. The anti-narrative approach employed by this research has afforded a novel opportunity to widen the aperture and view intergenerational, intertemporal and interspatial ambivalence through a participant-centred lens. By making visible the vacillating feelings generated by subjects, and inviting reflection on the paradoxes inherent to their circumstances, this research responds to Halliwell and Ackers' (2022) concerns that ritual non-communication of ambivalent sentiments, perceptions, and forces within cohabiting boomerang and failure to launch families condemns them to unreconcilable, destructive 'captivation'- a "struggle over ambivalence which often cannot be expressed adequately in words" (Lüscher & Hoff, 2013, p. 44).

*Family Power Dynamics and Relational Pretzeling as sites of Intergenerational Ambivalence*

Halliwell and Ackers (2022) suggest that where conflicts deriving from incompatibility of generational values exist, an asymmetric *power dynamic* predicated on differential structural capital and status privileges the older generation. This, in turn, reinforces traditional (legacy) societal narratives at the structural level. At a family level, the different "power and status that different family members possess directly informs which family narratives are given legitimacy" (Halliwell & Ackers, 2022, p.12). Halliwell and Ackers (2022) also suggest that differential power dynamics within the organisation of family cohabitation (i.e., emerging and re-emerging position of residential and financial dependence on their parents) seem to render emerging and re-emerging adults unable to challenge the narratives of their

parents. As Lüscher (2002, p. 589) proposes, asymmetric power dynamics within families may lead to a state of ‘captivation’ whereby power is used to “assert claims of one family member against another. In Halliwell and Ackers’ (2022) study, the conflict and power reflected in family narratives appear to be informed by structural/societal level discourses. Halliwell and Ackers (2022) suggest that these experiences of sociological ambivalence produce ambivalences at both the interpersonal family level and personal (psychological) level.

This research confirms Halliwell and Ackers’ (2022) finding that differential power structures and dynamics appear to generate ambivalences that are experienced at the structural, family and personal levels. The ambivalences experienced at the family level as a result of differential power dynamics appear to be generated at either *residential*, *generational* or *gendered* sites of relation. At the site of residentially generated ambivalence, asymmetrical *residential* power dynamics exist in the unequal status of home ownership/financial management. James Schilling (post) perceives his family home as an asset owned by his mother and stepfather, for which they are responsible and consequently, over which they preside. He feels limited in the agency he can express over the use of the space, which includes his reticence to invite guests back to his home. Similarly, Sean (pre) perceives his home as belonging to his parents, and consequently moderates his behaviour and choices to maintain his standing as the “golden child.” This includes self-regulating and restricting his own freedom to do “naughty things”, and pursuing a degree programme of study in the fear that not to do so would have resulted in his censure: “Oh, shit would have hit the fan, I suspect.”

Asymmetrical *generational* power dynamics are evident in the stories shared by Stewart Limpus (post), Peter Ferris (post) and Yvonne Wheller (pre). Stewart suggests that his parents’ generational value of ‘hard work ethic’ informs their view

of him as being somewhat lazy and unproductive by focusing solely on this studies. He perceives that their encouragement of him to get a job, implies unequal status between themselves as financially productive professionals, and himself as a financially unproductive student. Peter also implicates incompatible generational values as sites of ambivalence. He explains that he mediates his behaviour, adopting respectful language, conservative clothing and withholding his views about gendered/sexual expression in deference to father, Clive's 'conservative' values in order to maintain family harmony. Yvonne also experiences ambivalence in negotiating her father, Tom's generational value of 'experience knows best.' In his interview, Tom Wheller (p) positions his daughter, Yvonne as immature and in need of 'perfection', implying unequal knowledge and parent/child relationship status. Finally, asymmetric *gendered* power dynamics are evidenced in James Schilling (post) and Tyson Kornell's (pre) experiences of their mothers' domestic care. Both men describe their mothers' laundering of their clothes as a particular site of ambivalence, which they take to imply inability, incapability and lack of adult independence to take care of themselves. This implied inequality in the skills and knowledge required to perform adulthood successfully effectively sees both men describe themselves as feeling like a child/ kid.

#### *In-betweenness and Temporal Pretzeling as sites of Intertemporal Ambivalence*

As well as boundless possibility for self-designation, there is an inherent precariousness in the 'between' identity. Unable to access the protections, validity and intelligibility of being identifiably 'one thing or the another', betweeners risk marginalisation as "outsiders, failures or rebels" (Thomson and Østergaard, 2021, p. 436). The boundaries and limits that represented the guardrails of the previous identity

are removed. Emerging and re-emerging adults may experience anxiety and a sense of failure as they strive for an aspirational adult identity and encounter challenging new competencies that are necessary to achieve a successful transition (Szakolczai, 2014). Separation from existing identity can lead some young people to cling to new 'rules' and 'expectations', mimicking expected behaviour at a superficial level to minimise fear of the unknown (Land, Meyer & Bailie, 2010). As Turner (1967) explains, liminality is interstructural between two defined identities, in the case of emerging adults, between adolescence and adulthood: and in the case of re-emerging adults, between adulthood and re-attainment of adulthood. In the liminal stage between separation and incorporation is a state of exclusion (Turner, 1967).

In the first of my performative Acts, I shine a spotlight on the stories of three re-emerging adults, Peter Ferris, Stewart Limpus and James Schilling, who look back with some regret at the hasty, impatient and impetuous choices of their emerging adulthood. With the benefit of hindsight, they all wish that their younger selves had invested more time exploring options and planning more assiduously. They suggest that an extended period of exploration with respect to their higher education, employment and relationship choices might have afforded them time to "mature", experience the world, and gain a greater depth of self-insight and clarity about their present and future aspirations. This echoes Arnett's (2000) conception of emerging adulthood as an "opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work, and worldviews" (p. 472). However, Peter and Stewart both acknowledge that they would not have heeded this advice had it been offered in their adolescence and early twenties. The pressure that they felt to "get on" in life was experienced in their interactions with high school career guidance counsellors and teachers, in their desire to "keep up with" their peers, and in trying to live up to the perceived expectations of their parents.

Re-emerging adults who are forced to “go back to the start” of their professional or personal timelines experience fractures of identity whereby they lose aspects of their previously successful selves and are suspended in a liminal state of “partial ‘becoming-child’” whereby they “‘uncomplete’ themselves” (Lee, 2001, p. 143). This evokes Kathy Charmaz's (1983, p.168) “loss of self” in which “persons who observe their former self-images crumbling away without the simultaneous development of equally valued new ones” are pushed to the existential margins. James Schilling and Stewart Limpus describe regressing to childlike dependency and consequently, adult/child subordination in their family relations. Drawing on the social interactionist perspective that positions Self as constituted and maintained through social relations, the loss of relational markers such as career and intimate partner produces inconsistency in Being and Doing, a feeling that Stewart explicitly describes:

In my current lived reality... my "Doing" no longer aligns with my "Being"... my current "Being" is trying to function within a space that previously housed a past and very different form of "Being" (undergraduate, unemployed, child role etc.) And perhaps there is some kind of psycho-social tension in that clash.

It appears that re-emerging adults whose liminal ‘uncomplete’ status is experienced post-transition to adulthood due to a ‘failed’ employment, relationship or other endeavour face difficulty in fashioning a positive sense of Self. The chrononormative rupture of re-emerging adults’ progress trajectories generates ambivalences as their “natural progression” (James Schilling, B) is halted, and they are forced to *pretzel* back to “the beginning” of a residential career, or relationship trajectory and “re-do” the work of their younger selves.

*Growth and Spatial Pretzeling as sites of Interspatial Ambivalence*

The neoliberal progress paradigm demands upward and forward momentum of individuals at all ‘productive’ stages of life (excluding childhood and retirement). For young people transitioning from adolescence, a persistent mantra of ‘grow up, move out, go forward’ accompanies their emerging adulthood, implicating an efficient and productive progression towards, and attainment of, the status markers of a successful adulthood. Emerging and re-emerging adults in this study are far from a homogenous group, however they all aspire to residential independence, full-time employment and own-family formation. Consequently, when their personal project of progress is delayed or failed they experience significant ambivalences, often manifesting as disappointment, anger, frustration, embarrassment, guilt, and shame. As Mørch (1995) comments, failed individuals who are suspended in unproductive liminality suffer a prolonged societal marginalisation.

As this research shows, emerging adults who remain residing in their family home post the chronological age of adulthood (18 years of age in Australia) have mitigated their ‘outsider’ status by framing their decision to remain at home in acceptable neoliberal terms: saving money to fund future independent accommodations or other productive endeavours. By framing their choice to cohabit with their parents through the lens of financial shrewdness, emerging and re-emerging adults distance themselves from the ‘loser’ archetype. They play a soundtrack in their head: “you’re saving money, you’re getting ahead, you have a reprieve, you’ve got money in the bank, you’ve got time to study, you’ve got work coming in” (James) “it’s a pretty good ride” (Sean). This subversion of the (in)dependence narrative through a savvy pursuit of inquisitive and acquisitive success pathways confers some legitimacy for mature cohabitation. However, all emerging and re-emerging adults in

this study reflected a broader discursive economy in which this state of residential dependence must be transitioned and regarded as temporary. This appears to stem from the meritocratic notion that the transition to residential independence can be achieved through hard work and determination.

By employing a strategy of intelligibility through upwards growth, emerging and re-emerging adults can manage a continuing sense of identity in liminality. However, this appears not to provide protection against the charge of 'failure' or indemnify them against the affectations of guilt and shame. Yvonne Wheller (pre) admits feeling guilty for being a "leech... still at home, still living off mum and dad's money" with nothing of value to offer her parents in return for their continued residential and financial support. Peter Ferris (post) acknowledges his savviness in saving money on rent by cohabiting with his parents, but is shameful of the "stigma" associated with being a late-twenties man still living with his parents. Stewart Limpus (post) considers the prospect of telling a romantic prospect that he still lives with parents "not positive." Juxtaposing this with the earlier period in his life when he co-resided with his parents, he explains that it was "a little more acceptable" in the early twenties, but shameful in late-twenties because of the "awkwardness" and "lingering stress" of being judged as incapable of making his own way in life. James Schilling (post) similarly expresses shame at still needing to rely on his parents for residential and financial assistance, and refuses to invite romantic partners back to his parents' home, explaining that "it feels like an embarrassment" and "internally silly" and that he does not want to expose himself as a "39-year-old man living with my mother." Their dissatisfaction in being forced to reside with parents is further reflected in the language that emerging and re-emerging adults in this study use to denigrate their accommodations. James and Stewart both dismiss their accommodations as a

“garage”, and in our second interview post moving out of his parents’ home to live independently, Tyson juxtaposed his new place with that of his previous residence, asserting “It’s a lot better than living out in the shack, Siberia.”

The Grand Narrative of Upwards Growth is a product of the neo-liberal success paradigm, which continues to measure, compare, and regulate young people, despite no longer being coupled with a structural system of support (social welfare, affordable housing, graduate/apprentice employment) to facilitate their success. The hegemony of upwards growth has produced typologies and categories that problematise emerging adults as failures, ‘othering’ them as temporal and spatial outcasts who are off-track, behind time, and not where either society, family or they themselves expected to be. However, the possibility of retrenching, returning, retraining, restoring and restarting represents new possibilities and sideways pathways that liberate emerging and re-emerging adults from the oppressive regulation of the neoliberal progress paradigm. Whilst people may ‘lose’ status and wealth, enrichment and personal development are accumulative and irreversible. Investment in self-capitalisation remains a source of cultural and social capital that can be redeployed productively in the direction of sideways growth opportunities. Failed deployment of such capital in the past can be reframed as personal growth experiences and self-capitalisation through enrichment, which serve as milestones on a success pathway that precede a different future (Muñoz, 2009).

The notion of sideways growth therefore disturbs the constraining chrononormative, linear progression of the grand narrative of upwards growth. It offers positive growth choices that do not require the completion of conventional aetonormative rites of passage. By embracing and celebrating the slippages, meanderings and transcensions of an enrichment-fuelled growth trajectory, sideways

growth reimagines rites of passage as individually meaningful experiences rather than culturally and socially legible markers of progress. Furthermore, sideways growth does not preclude the development of traits commonly associated with upwards growth, such as taking responsibility for one's actions and their effects on others; or making responsible decisions about one's resources. The decision not to take on the responsibility of a residential, financial or relationship burden such as a mortgage, romantic partner, or children whilst in a state of liminality may be the most responsible choice for an emerging or re-emerging adult. As elucidated by James Schilling, his intention not to engage in romantic relationships whilst in a liminal space of growing sideways was predicated on his empathy and concern for how his residential, financial, and work instability might negatively impact a potential partner.

### *Pretzel Progress*

Throughout this thesis I have proposed alternative discourses which challenge the notion of a binary transition *from* childhood *to* adulthood as characterised by a linear progression of “growing up” regulated by time. I have advanced an alternative narrative that troubles the neo-liberal notion of a successful (transition to) adulthood. Alternatively, I have suggested ways of performing emerging and re-emerging liminality and pursuing multidimensional pathways towards a successful adulthood that I call *pretzeling*, which temporally encompasses going back to the beginning, exploring possibilities and taking one's own time; and spatially encompasses “growing backwards”, “growing sideways”, and “growing up.” Furthermore, I seek to unsettle chrononormative linear conceptualisations of “progress,” advocating for the realisation of individual aspirations and expectations in one's “own time.” I elucidate these reimaginings of the narratives of adulthood and progress in the Performance

Acts, exploring how they might be of utility to emerging adults in negotiating personal level ambivalences concerning matters of identity, interpersonal relationships, self-fulfilment/actualisation, and wellbeing.

### **Epilogue – Directorial Note (3) A happy ending or just the beginning?**

What is ‘happiness’ when it is framed within the fluid boundaries of liminality? How does it relate to performativity? Is happiness possible when constrained by the ‘subjectivities’ of neoliberal culture? These are the questions that remain as ‘gaps’ in my knowledge as I draw this performance to a close. My reflections on these points, some of which I share in this Epilogue, are presently unordered, undeveloped and unfinished, awaiting further reading and meaning-making in *my own time*, entirely consistent with my dyslexic ways of knowing.

Research participants’ responsabilisation mantra echoes prevailing societal narratives - if you cannot afford to purchase a property in the city, move to the outer suburbs or regions; if you are unsuccessful in securing employment in your specialism, choose a different career path; or, if you are unable to attract or retain a partner, put yourself out there more, stop being too picky, learn your partner’s “love language”, or get over yourself. These narratives have been my constant companions throughout my adulthood, and despite the illusion of agency that I have sought to maintain, I reflect on my life’s journey and ponder to what extent these narratives have informed my choices. My aspiration to own a property outright to ensure my residential security has seen me relocate from metropolitan Sydney to the regional city of Toowoomba, where the price that I paid for my residence was approximately one tenth of the price of a comparable property in Sydney. My ‘failed’ aspiration to semi-retire to academia, apparently thwarted by a dearth of full-time career opportunities at my local university, has convinced me to seek employment back in the corporate world that I had hoped to escape. And as an unmarried “spinster” (the term my family uses to describe me) of 42-years of age whose longest relationship of the past 20 years has been 23 months, I

have lost count of times that I have been advised by family, friends, colleagues and strangers to modify my search techniques, my criteria and even myself, in order to attract a partner. In pursuit of a long-term relationship, I did indeed expand my dating strategies to include ‘speed-dating’, online/app-based dating, professional introductions services and singles socialisers. I also revisited my ‘deal-breakers’ and accordingly cast my net a little wider than my erstwhile ‘ideal man.’ Perhaps a little egotistically, I did not submit myself to a process of deep self-reflection to identify the personality flaws that must surely be responsible for my single-status, nor did I “dumb myself down” to attract more suitors, as advised by several of my friends. It dismays me that such discourses are obtruded on those who deviate from the normative status markers of a successful adulthood. Society’s haste to responsabilise and invalidate individuals for their failure to calibrate to normative expectations risks compelling individuals to perform versions of self that are inauthentic. Fortunately, my patience has paid off, and I am (finally) affianced to a man who sees me and values me for the woman I have been, am now, and aspire in the future to be.

Since semi-retiring to academia and securing a long-term relationship, I have aspired to a eudaimonic rather than a neoliberal conception of happiness. Meaning “good-spirited” in its original Greek, the philosophical basis of eudaimonic happiness is *being* a good spirit by *performing* a good-spirited life and, importantly, acknowledging one’s reliance on surrounding (external) good spirits to maintain one’s own good-spiritedness. I am particularly drawn to this framing of happiness because it appears to implicate a performative way of being happy that is unconstrained by cultural expectations, thereby resisting what Muñoz calls the “dominant and overarching temporal and spatial organisation of the world” (2009, p.154). It acknowledges the role of others and does not solely responsabilize the individual for

their success or failure to attain and maintain a state of happiness. Eudaimonic happiness is unbound and unregulated by space and time; it creates the possibility for career pretzeling in the good-spirited pursuit of enrichment. And through this lens I might reimagine my ‘failure’ to actualise a career in academia not as an absence, but as a good-spirited doing of “something else” (Muñoz, 2009, p.154). I now begin to ponder if reframing neoliberal happiness to eudaimonic happiness might serve a ‘line of flight’ for emerging and re-emerging adults suspended in (unproductive and un-progressing) liminality.

This thesis has taken as its focus the liminal period of residential dependence that is negotiated by emerging and re-emerging adults and their parents. Through telling stories, spotlighting performances and offering directorial notes, it seeks to unsettle a hegemonic societal narrative that positions intergenerational cohabitation as a marker of failed adulthood. I hope this co-constructive performance has provoked multiple possible readings and multiple possible meanings of emerging and re-emerging adulthood beyond those that I have highlighted here. I hope these will inspire my readers’ further contributions to the field. This production is still running and is presented here unfinished and undone. Is this because the author has pretensions to immortality and wishes this thesis to be compared to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Requiem Mass in D Minor* or Jane Austen’s *Sanditon*? Perhaps her dyslexia impaired her productivity, and she ran out of time to complete the manuscript before the submission deadline. Was she enjoying the project so much that she wished to delay the final curtain, neglecting to seize early opportunities for foreclosure and denouement? Or perhaps this production has been ‘staged’ by a master marketer to leave the audience wanting more. There’s surely a squirrel in this.

What do you see?



Figure E.1: Connecting the Dots

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Definitions of terminology*

#### *Generation*

The concept of 'generation' as more than just age cohorts has received increasing attention, with sociologists pointing to social, economic, relational, political and technological factors which have contributed to shaping the historical role of particular generations through a shared generational consciousness (Pilcher, 1994). Edmunds and Turner (2002; 2005) identify 'strategic generations' as those that have a significant impact on social change, typically followed by a more passive generation that inherits and adapts to the changes created by their predecessors. Evandrou and Falkingham (2000) highlight 'Baby Boomers' political activism (for example, the feminist movement, nuclear disarmament protests, workers' rights to fair and equal pay, campaign for multiculturalism) and unwillingness to be held back by barriers associated with social economic class as two important societal changes that have changed the social landscape for generations to follow.

#### *Baby Boomers*

The Baby Boom years have been defined as those born between 1945-1965 (Beckett, 2010). The formative experiences of people whose childhood and young adulthood span 20 years are unarguably different; however, most demographers acknowledge that this cohort is distinctly different from the generation born before the Second World War, notably in their social, technological and economic experiences which have led to this group to being more politically and socially active and materialistic (Evandrou & Falkingham, 2000). Cultural references to the 'Baby Boomer'

generation are typically polarized, with the cohort being variously celebrated for their progressive and innovative attitudes or demonized as a selfish 'me' generation (Phillipson, Leach, Money & Biggs, 2008). Boomers grew up in a world of increasing individualism and economic optimism, giving rise to higher expectations than previous generations (Moore, 2006). However, over the period that Boomers' children have transitioned to adulthood, these 'good times' have given way to increasing social and economic pressures such as economic recession, lack of affordable housing and a labour market characterised by more casual and transient work (Carson and Kerr, 2003).

### *Cultural Capital*

Cultural capital can take three different forms, as Bourdieu explains:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body: in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.: and in the institutionalised state, a form of objectification ... of educational qualifications. (Bourdieu, 2002, p.47)

### *Habitus*

Bourdieu (1990) used the term 'habitus' to describe the acquired histories, values and beliefs that are learnt from birth and primarily influenced by one's social space i.e. family, social class/economic position. A person's habitus informs their attitudes and actions, colouring the way in which they perceive the world; it is '.. internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history.' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.56)

Appendix B: Planets and Moons Visualisation

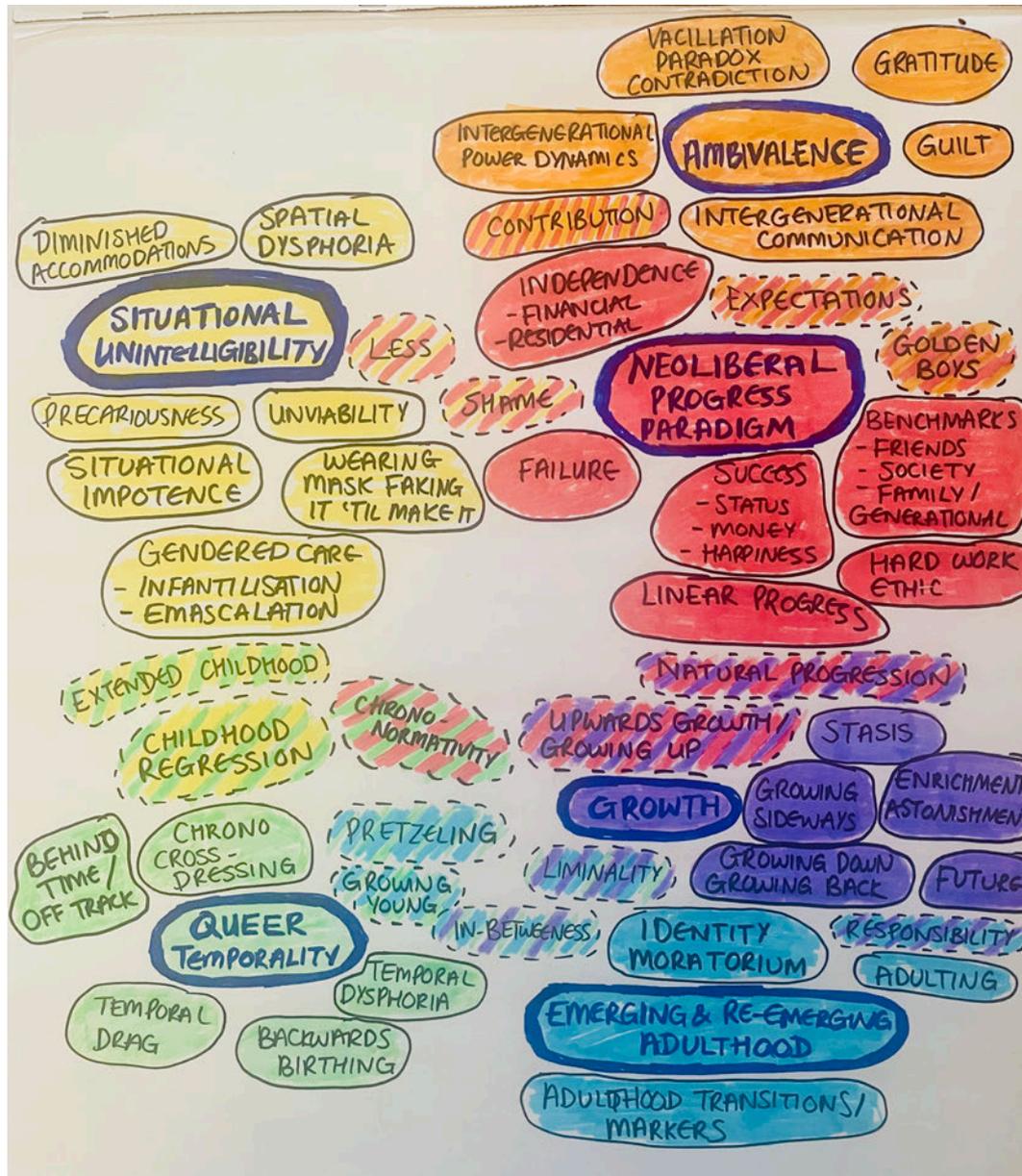


Figure B.1 Planets and Moons Thematic Map



Figure B.2 Planets and Moons Thematic Colour-Coding of Themes

## *Appendix C: Ethics Documentation*

### *C.1 Ethics Approval Notification*

**From:** human.Ethics@usq.edu.au  
**Subject:** [RIMS] USQ HRE Application - H19REA191 - Expedited review outcome -Approved  
**Date:** 19 August 2019 at 12:25 pm  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Andrew.Hickey@usq.edu.au

H

Dear Sherree

I am pleased to confirm your Human Research Ethics (HRE) application has now been reviewed by the University's Expedited Review process. As your research proposal has been deemed to meet the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), ethical approval is granted as follows:

USQ HREC ID: H19REA191  
Project title: Cohabiting adult parent/child families in regional Australia  
Approval date: 19/08/2019  
Expiry date: 19/08/2022  
USQ HREC status: Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- a) responsibly conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal;
- b) advise the University (email:ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaint pertaining to the conduct of the research or any other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project;
- c) promptly report any adverse events or unexpected outcomes to the University (email: ResearchIntegrity@usq.edu.au) and take prompt action to deal with any unexpected risks;
- d) make submission for any amendments to the project and obtain approval prior to implementing such changes;
- e) provide a progress 'milestone report' when requested and at least for every year of approval.
- f) provide a final 'milestone report' when the project is complete;
- g) promptly advise the University if the project has been discontinued, using a final 'milestone report'.

The additional conditionals of approval for this project are:

- (a) Nil.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of this approval or requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018, and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007 may result in withdrawal of approval for the project. Congratulations on your ethical approval! Wishing you all the best for success!

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to make contact with an Ethics Officer.

Kind regards

Human Research Ethics

University of Southern Queensland  
Toowoomba – Queensland – 4350 – Australia  
Phone: (07) 4631 2690  
Email: [human.ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@usq.edu.au)

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University of Southern Queensland

## Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

### Project Details

Title of Project: **Cohabiting adult parent/child families in regional Australia**  
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H REA 191

### Research Team Contact Details

#### Principal Investigator Details

Ms. Sherree Halliwell  
Email:  
[REDACTED]  
Telephone: [REDACTED]

#### Co-investigator Details

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Andrew.Hickey@usq.edu.au  
Telephone: +61 7 4631 2337

#### Co-investigator Details

Dr. Annette Brömdal  
Email:  
Annette.Bromdal@usq.edu.au  
Telephone: +61 7 4631 1609

### Statement of Consent

**By signing below, you are indicating that you:**

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.  Yes /  No
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.  Yes /  No
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.  Yes /  No
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded  Yes /  No
- Are over 18 years of age.  Yes /  No
- Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities [all future research activities OR only those related to this field].  Yes /  No
- Agree to participate in the project.  Yes /  No

Participant Name   
Participant Signature   
Date

**Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.**

## C.3 Participant Information Form for USQ Research Project Interview



University of Southern Queensland

### Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

#### Project Details

Title of Project: **Cohabiting adult parent/child families in regional Australia**  
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H REA 191

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Ms. Sherree Halliwell

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Telephone: +61 7 4631 1609

##### Co-investigator Details

A/Prof Andrew Hickey

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Telephone: +61 7 4631 2337

##### Co-investigator Details

Dr. Annette Brömdal

Email:

Annette.Bromdal@usq.edu.au

Telephone: +61 7 4631 1609

#### Description

My name is Sherree Halliwell; I am conducting this research project as part of my PhD project at the University of Southern Queensland. My supervisors are Associate Professor Andrew Hickey and Dr. Annette Brömdal.

The research aims to explore adult intergenerational cohabitation, that is, where parents and adult children live together in the same home. Over the past two decades it has become increasingly common for young adults to choose to stay or return to the family home. It is particularly important for public policy formation that this phenomenon is better understood.

The research team requests the assistance of families living in the Toowoomba region whose households comprise one or more parents and one or more adult children.

#### Participation

The interview is between yourself and the researcher and is anticipated to last around 1 hour. Questions will focus on your home life, including your feelings about intergenerational cohabitation and the ways in which your family interacts in your home. We will also discuss your feelings about broader topics such as becoming an adult in today's society, the different roles men and women play in families, the workplace and society, and the issues facing different generations now, in the past and in the future. The interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can focus on you during the interview rather than making notes. If you do not wish for recording to occur, please advise the researcher.

Your participation in all aspects of this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected about you be withdrawn and confidentially destroyed. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.

#### **Expected Benefits**

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you. However, your participation will provide insights that may inform future development of public policy and shift wider perceptions of intergenerational cohabitation.

No incentives are offered for participation in this project. However, reasonable non-alcoholic beverage expenses will be paid by the researcher at the first meeting (at your local café).

#### **Risks**

In participating in the interview there are minimal risks such as:

- time inconvenience (the culmination of the meetings may take up to 2 hours depending on your level of engagement and/or questions).
- feelings of discomfort. Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the interview, including topics regarding wider social perceptions of intergenerational cohabitation, can create some uncomfortable feelings.

If you need to talk to someone about this immediately, please contact:  
Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

You may also wish to consider consulting your General Practitioner (GP) for additional support.

#### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

Interviews will be audio recorded for verbatim transcription to ensure your comments are represented faithfully. You will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript for review and endorsement prior to inclusion in the project. You will be given a period of two weeks to review the transcript and notify the researcher of any inaccuracies. It will not be possible to participate in the research if you do not consent to audio recording.

The transcription may be conducted by a third-party service recommended by the supervisory team. The third-party transcription service, if used, will be required to destroy all data upon verification of accuracy. Only the research team (Ms. Sherree Halliwell, A/Prof. Andrew Hickey and Dr. Annette Brömödal) will have access to the transcribed data.

Data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per USQ's Research Data Management policy. Research findings will not identify individual participants and will be reported as a group of information. The data may be used in future research, to compare this group with information collected from other regions or collected during other periods of time. Interested parties may request a general summary of results (non-identifiable) by contacting Sherree Halliwell at U1120536@uemail.usq.edu.au. Data will be made available through the USQ QCIF's Nextcloud after the project has been completed.

I anticipate that I will submit my PhD for examination in November/December 2021. Once published you will be offered the opportunity to receive an electronic copy of the published thesis. It is anticipated that the results from this research project will also be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. All data presented in a public forum will be non-identifiable.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's [Research Data Management policy](#).

#### **Consent to Participate**

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to a member of the Research Team prior to participating in your interview.

#### **Questions or Further Information about the Project**

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

#### **Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 1839 or email [researchintegrity@usq.edu.au](mailto:researchintegrity@usq.edu.au). The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

**Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.**



## Risk Management Plan

### Project Details

Title of Project: **Cohabiting adult parent/child families in regional Australia**

### Research Team Contact Details

#### Principal Investigator Details

Ms. Sherree Halliwell

Email:

Telephone: + [REDACTED]

#### Co-investigator Details

A/Prof Andrew Hickey

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#### Co-investigator Details

Dr. Annette Brömdal

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Annette.Bromdal@usq.edu.au

Telephone: +61 7 4631 1609

### Project Abstract

Two intersecting social phenomena - the western world's aging population and affordable housing shortage - have led to a rise in intergenerational cohabitation over the past three decades. Compounded by the neo-liberal retrenchment of the welfare state, a privatised family care economy has emerged. In consideration of such a climate, this research will examine the place and dynamics of the intergenerational, cohabiting family. This project will also outline a plan of research that will seek to reframe normative, linear and gendered discourses surrounding emerging adulthood at macro (structural), meso (family) and micro (individual) levels (Connidis, 2015). To achieve these aims, this research will deploy an innovative anti-narrative methodology; a new methodology that holds significant utility for studies of this type.

### Risk Management Summary

The aim of the Risk Management Plan is to identify the major risks faced in the conduct of the proposed research project and to analyse and manage them effectively.

This plan is intended to supplement legislation, regulations and guidelines under which research is conducted such as good research practice, human research ethics (including privacy) and intellectual property/data management (described in a separate Data Management Plan).

The potential risks identified relate to:

Participant consent

Time, Physical, Psychological and Social risks

Insufficient data for purposes of PhD-level inquiry

Loss of data due to inadequate back-up procedures

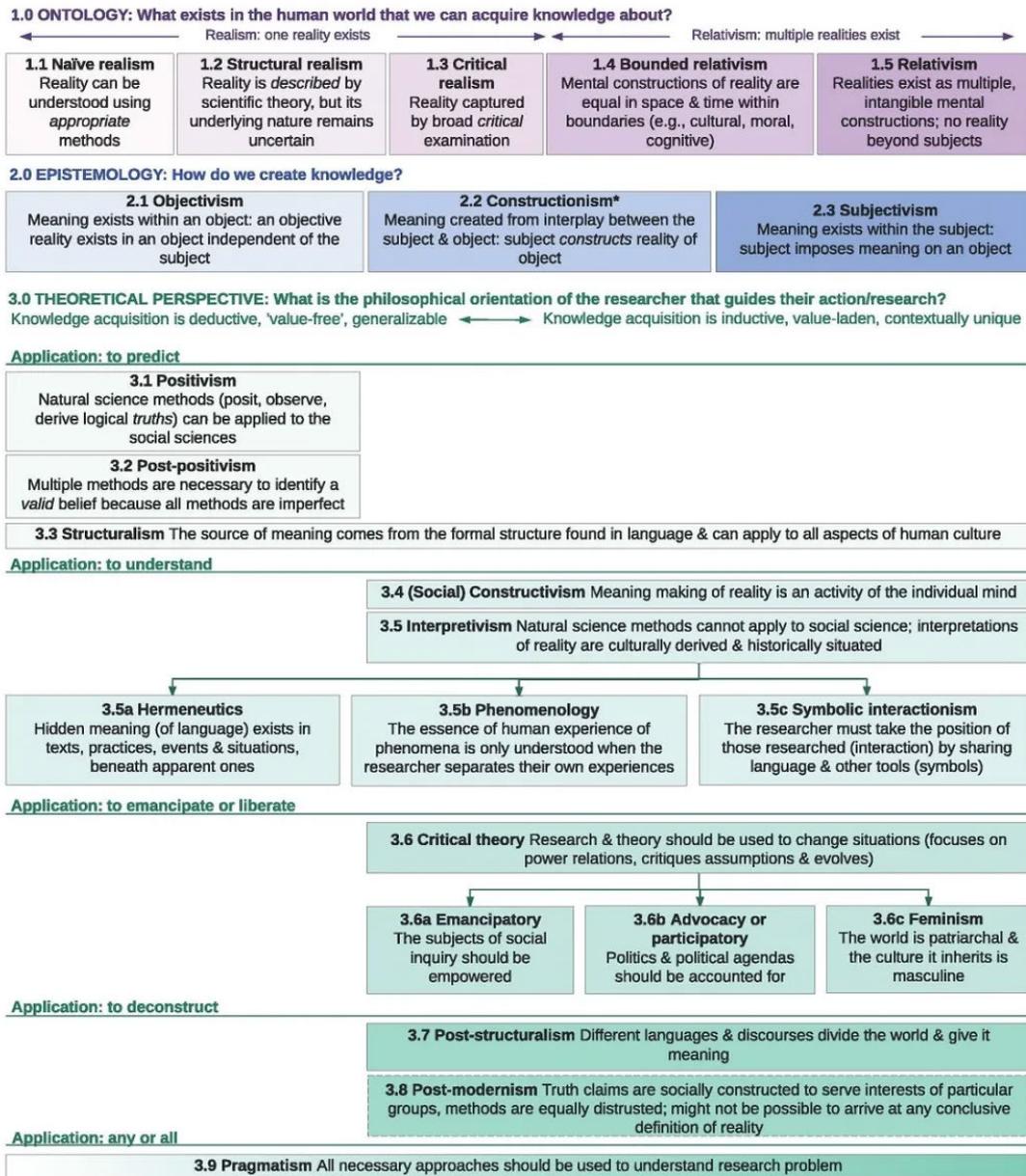
**Risk Management Matrix**

<b>Risk Identified</b>	<b>Assessment of Risk</b>	<b>Explanation of risk</b>	<b>Risk management strategies</b>
Participant consent	Very unlikely	Participants feel pressured or coerced to participate in the research	<p>Participants will be recruited on a voluntary basis and will be able to withdraw at any time throughout the process without being required to give a reason.</p> <p>Participants will respond to calls for potential research participants, facilitated via advertisements by third party connections of the research team.</p>
Time - participants	Possible/ Low impact	The time inconvenience in participating in the proposed research may be considered significant. The research design proposes three stages of research: an initial meeting with potential participants at a neutral public location (e.g. cafe) may run to an hour's duration; and two one-on-one interviews of ~1-2 hours. Time inconvenience may therefore run to 5-6 hours per participant.	Participants will drive the content of the discussion and control its duration. Breaks will be taken per the participants' request, and interviews may be suspended by the participant at any time throughout the process.
Physical – participants	Very unlikely/ Low impact	Physical: Apart from the potential discomfort associated with interviewing fatigue, no other physical risk factors have been identified.	N/A
Physical - interviewer	Very unlikely	It is proposed that the interview (following initial meeting in a public space) will take place in the participant's home to minimise their discomfort and inconvenience as well as placing the research within its ethnographic (cohabiting) context. The greatest risk to the researcher is lone working within a non-public place.	<p>Prior to commencing similar lone-interviewing in participants' homes for my master's degree project I received personal safety and dynamic risk assessment training to assist me in recognising potentially risky situations in the field and formulating an appropriate response.</p> <p>During the recruitment phase of the research, I will meet with potential participants in a public place (e.g. cafe) and seek to build trust and rapport. Any 'gut feel' concerns about my personal safety in company with participants will be noted and discussed with my supervisory team, resulting in the possible non-inclusion of participants in the study.</p>

			<p>I will manage the risk of being a lone researcher during interviews as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I will ensure that my supervisors know the name and address of the person I am going to interview;</li> <li>2. I will send a text message to my nominated supervisor before I go into the interview and when I am safely back in my car following completion of the interview;</li> <li>3. I will appraise my nominated supervisor of the expected duration of the interview and send a text message no less than 5 minutes prior to the intended completion time if I anticipate that the interview will run over the scheduled time of completion. In that message I will stipulate an adjusted time of completion; and</li> <li>4. I will request that my nominated supervisor calls me on my mobile if they have not heard from me after 30 minutes post the intended time of interview completion. If I am unreachable at that time, my supervisor will alert the police and continue to call my mobile at 1-minute intervals.</li> </ol>
Psychological - participants	Possible/ Low impact	<p>In the proposed interviews, the discursive space will cover issues associated with 'Boomerang' and 'Failure to Launch' intergenerational cohabitation as reflected in the literature. Discussion of external reference points pertaining to society's norms governing 'success' and 'failure' may create anxiety or discomfort in participants if they have been or continue to be subject to any negative experiences that are upsetting for them. The proposed qualitative interviewing technique seeks to open a space where participants can explore different options for past, present and future actions; whilst this technique is by design emancipatory in its aspiration, this process may draw out negative emotions and feelings.</p>	<p>Labels such as 'Boomerang' and 'Failure to Launch' and other negative language popularly associated with the topic will not be introduced by the researcher.</p> <p>During the interview I will be on alert for signs of participant distress such as tears, shaking, a flushed face, nervousness, irritability, withdrawal, complaints of nausea/headache/stomach upset, fatigue or an inability to communicate.</p> <p>If at any time I feel that the participant is becoming distressed, I will reassure, redirect, suspend or terminate the interview, as appropriate.</p>

Social - participants	Possible/ Medium impact	Participants will be invited to discuss how their cohabiting relationship impacts both family life and their own wellbeing. It is anticipated that positive, negative and ambivalent features of family life will be explored. Whilst the participant will drive these discussions and be free to change direction if a topic becomes uncomfortable, it is possible that points raised may influence their feelings about family members or their position within the family, potentially impacting interpersonal family relationships.	If after completing the interview a participant subsequently finds that the research experience has been distressing or anxiety provoking, they will be encouraged to contact the researcher's supervisors or appropriate counselling services as listed on the information sheet (Lifeline 13 11 14; Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636) or their GP for support.
Insufficient data for purposes of PhD-level inquiry	Possible/ High impact	Research data collected across ethnographic interviews with 5-7 families may not be sufficient to generate insights worthy of a PhD.	A review of initial themes will be undertaken with the supervisory team post co-creation of themes with research participants. If the data is not deemed sufficient for a PhD-level of inquiry, further interviews will be scheduled. These will take place either with existing participants by their consent post submitting an amendment to the currently proposed Ethics application, or with a new cohort of participants.  The additional time required to undertake a further stage of interviewing can be accommodated within the 3-year PhD timeline for completion.
Loss of data due to inadequate back-up procedures	Very unlikely	Irrecoverable loss of research data, resulting in considerable expense and time in reconstructing database or repeat of fieldwork/analysis	Per the Data Management Plan, data will be stored in two separate USQ storage databases and backed up daily on a 1TB external hard drive stored at the researcher's residence.

## Appendix D: Moon and Blackman (2014) Theoretical Model



### *Appendix E: Participant Interview Schedule*

Pseudonym	First Call	Café Meeting	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Peter and Clive Ferris	28/08	05/09	24/09/19		
Sean, Gordon and Harriet Dale	17/09	22/09	27/09/19		
Yvonne, Tom and Siri Wheller	7/11	N/A	8/11/19		
Charlie and May Polson	15/10	24/11	28/11/19		
Tyson and Don Kornell	17/10	21/10	30/10/19	25/11/20	
Tanya and Diane Hughs	22/12	14/01	6/02/20		
James and Jane Schilling	6/11	N/A	6/11/20 (James) 14/12/20 (Jane)	21/11/20 (James)	08/03/22 (James)
Stewart, Andrew, & Chris Limpus	12/08	N/A	1/09/21	Collaborative Autoethnographic Project: 3/12/21 – 22/04/22 (Stewart)	