Three Pedagogies of Mobility for Australian Show People:

Teaching About, Through and Towards The Questioning of Sedentarism

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Bionotes

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Abstract

Questions concerning the education of mobile groups help to highlight the lived experiences of people otherwise rendered invisible by policy actors. This includes the diverse communities of occupational Travellers – those people who regularly move in order to earn their livelihood. While the category 'occupational Travellers' encompasses groups as varied as defence force personnel, specialist teachers and seasonal fruit pickers, the focus here is on the people who travel the agricultural show circuits of Australia to provide the entertainment of 'sideshow alley'.

Drawing on qualitative research with the Australian show people since 1992, this paper deploys the concept of 'sedentarism' to highlight the ambivalently valorised lived experiences and educational opportunities of the show people. In particular, the paper explores the pedagogical and policy implications of efforts to disrupt and transform the marginalising impact of sedentarism, which constructs mobility as the other in relation to fixed residence.

Specifically, it is argued that anti-sedentarism makes possible the identification and interrogation of three distinct pedagogies of mobility pertaining to the show people, revealing differing stances on intersections of mobility and education. The first is teaching *about* anti-sedentarism, which involves demonstrating the value of the informal learning that takes place on the show circuits so that the show people's mobility does not throw a negative light on their learning on the run. The second is teaching *through* anti-

sedentarism, which centres on informing non-show people about the lives of show people and their contributions to cultural, economic and social life in Australia. The third is teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism, entailing the mapping and valuing of multiple forms of mobility.

The paper considers implications for policy actions of these three pedagogies of mobility about and for the Australian show people. These implications are identified through the lens of assumptions underpinning the current Commonwealth Government policy statement on student mobility. The argument is that the evidence from the show people's experiences suggests that pedagogies of mobility represent one among several possible ways forward in pursuing anti-sedentarism and in imagining anew traditional education for contemporary mobile learners.

Introduction

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Australian show people is that they travel in communities with family life, work and entertainment being largely subsumed within their group. While there are other groups in Australia that also move as communities, such as the Indigenous people who travel the Murray Darling basin and the Lachlan and Macquarie River systems (Fox, Green, Red, Kell, Wright, Harwood, Burnley, & Stanton, this issue) and circus people, this article makes a distinctive contribution to this issue because it focuses on the 'sideshow alley' communities that travel throughout Australian's eastern states, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Our research with these communities has been concentrated in two distinct phases of data gathering: annual visits on one or two days each to the showgrounds between 1992

and 1996; and an intensive, follow-up, five-day visit to the show school in 2003. Working singly and in pairs, we have conducted individual and group interviews with show children, their parents, show community members, teachers and other school personnel. (For example, in 2003 we interviewed 2 leaders of state education, 7 teachers and other school staff members, 20 students and 6 parents.) Our questions have focused on sociocultural aspects of the show people's lives and especially on the educational opportunities, experiences and developments associated with their communities. Data were analysed by means of close textual readings of the narratives that occurred, and by identification of recurrent themes (Potter & Wetherell, 1989). (This analytical approach was used also with the policy document analysis conducted later in this paper.)

Over this period of our researching with the Australian show people, there have been developments in the education of show children that highlight ways in which Australians have continued to be innovative in their provision of education for children in distinctive circumstances. One of the underlying arguments that we make in this article is that the improvements in educational delivery for this group of children places in increasingly questionable light any tendency to pathologise the circumstances of this group of children compared to children who are not mobile.

In this paper, we deploy McVeigh's (1997) concept of sedentarism to develop an anti-sedentarist project, centred on contesting and transforming the key elements of sedentarism (essentialisation, pathologisation and naturalisation). We then enact what we identify as three pedagogies of mobility (teaching *about*, *through* and *towards* anti-sedentarism), exemplified and situated in the lifeworlds and educational experiences of the Australian show children. We also use the three elements of sedentarism and the

three pedagogies of mobility to articulate three key implications for policy actors. We do this by focusing on three dimensions of anti-sedentarism (disruption, dialogue and difference), which we argue are illustrated through a preliminary interrogation of *Changing Schools: Its Impact on Student Learning* (Department of Education, Science and Technology and Department of Defence, 2002).

Concepts

McVeigh defines 'sedentarism' as 'that system of ideas and practices which serves to normalise and reproduce sedentary modes of existence and pathologise and repress nomadic modes of existence' (1997, p. 9). In other words, sedentarism moves beyond a casual and informal prejudice against nomadic lifestyles (though it might incorporate such prejudice) into a more institutionally authorised and formalised system of ideas and practices. As such, it should be possible to discern sedentarist dispositions being communicated across a wide range of social structures and cultural contexts: media representations, educational curricula, government policies, policing measures, children's namecalling and so forth. So an anti-sedentarist project would be interested in mapping – and contesting – the continuity and repetition of these discriminatory practices across a range of sites, such that they become mutually supportive, embedded at a deep structural level and accepted as orthodoxy or common sense.

It is important here to acknowledge, however, that sedentarism is likely to take different forms and have different emphases within these different contexts. McVeigh (1997) is writing within the European context of travelling communities and focuses his study specifically on two of these communities: Gypsies and New (Age) Travellers. As our study focuses on the experience of occupational Travellers associated with the

agricultural show circuit within Australia, McVeigh's comments need to be qualified to take account of this different context. The 'showies' have been part of a significant cultural tradition in Australia (Broome with Jackomos, 1998, Morgan, 1995). Indeed, the annual show is regarded as a valuable cultural event that serves to unify rural communities as well as urban residents, as in the case of large metropolitan shows such as the Royal Easter Show in Sydney and the 'Ekka' in Brisbane. The shows thereby foster valuable connections between urban and rural Australia. This tradition means that show people are able to generate a degree of public sympathy and political influence that has been crucial in agitating for such innovations and reforms as a dedicated travelling school for show children. We can contrast this attitude with the British government's Criminal Justice Act (1994), which McVeigh attributes in part to what he describes as 'moral panic around New Travellers' (1997, p. 8).

Indeed, the negative stereotypes and pathologising tendencies that McVeigh (1997) sees as being targeted at travelling groups tend, in the Australian context, to be more associated with rural life in general. An illustration of this discourse was in an article outlining problems facing rural youth in the New South Wales community of Wellington (Wynhausen, 1999). The author comments:

> Lying behind the inevitable social pressures and what is tempting to call the psychopathology of rural life, with its worship of firearms, its dependence on alcohol and its emphasis on self-sufficiency, are emotional problems country people don't like to talk about. (p. 18)

To the extent that the show community is bound up in the values and experiences of its rural constituents, it is subject to the same pathological discourse that Wynhausen exhibits.

McVeigh attributes the emergence of sedentarism to 'the transition of the *predominant* mode of existence from nomadism to sedentarism' (1997, p. 9, emphasis in original), in which sedentary living is equated with civilisation (1997, p. 13). McVeigh associates the final triumph of sedentarism with the emergence of the nation state and the project of modernity (1997, p. 17): in order to be assimilated into the civilised values of modernity, nomads needed to be settled. (Space limitations preclude here the suggestion of one of the referees of this paper, which we hope to pursue in other publications: a conceptual mapping of the links among anti-sedentarism, the construction of 'vagrancy' and the notion of 'the stranger' [Bauman, 1991, Carmeli, 1988].)

It is interesting to compare this process with the Australian Traveller experience. It might be noted that the word 'civilisation' first entered the language in the second half of the 18th century (Danaher, 1995, p. 288), coinciding with the settlement of Australia as a convict colony as well as with the emergence of disciplinary institutions (Foucault, 1995) that played a significant part in moulding docile populations equipped to carry on the civilising project, colonial expansion and industrial revolution of European modernity. The vast distances, both between isolated settlements in rural Australia, and between Australia and 'civilised' Europe, meant that mobile and nomadic lifestyles played a formative role in developing the primary industries that provided the nation's economic staple well into the 20th century. The context of this history means that the civilising project of modernity and its links with relations between sedentary and nomadic groups played a constitutive role in the development of Australia. The show community has played a significant part in this history.

In qualifying McVeigh's (1997) case, we opt to focus on particular and related aspects of the ideology and practice of sedentarism that we see as relevant to the Australian travelling show people's context. First, there is the process by which the practices and values associated with the nomadic lifestyle are essentialised – understood as being fixed and unchanging, a fundamental core of their being. From here, this essence is pathologised – viewed as diseased and as potentially contaminating and infectious, and as needing to be treated. This logic is pursued through the naturalising of sedentarism – the means through which this essentially pathological condition can be apprehended, made sense of and subjected to correction.

Pedagogies of mobility

As we discussed above, we have elected to focus on three key elements of sedentarism as conceptualised by McVeigh (1997). These three elements are the processes by which people who are nomadic are *essentialised* (the boundary between 'nomadic' and 'sedentary' is fixed and unchanging); their nomadism is *pathologised* ('nomadic' is a marker of deficit and inferiority); and sedentarist policies and practices are *naturalised* (it is charitable common sense to help 'nomadic' people to become (re)settled in permanent locations).

In articulating three distinct pedagogies of mobility arising from McVeigh's (1997) conceptualisation and framed by our ongoing research with Australian show people, we have linked each pedagogy directly with one of the three elements of sedentarism identified above, as reflected in Table One below:

Elements of sedentarism…		…Pedagogies of mobility
Essentialisation	**…Disrupted and potentially transformed by means of…**	Teaching *about* anti-sedentarism
Pathologisation		Teaching *through* anti-sedentarism
Naturalisation		Teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism

Table 1: Elements of Sedentarism and Pedagogies of Mobility

From this perspective, the purpose of teaching *about* anti-sedentarism is to demonstrate that the differences between show people and non-show people are not fixed and unchanging; the function of teaching *through* anti-sedentarism is to highlight the positive rather than the pathological features of the show people's mobility; and the goal of teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism is to emphasise that policies towards show people and other mobile communities are as constructed and politicised as they are towards any social category or group.

Teaching *about* anti-sedentarism

Teaching *about* anti-sedentarism has two crucial dimensions. It follows from Table 1 that one of these dimensions is an anti-essentialist agenda: the idea that the categories 'nomadic' and 'sedentary' are often temporary and tentative descriptors rather than fixed and timeless essences. The other dimension of this particular pedagogy of mobility is the informal learning that takes place on the Australian show circuits. This dimension is also anti-essentialist, by disrupting the assumption that 'education' is tied to place and time dictated by a separate classroom. In combination, these two dimensions highlight the multiple ways in which show people acquire a broad range of knowledges informally

through living and working on the show circuits, and in which they disrupt the 'nomadic'–'sedentary' binary by moving on and off those circuits as their circumstances and aspirations change. (The discussion in this subsection is based on Danaher [2001], pp. 301-310, with interviewees' names having been changed into codes to preserve their anonymity.)

Several show people made comments that reflected their conviction of the special opportunities for learning afforded by their mobile lifestyle. One set of such comments was concerned with identifying certain characteristics or qualities that the speaker asserted as being present among show people and implied as being absent from local people. One man praised the adaptability of show people.

> As Tex Morton [a well-known Australian country and western singer] once said, 'Show me a showman's son or daughter and there's no fools amongst them'. He sang a song about them. They were...[such] good children, they adapted to other things. (Y4P3)

One woman explained how this adaptability operated in the practical, everyday conditions of show life.

> I mean, it might sound fun, travelling and all that, but there's a lot of hard work involved and it's very hard...to teach children and travel and work and that. (Y4P1)

The speaker asserted that, because 'they see so much with the travelling', show children's 'outlook on life is really great' (Y4P1). Another woman referred to show children's special maturity, which by implication derived from their capacity to adapt to

changing circumstances.

> ...I think they're pretty well very smart kids to start with. They're very grown up.
> ...[My daughter is] only seven, but you can sit down and have a conversation with
> her like she's an adult. They know what's going on outside. (Y4P2)

Several statements were made by a show person who was interviewed twice, once using
audiotape and once using videotape. For example, during the videotaped interview she
emphasised the advantages of the show people's lifestyle:

> I must be biased, because I think we have the best lifestyle. We have everything.
> We have Australia's most beautiful places that we see every year. We have
> travelling, life, colour, movement, all in our world. We do things, we move, we
> have activities, we have a little taste of everything. We go to places where they do
> bungee jumping. We all try...whatever's the tourist spot in town, we go and have a
> look. We get to look at all this beautiful scenery, the countryside. We get to do all
> that, plus we can earn a living and do it. We don't have the stressful [need to] get up
> at nine o'clock, but we'll work hard. But we have so much scope in what we can
> do....[W]hat we experience every day is not regular, and it's not routine. So
> therefore it's exciting to get up each day and not know what may be at the end of
> the day....But it's so good. You have so many advantages that people can't even
> conceive. (Y4P5)

This is a powerful and proud articulation of the pleasures and benefits – including
informal learning – of occupational travelling. It is noteworthy that the speaker argued

strongly that show life is full of variety, experience and excitement. Moreover, she

represented the show people's lifestyle as being 'better' than that of 'most people', with

'so many advantages that people can't even conceive'. This representation suggests that

this show person had a clear notion of her own identity and that of her fellow 'showies',

and that that identity gave her a secure basis for learning and benefiting from the

distinctive experiences of living and working on the show circuits.

The speaker also identified certain special characteristics that she ascribed to 'showies',

and that by implication were the prerequisite of their enjoying the special advantages

that she had already outlined:

> We've got the drive, we're not scared to work. See, the thing is with our growing
>
> up is our form of doing things is that if it's broken, you fix it. You don't have to
>
> ask someone, you have to do it today. We're here for two days; we earn our
>
> money now; we do our jobs now. (Y4P5)

This statement functions to position the show people as a young, energetic, dynamic

group of people, in contrast to the inbuilt conservatism of some business and

government bureaucracies. According to this admittedly simplistic representation, the

'showies' are utilitarian and practical in their approach to life: 'if it's broken, you fix it'.

They are also task oriented and well organised, owing largely to the regularity with

which they move from town to town. This regularity means that they must complete

tasks here and now: 'It's always urgent'. Again, the assumption is that these are special

characteristics of show people, and that they need to be recognised and celebrated, in

place of others' less positive constructions of 'showies' as 'other'.

These discursive tactics of resistance (de Certeau, 1984) frame the show people's identification of and deriving knowledge from a long list of informal learning opportunities on the show circuits. Kiddle (1999) provided a useful synthesis of this informal learning as it pertains to British fairgrounds, which have strong similarities with their Australian counterparts:

> accountancy, administration, advertising, book-keeping, business management, carpentry design, diplomacy, driving, electrics, electronics, engineering, law, mechanics, painting, public relations, sign writing, welding. (p. 103)

In the context of this complex set of skills, teaching *about* anti-sedentarism entails drawing attention to and celebrating the informal learning made possible – and necessary – by the show people's mobility, thereby throwing a positive rather than a negative light on the educational experiences pertaining to that mobility.

As we indicated above, teaching *about* anti-sedentarism entails also the anti-essentialist project of demonstrating that the 'nomadic' and 'sedentary' categories are contingent constructions rather than fixed and timeless 'common sense' occurrences. From this perspective, it is significant to note the multiple ways in which show people break down the seemingly essentialised and homogenised 'showie'–'non-showie' dichotomy. This is another way of contesting and subverting the sedentarist strategy of representing the show people as naturally and irredeemably 'marginal' and 'other' to 'normal' Australians on account of their mobility, by demonstrating that the conceptual barrier on

which such a construction is predicated is actually a fluid and shifting set of discourses.

In that context, the show children made several references to the 'showie'–'local' division being fluid and temporary. A 12 year old girl asserted strongly, 'No, we travel around, because we're with the showmen' (Y2C4). She explained: 'We settled down for a while and went to school, and then mum got us correspondence and we started travelling again' (Y2C4). Her explanation of her situation indicates the transitional rather than the separate links between 'showie' and 'local'.

One boy, who stated that 'I've got a couple of friends who are locals' (Y1C5) but most of whose friends followed the show circuits, described at second hand the reverse transition from the 'showie' to the 'local' categories. He explained that 'my brother and I had a friend and he went off the show and he's a local...[and I don't know where he lives]' (Y1C5). Perhaps his concern at the loss of a friendship underlay his assertion that 'locals' 'can come back' to the show circuits, and his statement that 'I think a few of them' actually do so (Y1C5). Here this boy's discussion of 'showies' and 'locals' is tempered by his personal knowledge of someone who had traversed the boundary between those categories, and by his evident regret that this process had ended a valued friendship.

Another boy described at second hand the change from 'local' to 'showie' status, a change with a different outcome from the situation quoted in the previous paragraph. He explained how his friendship with another boy endured the latter's changing status in

connection with show life that derived from his parents joining the show circuit.

> Well,...[he wasn't] actually a local. See, what it was is….I was friends with him
> about two years back when he was a local, but now he's a full showman.
>
> [. . .When he's a local, what does that mean?]
>
> That means, like now we can get free rides and all that and he couldn't and all that,
> and he had to pay for the tickets.
>
> [If he's a local, doesn't he travel with the show?]
>
> No. He has to stay in one place. But now he's a showman. (Y1C2)

In both these cases, the show children's references to individuals moving on and off the show circuits in some respects parallel the show people's traversing the physical and symbolic spaces of their mobility. That is, the emphasis is on fluid and shifting markers of identity and signifiers of meaning, rather than fixed essences. The particular point that we are emphasising here is it is that fluid and shifting character that show people exploit in resisting the sedentarist constructions of their otherness – in this case, by emphasising that the difference between them and others is less clearly defined and permanent than other people might realise or like to think. This argument resonates with McVeigh's (1997) contention that historically 'the sedentary/nomad distinction was much more ambiguous than it is in contemporary societies', and that

> ...even when this distinction does become unambiguous...it bears emphasis that
> nomadic–sedentary transition is not a one-way process. Just as people can exchange
> a nomadic for a sedentary existence, so they can exchange a sedentary for a

nomadic existence. (p. 11)

With reference to Table 1, therefore, we have argued in this subsection that the pedagogy of mobility that we have labelled 'teaching *about* anti-sedentarism' consists of two complementary processes. The first is mapping and valuing the extensive range of informal learning in which mobile communities like the Australian show people engage. The second is highlighting the ways that, equipped with the skills and confidence arising from that informal learning, the show people move in and out of roles as 'showies' and 'locals'. Both these processes are avowedly anti-essentialist in design, as an explicit countering of the essentialisation identified above as a key component of sedentarism: the first by disrupting the homology between 'formal education' and 'institutional place' (and hence the implicit assumption that any learning that takes place informally in the home is not legitimate or valuable), the second by highlighting that the demarcations between 'nomadic' and 'sedentary' are blurred and often breached descriptors, rather than fixed and unchanging categories.

Teaching *through* anti-sedentarism

Teaching *through* anti-sedentarism may appear problematic in Australia, because of popular views about Travellers, especially show people, that are mentioned in passing in conversation in rural and regional towns, if not the cities. These views relate primarily to throwaway lines that are sometimes heard, for example, when the show people are in town (see also Broome with Jackomos, 1998, pp. 2-3, Morgan, 1995, p. 13). Researching the extent of these attitudes, how they are developed and the reliability of the evidence on which they are based could be informative in developing strategies for

teaching *through* anti-sedentarism. It could be anticipated that comments might refer to the perceived fact that there is a high incidence of theft in the town when the show is passing through, during which time there is a need to ensure that valuables are secured. These conversations tend not to be emotive or deliberately meant to cause damage, but just state calmly what are believed to be the facts.

When groups such as show people move on a regular basis, their mobility can contribute to a lack of understanding between themselves and the fixed residents of a town. This is because there is often not the time to get to know people well or to make friendships before leaving for the next town. Prior to the establishment of the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children in 2000, even show children acknowledged that it was not always worth making the effort to get to know children in the classroom where they spent several days before moving, because they would be unlikely to see those children 'for another year, and perhaps not even then' (Moriarty, Danaher, & Rose, 1998, p. 54).

These difficulties persist, even with the show people visiting the same towns at the same time each year. There is still often not enough time to establish friendships and make continuous enough contact with local people for a better understanding of one another to develop. Informing non-show people about the lives of show people and their contributions to cultural, economic and social life in Australia could, therefore, be made more difficult because what is already known by fixed residents about show people is incomplete and often incorrect.

Despite the contextual differences between the European Travellers studied by McVeigh (1997) and the Australian show people, there is a degree of resemblance between

McVeigh's observations of the effects of a range of stereotypical views about Travellers and observations in Australia. Descriptors that have been used in the European context include 'criminal', 'dirty', 'dishonest', 'immoral', 'amoral' and 'nomadic' (p. 8), all contributing to long-surviving attitudes that require teaching t*hrough* anti-sedentarism to highlight the pathological set of circumstances based on questionable evidence and borne out in equally unsubstantiated fears and distrust.

Strangely juxtaposed against this context and acknowledged through our research in Australia is the reality that show communities already have many dispositions that enable them to survive in a continually changing and uncertain world. As Australia is generally coming to terms with the casualisation of the workforce, the need to be futures-oriented and committed to lifelong learning, show communities have long needed to negotiate circumstances that made these attributes necessary for their continued survival. In 1998, while our research team was gathering data with another travelling community, a circus, it occurred to us to question why communities such as circuses and shows survived for so long. In the case of Australian show communities, show people themselves have recognised that they needed to be up-to-date in their thinking in terms of the types of entertainment that they provide. While some of the older attractions at shows might today have curiosity value, they are unlikely to attract the interest of large numbers of potential show visitors whose regular entertainment is located in a digital and electronic age. The response of show people to changes in the mainstream has been an important economic tactic that has served also to demonstrate their capacity to resist reduction to an essentialised and pathologised stereotype of mobility. This resistance is one example of teaching *through* anti-sedentarism, noted in

Table 1, by virtue of its extending non-mobile people's understandings of the show people's lives.

The concomitance of changes in entertainment in society generally and questions about whether the shows will survive long enough to provide guaranteed employment for the next generation of show people have made show people realise that they need to ensure that their children have an education that will allow them to survive outside the show. Even a basic education has been difficult for several generations of Australian show people because of their mobility. While correspondence lessons and boarding school have been among some of the available options, the practical reality is that many show people did not develop satisfactory levels of literacy. Show people collectively, however, have always had many other skills, one of them being the ability to lobby governments and to represent their group articulately and convincingly. These skills, together with the show people's commitment to improving their children's educational opportunities, led to the establishment of the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children in 2000. These skills and this commitment underpin also the show people's determined resistance to being pathologised, of which the school's establishment is a striking illustration and outcome.

The most recent stage of our research into Traveller education in 2003 explored stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of the show school in meeting the needs of this community. The school is like any other with regard to its overall structure: it has a principal and a supportive school community and it falls within the jurisdiction of the Executive Director of one of Education Queensland's district offices. It also has two very well equipped, high-technology classrooms, four teachers and three support staff

members. The difference is that the classrooms are on wheels and the whole school travels with the children throughout eastern and central Australia. Sometimes the classrooms travel together and at other times they go in different directions according to the regular yearly show circuits.

The classrooms are often located in the grounds of the local schools in the towns that the show visits. The sight of a technologically advanced, innovative and well-equipped classroom with the show children learning in a single cohort and wearing their own uniform is quite different from the previous picture. In the past, show children became temporary, token members of classrooms distributed throughout a local school when the show was in town. Many show children expressed how uncomfortable they felt in these circumstances, even though some schools endeavoured to establish buddy systems for the show children while they were in their care. As the following quotations from show children prior to the establishment of the show school indicate (Danaher, Hallinan, & Rose, 1998), show children had a variety of experiences with the buddy system and with making friends among local school children.

It's hard to find a friend because [locals think that] all of us [are] so stupid, don't get anything done, but we do get things done. (p. 139)

But sometimes you can have a buddy for a week, but sometimes they don't really like you and sometimes you find another person, but they're nicer. (p. 139)

You make friends and move to another place. So you usually make friends at every show. (p. 140)

Despite the positive slant that the last child above placed on the situation, we found that less positive reactions were far more common, reflecting the widespread impact on the show children's psyches of the pathologisation of their families' and their mobility.

When we interviewed mobile teachers who worked on show circuits prior to the establishment of the show school, there was one comment made that, with the benefit of hindsight, might now appear almost prophetic and as relevant to the discussion of teaching *through* anti-sedentarism. Consider this comment from one of those teachers:

> Sometimes I'd love to be able to take·[the show children] home, and bring them into a school for an extended period of time, and really get them up to speed because there's a couple of little gaps, and you stumble across the gaps sometimes. And you've got to pick them up, and pinpoint certain skills and go for them, and get them up to speed on those things. (Danaher, Hallinan, & Rose, 1998, p. 155)

Even though this teacher was unaware of the significant changes that were to occur with the delivery of education to Queensland show children in the future, the show school has gone much further than this teacher was suggesting. The School has done this by having the children withdrawn from their previous situation on a continuous basis so that, especially with children young enough to gain all of their formal education through the School, the question of gaps in their skills is likely to be addressed. A closer examination of the curriculum and discussions with the principal and teachers in the future would enable us to determine the extent to which those gaps have closed and help focus even further on future developments within the school.

These changes are significant enough to suggest that the show school may be an important catalyst in informing non-show people about the lives of show people and their contributions to cultural, economic and social life in Australia. The commitment of the show people in lobbying for the establishment of the school and the investments that they have made to it by adapting their daily lives (for example routines and school uniforms) demonstrates the importance that show people place on education and everything that goes with it, such as literacy, preparedness for the future and opening of opportunities.

The outward manifestation of attitudes towards education and the willingness to commit to changing circumstances could contribute to a changing of attitudes and removal of the pathological stereotypical images of old and be one of the best advertisements that demonstrate to fellow Australians that show people are setting themselves up for continued economic survival. Show people may also be perceived as Australians who pay their way and are a more positive social influence than was typical of the understandings that Australians previously had of this sector of their community.

A caution that could be drawn from our most recent research with the show people and the Queensland School for Travelling Show children is that it would be relatively easy for many of the cultural values and traditions of the show to be lost in this new approach. As families with the show circuits allocate more of their time and effort to the formal schooling of their children, they appear to have less time to devote to handing down stories around the camp fire and continuing other traditions that have been so culturally rich in the past.

In a sense, if the effort that show people are putting into the education of their children does become an important factor helping to change old attitudes and make the general public better informed, then the show people are effectively meeting other people on their own ground. Such an outcome encapsulates what we conceive as teaching *through* anti-sedentarism, whereby the positive aspects of mobility are communicated in ways that disrupt the show people's pathologisation arising from that mobility. This is not before time, especially if one has the view that show people's realistic access to education was thwarted for too long.

Teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism

In this subsection, we deal explicitly with the ways in which sedentarist values and attitudes have been naturalised. In order for any ideology to be effective, it needs to cross a threshold of credibility to the point where it becomes accepted as common sense – the way in which things naturally are. Such common sense has historically informed ideologies associated with gender and race: 'men are naturally stronger and more rational than women and are therefore suited to be head of the household'; 'white people are inherently more civilised and better capable of governing societies than are black people'. Anti-sexist and anti-racist education has explicitly sought to confront these naturalised assumptions and stereotypes. As a corollary, an anti-sedentarist curriculum would seek to confront explicitly the common sense beliefs and values that focus on relations between sedentary and travelling communities. As such, it would seek to communicate the ways in which policies towards show people and other mobile communities are as constructed and politicised as are policies towards any social

category or group. This communication is linked directly with using the recognition of multiple forms of mobility as a key means of teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism.

Part of the value of contemporary cultural theory lies in providing a framework for both understanding and challenging this common sense. Foucault's studies of disciplinary practices (1995) and 'bio-power' (1978) have shown how the modernist project of civilisation was informed through processes in which a floating population of shifting bodies was settled, disciplined, improved and administered through the work of institutions such as education, workshops, prisons and families, from about the mid-18th century onwards. From this perspective, travelling communities constituted a residue of 'dangerous floaters' seen as perilous to the interests and lifestyles of a proper, settled order. Theorists such as de Certeau (1984) and others have responded to Foucault's ideas by suggesting ways in which people might resist such disciplinary forces and practise a lifestyle marked, if not by outright opposition to these forces, then at least by a sense of sustaining and self-creative difference in respect of them.

From a pedagogical perspective, this contemporary theoretical lens provides a focus for engaging with a particularly rich body of text and experience relevant to the relationships between sedentary and mobile lifestyles. Our research with the show people has tended to be based on interview data generated from members of the community and other interested parties, as well as supporting policy documentation. This research reveals that the show community itself has a situated interest in passing on its cultural heritage through curriculum projects taught within the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children. One teacher mentioned such a project:

Last year at the end of the year we did a study of their life, trying to get them to appreciate their life, and one of the things they had to do was a family tree and interview a grandparent. Almost all of the interviews that came back, when the question was asked, what do you remember fondly about days gone back, it was always they would all sit around the campfire and they would all share their stories and share their times together. ….We did a lot of poetry on it, a lot of creating a new ride that could work out.

The generation of such curriculum material might be constituted as part of a broader project to make available the cultural history and lived experiences of travelling communities to all school students.

This project raises certain issues. One entails recognition of the need for a balanced engagement with representations of mobile lifestyles. To focus too greatly on the negative stereotypes and prejudicial policies aimed at Travellers risks the perverse effect of reproducing pathological tendencies that reduce the Travellers to victims devoid of meaningful agency. On the other hand, over-emphasising the pleasures and freedoms associated with the travelling experience risks constructing an image of an exotic, romanticised other, diminishing the very real impact that sedentarist practices have had.

A second issue entails recognition that the basis on which distinctions between sedentary and nomadic lifestyles are made no longer really applies. In the context of the uncertain global environment and ongoing social and economic transformations, there is an emerging recognition that the sedentary phase of modernity, characterised by stable and enduring social institutions and a mode of existence based on fixed and generally

lifelong attachment to geographical location, class and occupation, is much less common than it was. The experience of mobility, as measured geographically, culturally or occupationally, is increasingly the norm. This mobility is experienced differently by different groups in different contexts. People forcibly displaced from countries through war and famine, or those retrenched through technological change or the vicissitudes of global trade markets and compelled to 'reskill' and shift locations in order to regain employment, are likely to have a different stance on this culture of mobility from that of the growing class of international business and information and communication technology operatives, at ease with moving around the world to take up lucrative positions suited to their skills.

So there is an evident demand, in this context, to develop curriculum projects that engage with the different experiences of mobility: their histories, cultural contexts, threats and opportunities. There is an equivalent need to develop theoretical models that assist in making sense of these different experiences: anti-sedentarism, we suggest, makes a contribution to one such model.

Anti-sedentarism provides a framework for recognising that there is no one normal or natural mode of life rooted in a fixed geographical location. Rather, life is experienced contingently as people take on roles that, depending on circumstances, might be characterised as more or less nomadic/sedentary. Within this context, anti-sedentarism emphasises the urgency of developing ideas, policies and practices that are able to accommodate this contingency, this shift in roles and forms of mobility, this denaturalisation of the construction of mobility as 'deviant' and 'deficit'.

Implications

To this point in the paper, we have:

- Deployed and qualified McVeigh's (1997) elaboration of the concept of sedentarism;

- Used that elaboration as the basis of our identification of three pedagogies of mobility (teaching *about*, *through* and *towards* anti-sedentarism); and

- Situated those pedagogies and their associated resistance of the key elements of sedentarism (essentialisation, pathologisation and naturalisation) in the lifeworlds and educational experiences of the Australian show children.

Accordingly we turn now to examine the implications for policy actions of these pedagogies of mobility and the elements of sedentarism that they help to resist. In doing so, we have extrapolated from the 'Coda' (pp. 23-24) to McVeigh's (1997) critique of sedentarism what we have identified as three crucial dimensions of anti-sedentarism: disruption, dialogue and difference. First, we have assigned the label 'disruption' to McVeigh's statement that 'To begin with, anti-nomad stereotypes must be challenged and inverted' (p. 24). Second, we have called 'dialogue' McVeigh's assertion that

> We must also address anti-nomadism in a way which encourages the development of a partnership between nomads and sedentaries which is emancipatory for both. (p. 24)

Third, we have used 'difference' to synthesise McVeigh's assertion that

> We also need to think seriously about difference. We must move away from a position of assuming that equality will obliterate difference towards thinking about how we can actively create societies in which people are genuinely 'equal but different'. (p. 24, emphasis in original)

Table 2: Elements of Sedentarism, Pedagogies of Mobility and Policy Implications of Anti-Sedentarism illustrates our conceptualisation of the integral and iterative links among the elements of sedentarism, the pedagogies of mobility and the dimensions of anti-sedentarism. This conceptualisation derives from our analysis of the Australian show people's mobility as simultaneously the source of enduring educational and social marginalisation and the site of rethinking formal and informal learning in ways that reimagine traditional education for contemporary mobile learners. As we have sought to demonstrate in this paper, this conceptualisation also has significant pedagogical and policy implications.

Elements of sedentarism…	…Disrupted and potentially transformed by means of…	…Pedagogies of mobility	…linked with policy implications of…	Dimensions of anti-sedentarism (after McVeigh, 1997, p. 24)
Essentialisation		Teaching *about* anti-sedentarism		Disruption
Pathologisation		Teaching *through* anti-sedentarism		Dialogue
Naturalisation		Teaching *towards* anti-sedentarism		Difference

Table 2: Elements of Sedentarism, Pedagogies of Mobility

and Policy Implications of Anti-Sedentarism

We have elected to 'apply' selectively the right hand column of Table 2 to *Changing Schools: Its Impact on Student Learning* (Department of Education, Science and Technology and Department of Defence, 2002). This is on the basis that *Changing Schools* is the most recent and comprehensive Australian national document pertaining to student mobility, and hence an appropriate source of information and thinking for policy actors concerned with this educational and social issue.

This is by no means a comprehensive interrogation of *Changing Schools* (Department of Education, Science and Technology and Department of Defence, 2002). Instead, it is an exercise intended to identify potential policy implications of the three identified elements of anti-sedentarism as seen through the lens of this policy document.

In relation to the *disruption* of sedentarism, we commend the report's definition of mobility:

> Mobility has the potential to impact either positively or negatively on student learning outcomes where:
>
> - a student has more than two moves in three years; or
>
> - patterns of family movement involve students in relocating schools for periods of time when they do not attend school. (p. 26)

We consider the explicit acknowledgment that mobility can 'impact…positively…on student learning outcomes' a welcome counternarrative to generations of constructions of mobility as 'deficit' and 'deviant'. At the same time, we note with some concern the report's comment that most of the literature surveyed defined mobility in terms of 'stipulat[ing] a specified number of moves within a specified period' (appendices, p. 3),

and that 'the working definition of mobility' used in the report was: '"A mobile student is one who moves school more than twice in a three year period"' (appendices, p. 3). Instead of valuing mobility as a millennia-old and legitimate lifestyle, the report's focus on prespecifying a 'benchmark' of mobility in terms of numbers of moves retains implicitly sedentarist thinking, with fixed residence still the norm and mobility the aberrant case. This is despite the report's recognition that:

> Mobile students are frequently compared with 'settled', 'stable' or 'sedentary' students, and thus categorised according to a deficit model. By default, a mobile student must be 'unsettled' or 'unstable'. (Appendices, p. 2)

With regard to *dialogue* about sedentarism, we applaud the consultations by the authors of *Changing Schools* with a large number and wide range of stakeholders in student mobility. This number and range were reflected in their interviews with students, parents and teachers in several Australian states and territories. A prerequisite for dialogue is attentiveness to the voices of 'the other'. While the report reflected an awareness of multiple manifestations of mobility, and an acknowledgment that 'there are many factors needing to be taken into account before any definitive claim can be made' about the impact of such mobility on learning, the conflation of this acknowledgment with a reference to 'a diverse range of studies into the problem of student mobility' (Appendices, p. 19) reflects the ease with which slippage into the dominant discourse of mobility as 'deficit' and 'deviant' occurs. This slippage makes the project of dialogue about sedentarism both more difficult and more urgent.

In relation to *difference* and sedentarism, the report engaged with several forms of and reasons for student mobility, including 'Australian Defence Force mobility'

(Appendices, pp. 9-11), 'Indigenous mobility' (Appendices, pp. 11-12) and 'Other categories of mobility' (Appendices, pp. 12-13). At the same time, we find disturbing evidence of the resilience of 'deficit' constructions of student mobility in that engagement. For example:

> While studies have been done of young children living in Dutch barges and nomadic pastoralists in African countries, these studies would seem to be less relevant to this particular project than some other categories of mobile groups because of the particularity of the occurrences. The main intent of such studies perhaps lies in demonstrating the breadth and diversity of the nomadic experience. (Appendices, p. 13)

We deprecate this somewhat offhand reference to these international studies of occupational Travellers and nomads (Scholten, 2000, Umar & Tahir, 2000). More broadly, we assert that 'demonstrating the breadth and diversity of the nomadic experience', rather than being an 'optional extra', is in fact central to the project of valuing the difference(s) of student mobility and hence to the project of anti-sedentarism.

In sum, therefore, the implications for policy actors of the pedagogies of mobility and the anti-sedentarist project that we have elaborated in this paper are threefold:

- The need to engage in fundamental and ongoing *disruption* of the assumptions and practices that conceive and operationalise sedentarism;
- The need to develop *dialogue* with multiple participants and stakeholders in mobility and sedentarism;
- The need to map and celebrate *difference* as manifold forms of mobility.

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Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to imagine anew traditional education for contemporary mobile learners. Indeed, this is the key point about the project of anti-sedentarism. Such a project is directed at illuminating the ways in which travelling communities such as the show people are adept at making do, adjusting their lives and work practices in order to adapt to prevailing conditions, moving across different geographical and cultural contexts, keeping the show on the road, assembling and disassembling joints and rides. This lifestyle provides a model that curriculum designers and educational bureaucrats might productively adopt: evaluating policies and procedures not on the basis of their enduring quality or fixed attachment to a set of values and practices that have been reified as common sense, but instead on the extent to which they are capable of 'travelling', engaging with the different needs and lifestyles of those who come within their circuit.

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