

2 Cultural Studies and the Pedagogy of Community-Engaged Research

Rob Garbutt

Introduction

Of all that community groups do, the Annual General Meeting (AGM), with its election of office bearers and reports from the president and treasurer, can be one of the least inspiring. It is a largely administrative affair that punctuates the passion that brings people together. The December 2011 AGM of the *Aquarian Archive* had some of that, apart from an ongoing tussle over the role of president. What piqued my interest, though, was a reminder about a looming celebration: the 40th anniversary of the *Nimbin Aquarius Softlick*. This was a 10-day counterculture festival in May 1973 organized by the Australian Union of Students in the village of Nimbin on the far-north coast of New South Wales. Somewhat misleadingly badged as “Australia’s Woodstock”, the Aquarius Festival (as it is locally known) transformed this conservative rural region from sleepy Summerland into the fire-stick twirling Rainbow Region. Forty years on the Festival still resonates.

With a pronounced nod to Lawrence Grossberg’s (1994) formulation of pedagogy and cultural studies, this chapter sits in the midst of the ‘pedagogy of culture’ and the ‘culture of pedagogy’, by way of research and teaching, community and university. It assays these constitutive elements and their interactions through the author’s involvement in *Aquarius and Beyond*, as both an ongoing research project into the Aquarius Festival and its ripples through the Rainbow Region, and through the author’s involvement in the 2-day community conference in 2013 that marked the 40th anniversary. The community conference provides the specific focus of this chapter.

The conference, one participant announced to me the night before the gathering, was an “eminently respectable cover for a group of ageing hippies to have a reunion”. Before starting, the outcomes had already exceeded the intentions. As relative outsiders, the conference organizers created a space of hospitality in the Nimbin Town Hall where the village heard stories of itself told by locals and others, and where Nimbin in the present tense told its stories to many who were returning, some after a 40-year absence. As the conference unfolded, so too did reunions and reconciliations.

And just as *Aquarius and Beyond* yielded its joyous and awkward moments of reflection for many of the participants, so too did it provide the organizers with moments of intensity that stimulated ideas and reflections

on the relationships between university, community, research, and pedagogy. Furthermore, because of the community-engaged nature of the conference, historical events and specific locations folded themselves into these thoughts and reflections. The result, in this chapter, is a *geophilosophical* investigation in miniature of what, how, and who cultural studies teaches when it is brought to bear on a community-engaged research project.

To begin, then, some scene setting is called for.

Cultural Studies in Particular

One of the distinguishing features of cultural studies is its close attention to *contexts* (Grossberg 1994: 5). The context for this chapter is a particular cultural studies formation within the cultural studies project (Rodman 2015); this locally influenced inflection of the global project intersects with more recent enthusiasm for community-engaged modes of research within the academy. This is the pedagogy of culture in which I became immersed when, midway along the course of my life, I stumbled into cultural studies at Southern Cross University.

The cultural studies formation at Southern Cross University (SCU) was strongly influenced through the scholarship of Baden Offord who from the late 1990s to 2014 played the lead role in the fostering cultural studies practice at the university. The cultural studies undergraduate major in the Bachelor of Arts degree was largely shaped by Baden’s insights regarding how to connect the promises of cultural studies to local students’ interests. This had direct connections to the theoretical interests of scholars at the Birmingham Centre such as Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. However, and crucially, this scholarship was also strongly influenced by the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, and imbued with the ethos of the public intellectual as espoused, for example, by Edward Said (1994). Cultural studies at SCU is, therefore, an intellectual and political intervention with activist leanings.

This cultural studies practice has, of course, a particular institutional context. Southern Cross University is a small, rural-regional, multicampus university that is just over 20 years old. Its size and its geographic location enable personal engagement between faculty and students. The student population is composed of many mature-aged students as well as those straight from school. Most are the first in their family to enter university (Garbutt and Kayess 2014). Thus, the pedagogy of cultural studies has been a key concern at SCU, with the situation demanding a pedagogical approach that engages with everyday life experiences that are locally meaningful. Teaching deracinated theory—the sort that Graeme Turner critiques as “Cultural Studies 101” (Turner 2009)—would hold little relevance or interest for most of the university’s cultural studies students. The units in the undergraduate major incorporate such activities as field trips to connect theory with the everyday world (Garbutt, Biermann and Offord 2012), with the

term *engagement* integral to SCU cultural studies as a “way of being in the academy” in the sense that personal-political agendas are positioned as up for negotiation (Ang 2006: 186–7; Johnson et al. 2004: 25). Beyond the classroom, opportunities are sought to involve the wider university and the local community in less-formal educational experiences on areas of research interest such as critical race studies and critical disability studies (Biermann, Garbutt and Offord 2010). Thus, at SCU, cultural studies has a strong affinity with the discipline’s pedagogical origins and political motivations (Rutten et al. 2013: 444).

Furthermore, the smaller-scale regional population in which the university is located affords a blurring of the lines between community and university. It is important not to overstate this: the academy is a foreign place for many people who find its practices, discourse, and spaces exclusionary. Nevertheless, research agendas are often founded in community concerns, and the region’s history from the mid-1970s of environmental and community activism provides fertile ground for community-inspired research. The publication of *Belonging in the Rainbow Region* (Wilson 2003) and two international conferences organized around activating human rights that brought together activists *and* scholars are evidence of this simultaneously local and international research that engage beyond the academy (Goh, Offord and Garbutt 2012; Porter and Offord 2006).

So while community-engaged cultural studies research can be viewed as a pragmatic concession to neoliberal research agendas focused on *usefulness*, *relevance*, and the quest for new sources of funding (see Allon 2006: 36–37), I argue that at SCU engagement is a critical response and an organic aspect of being a cultural studies academic in a regional university: of strategically sharing the “wealth” of the university, in all its aspects, in response to community need. It combines a cultural studies “mode of interest in the world” with a “mode of involvement with others” (Allon and Morris 2006: 12).

It is within this context, disciplinary *and* institutional, that *Aquarius and Beyond*, the community conference and the longer-term research project, was and is still situated: within a university that is drawn into relevance with the community around and beyond it; where cultural studies research engages directly with people outside the academic realm as well as within it; and where the cultural studies pedagogy is decidedly democratic, has the potential to enable personal transformation, and is acknowledged as occurring within the academy’s physical boundaries as well as without. This is a cultural studies that develops “by allowing the world outside the academy to ask questions of us as intellectuals” (Grossberg 1997: 264).

Community ⇔ University

The cultural studies story could be told another way.

Every day the numbers of tourists arriving in Nimbin dwarfs the population of around 500 people. Each shop in the village is occupied and

during business hours street parking is not easily found. For tourists, the main street is a source of astonishment, mostly reactions to the village’s reputation for a relatively visible drug market, particularly marijuana. But there is much more besides that which captivates: shops sell an array of hippy clothing, nostalgic and new in design; candles from the local Nimbin Candle Factory are favorite souvenirs; the bookshop swells with esoteric titles; the availability of alternative healing modalities dominates the single traditional pharmacy; cafes carry a vast array of organic, vegetarian, and vegan options; environmental concerns feature in the street posters; and life in all its richness seems to pour onto the footpaths and street.

The countercultural energy that gives life to this creative outpouring is not solely commercial: it is an ethos that pervades much village activity. Behind the scenes the Rainbow Power Company has been enabling people to decrease their dependence on the coal-fired power grid for 30 years and the Permaculture College spreads a similar message of sustainability and self-sufficiency. The Nimbin community has itself purchased the old high school site for its community center, as well as other buildings including the community art gallery and town hall. Most recently the community purchased a weatherboard cottage to demonstrate retrofitting a house for sustainable living. These communal buildings are also the focus of a solar grid for the village power supply.

And among and intermingled with this rainbow of activity are traditional organizations: the chamber of commerce, the lawn bowling club, the hospital, the agricultural show society, and much more. Countercultures and mainstream cultures flow into each other, as well as having their moments of partition. And beside the rainbow of color there are pockets of despair, mental illness, drug dependence, and exploitation. Nimbin is a complex and confusing site beyond first sight. So how is it that a declining dairy town became a thriving countercultural center?

The local confluence of global economic and technological changes on one hand, and cultural change on the other provide the most rehearsed answer. By the 1970s changes to the northern New South Wales dairy industry had brought a decrease in the working population to small village-based operations such as in Nimbin. Improvements to transport links and more affordable cars enabled travel to the larger shopping center, 30 kilometers away in Lismore. It is a disputed but often made claim that Nimbin in the 1970s was a dying village. Many shops had been shut for some time. It was unclear to the villagers where the future lay (Garbutt 2014).

Nearby, but in a parallel universe, a group of paid and volunteering workers with the Australian Union of Students were looking for a festival site for the biannual *Aquarius Festival of University Arts*. The 1971 Festival in Canberra had been criticized for having a planned program that was too “bourgeois”, and an unofficial program that was too entrenched in oppositional protest. The pitch by the 1973 Festival Director, Graeme Dunstan, and Cultural Director, Johnny Allen, was for a 10-day countercultural festival

with affirmative politics. The festival themes would be “survival on earth and a living affirmation that we do not need to be sold our culture” (May Manifesto, cited in Jiggins 1983). There would be no program, and it would take place on a greenfield site away from the mainstream where experiments toward a new social future could be carried out (Dunstan 1971).

Because of the declining agricultural economy during the 1970s, the NSW far-north coast with its abundant, cheap, subtropical, green fields was becoming known as a countercultural Shangri-la. Nevertheless, a suitable greenfield site for a festival was not easily found and by late 1972 the organizers were desperate. With too little time to turn farmland into a festival venue, a compromise was needed and Col James, an architecture lecturer from Sydney University, saw this situation as an opportunity to “recycle a town”. When the idea was put to Fred Cullen, the president of the Nimbin Show Society, he knew that a festival for 5000 students needed the entire village to be involved in the decision making. A village meeting was called in January 1973 (Dunstan and Allen 2013).

Over 180 people came to the meeting. Graeme Dunstan had done a lot of storytelling in the preceding days and at the meeting did so again. Billy Garner (1973) wrote in the counterculture magazine *The Digger*, how:

[Dunstan] gives a public recitation of The Dream. ... He says that he wants the country culture and the city culture to meet. It's not to be a rock festival, not just a collection of performances, but 'an enlarging of the community for ten days', a sort of a bazaar of alternative lifestyles. Then he offers a simpler bait: a burst of spending; the beginning of craft industries; tourists; a bit of fame for everyone as Nimbin gets onto the map. Above all he claims it will bring young people back to the country.

Bob Marsh, the local police sergeant, was unable to attend the meeting but in a letter read out by the meeting chair implored the community to vote yes. The outcome was that all but four or five gave their assent to the Aquarius Festival coming to Nimbin later that year in May.

In the remaining months prior to the festival, a number of vacant buildings were bought by the Australian Union of Students and transformed into a festival headquarters, food cooperative, café, and meeting place. Students were given subsistence pay in the form of *Nimbuns*, exchangeable for food, while preparing festival infrastructure, taking on community liaison roles, and traveling the nation in performing troupes for publicity. The Sydney-based Bush Video installed Australia's first open-access cable television network across which each day's events would be streamed across wired-in monitors with footage shot by participants who took advantage of video “portapaks” (Allen 1973; Jones 2011: 248–9). A learning exchange was developed for the sharing of skills and knowledge, from natural therapies to weaving, but including such things as bridge lessons from the Lismore Bridge Club.

Throughout the lead-up, Dunstan and Allen put considerable energy into spreading the word “on the lips of the counterculture” (Dunstan and Allen 2013). The word-of-mouth invitation was important because of the festival's experimental form. As they wrote in the May Manifesto, “there will be no program; you are the program. But ...”, Johnny Allen emphasizes:

[W]e spent a very active year [...] going from campus to campus, community to community, inviting people to come and explaining to them how we wanted them to come. We wanted them to come in small self-sufficient tribal groups. We wanted them to find ways of manifesting their lifestyle and what they cared about. [...] So it was really quite an effort to turn the conventional festival on its head.

(in Dunstan and Allen 2013)

It is for this reason that the organizers and many Aquarians eschew the idea that the *Nimbin Aquarius Festival* was Australia's Woodstock, as its ethos was opposed to the idea of having celebrities on stage entertaining a crowd around the clock. Aquarius was a deliberative social experiment with the purpose of creating the society to come.

A concrete expression of this open and experimental social process at the *Aquarius Festival* was the establishment of one of the Rainbow Region's largest intentional communities at Tuntable Falls. While this community was not the first “alternative” community in the region, it presaged an influx of post-Aquarius lifestyle migrants, attracted by the “The Dream” that there is an alternative. As a result, the *Aquarius Festival* left indelible marks on the village. At its best, this has developed into a community that is collaborative, supportive of difference, and creatively sustainable; but conversely, it is also sometimes beset by issues arising from economic deprivation and the drug trade (McGee 2014).

Nimbin is the center of a countercultural change that has rippled through the wider region. The counterculture has nestled in beside a conservative rural community, both of which coexist and engage with each other, sometimes willingly, at other times “if we must”, and that hybridize to produce a regional “vibe”. For example, the community's history and skill in environmental protest and community organizing resulted in an unusually disparate coalition of interests coming together to successfully resist the coal seam gas industry on prime agricultural land (Hartman and Darab 2014). Or, to take another focus, the Rainbow Region, unlike many rural areas in Australia, has been able to embrace sexual diversity so that it has a significant and visible Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Trans-sexual and Inter-sex (GLBTI) community, with the *Tropical Fruits New Years Eve* party being one of the largest GLBTI events held outside the capital cities of Australia (Tropical Fruits Inc. 2013).

It is during this post-1970s period that Southern Cross University in Lismore grew from a Teachers College to a University (Bass 1992). The countercultural presence in the Rainbow Region and the subtropical setting

often attract a somewhat “countercultural” group of academics and proto-academics (though none might use that specific term). And just as there are individuals such as Baden Offord who have infused cultural studies with a distinctive foci and ethos, so too has the local cultural formation and its landscape played a pedagogical role in this same disciplinary process.

University ⇔ Community

I have sketched this scene to explicitly situate the Aquarius Festival 40th anniversary event *Aquarius and Beyond* in terms of cultural studies at Southern Cross University, and in terms of the university within its region.

Aquarius and Beyond began as not much more than enthusiasm and interest. As a university-based member of the *Aquarian Archive*, a volunteer organization dedicated to archiving materials from the NSW far-north coast counterculture, I raised the opportunity for a 40th anniversary collaboration in late 2011: a forum at the university perhaps? The idea received positive nods. Such an event would be not only a way to expand the archive’s collection but also an opportunity to develop a research project examining a significant cultural experiment on the university’s doorstep.

A group of SCU staff and students began planning an event and by May 2012, at the first community-organized meeting at Nimbin Hall to plan the 2013 anniversary, we were ready with a proposal for *Aquarius and Beyond*. We framed it as a:

market of ideas styled as a multiversity event [...] bringing together a range of expressions, reflections and projections into the future: from academic short-papers to performances, from pamphleteering to speaker’s panels and soapboxes, and all points in-between.

(Southern Cross University 2012)

The idea and the university were openly welcomed by the Nimbin community and we were given a prime spot in May after the *Nimbin MardiGrass* (the annual drug law reform rally) and directly preceding the Masked Ball.

Given this timing and our welcome, it was clear that an event held within the safe, convenient, and *cheap* confines of the university campus in Lismore would be an anathema to the Aquarian and community spirit. The university needed to go to Nimbin. From a critical pedagogical point of view this seems obvious—begin where the people are and make education accessible, in this case in geographical terms. It would, however, be one of many instances where convenience or cultural blindness—the enculturated, institutionalized blindness that comes from being in the academy—would be challenged. In this case the convenience of the university setting was because of the established and free facilities. To move to the Nimbin Town Hall, the site of that village meeting which voted “Yes” to the Australian Union of Students changed the financial and logistical equation. What was

to be a simple and free day became a little more complex and a lot more wonderful.

Meanwhile, support for *Aquarius and Beyond* within the wider “Aquarian community” was growing. For many original participants, most now in their 60s and 70s, the desire and space to revisit as well as give due critical regard to a significant moment in their lives had come round. Importantly, too, Graeme Dunstan and Johnny Allen were actively supportive, and this gave our event an Aquarius stamp of approval. When, in 2012, Johnny began a “My Nimbin Aquarius Story” Facebook group that gathered over two hundred and fifty members, word spread about *Aquarius and Beyond*, this time on the new-media-lips of the counterculture. The “Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest” elicited so many responses that the planned 1-day event expanded to 2 days. Its timing on the Thursday and Friday before Saturday’s 40th Anniversary Masked Ball, yielded a neat travel-friendly package of reflection, reunion, and revelry.

To quickly detour to one end of this tale, *Aquarius and Beyond* was a success. People came to what ended up becoming a “community conference”—something resembling an academic conference but substantially handed over to community speakers. Unlike most conferences, audiences grew throughout the 2 days with people coming in from the street to fill Nimbin Hall with up to one hundred and fifty people.

The first day became a critical reflection on the past, with an abundance of storytelling and song. The joy and the life-changing nature of the festival and times were on display. Mixed-in was the acknowledgement that the issues of the 1970s had remained live: the nature of social relationships and institutions and the connections between economy, ecology, and lifestyle were just two of these. And there were places for critical pause: the gendered and racialized assumptions of the times provided two points of focus and debate, as did the issue of new sexual freedoms and its limits in terms of power, exploitation, and abuse. The ability of participants to listen and speak, celebrate, and critically reflect was one sign of the hope and critical optimism that pervaded the event.

The second day considered post-Aquarius Nimbin, now and into the future. For example, on this day pre-Aquarius locals, some now into their 80s, reflected on life in Nimbin before Aquarius and now. Their focus on relationships between cultures rather than on a “straight/hippy” divide was revelatory. A panel of “children of Aquarius”, many now with families of their own, spoke of what they had learned about child-rearing, freedom, and its limits, among other things. Natalie Myer, from the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre, gave a grounded account of maintaining and modifying the Aquarian countercultural ideal in more intensely economic and regulated neoliberal times. Others reflected on the regional history of activism that has produced a community rich in practical knowledge of organizing for change, and which has resulted in such things as environmental victories and new communal property ownership laws. These technologies

of care have been exported to others around the nation and beyond (Page 2014; Ricketts 2012).

Community members and academics spoke, together. Some sang. History was fashioned and sometimes spun. There was a storytelling dinner cum soiree. Archives of audio, video, and material objects were developed. And, *we broke-even*. After a final communal reflection, the closing session wrapped up with Aquarius minstrel Paul Joseph on ukulele leading a spiral dance to the Aquarius hymn, “May the Long Time Sun Shine Upon You (all love surround you, and the pure light within you guide your way home)” (New 2013: 4:14ff).

Aquarius and Beyond provided a community, for whom the place of Nimbin is significant, space to tell stories about itself *to itself*. It was an education for post-Aquarian arrivals in the region to hear about the festival and its build-up, but perhaps more significantly to experience “The Dream” through the spirit of the storytellers, and to consider how and in what form that dream is still active and viable. And it was an education for all to share in Nimbin in the present day and the struggles and hopes that continue. Nimbin itself is a pedagogical site: beyond the headlines of drug busts and beyond the commercialized hippy-dom is a community that takes conscious living seriously: being there among a collection of its people is an “always already” emplaced and engaged education.

Research ⇔ Pedagogy: University ⇔ Community

Cultural studies scholarship has been framed as a political “intervention” into social and cultural practices in an attempt to advance social justice (Bowman 2007). A public intervention, such as *Aquarius and Beyond* generates and demands ethical and scholarly rigor by opening academic cultural practices to the glare of public scrutiny: this is revealing for self and institution. Via social media, critique ensuing from such scrutiny can be rapidly shared, generative in its effect, and demand responsiveness that is enervating and sometimes frightening. And with *Aquarius and Beyond* scrutiny was amplified because “the public” in question was participating in the intervention, with this “public” skilled in cultural critique and intervening on their own terms.

The 2-day community conference was explicitly pedagogical. But it soon became apparent that the larger research project within which the conference was embedded was similarly pedagogical. The research outputs derived from this conference are an obvious manifestation of this, but so too was the research process itself. The act of research engaged during this conference provided concrete expression of what universities do when they research, and how and why they do it. It is in this sense that research as intervention has ethical implications that can reverberate beyond a single project.

It is here too that cultural studies practice, a practice for which ethics “organizes [its] political horizon” (Zylinksa 2005: 3), is well suited to

community-involved research. Initially this derives from valuing everyday life in its multiplicity: a refusal to essentialize any one aspect of culture. Moreover, the discipline’s sensitivity to the power-relations that are integral to cultural practices and processes (including the power-relations that imbue a research project itself) inform a cultural studies researcher’s sensibility: humility is key in publicly pedagogical engagements, whether in the form of a research interview, or an event-planning process. This self-reflexivity provides researcher/interventionists with real-time feedback and checking mechanisms that build relationships. These both benefit the project and, at times, surface boat-rocking revelations about one’s own practice and those of the academy. These public encounters are deeply pedagogical for all involved, if we are open to that potential. The following examples are intended as illustrations of these general points.

The decision to take the university to Nimbin significantly contributed to the success of *Aquarius and Beyond*. It was a surprise to many Nimbinites that we were able to hold and grow a crowd throughout the 2 days at what was, to all appearances, a conference. As Michael Balderstone, Nimbin Hemp Embassy President, told me, “It’s a tough crowd; they don’t stay if they don’t like it” (2013: pers. comm., 24 May). Written feedback showed that hearing one’s own history being told was a rare joy; to have time to meet and talk about local hopes, dreams, and realities was a stimulating pleasure. The familiar location at the Town Hall in the center of the village allowed the audience to grow organically as word spread on the street. The adult educational principle, sequestered by cultural studies, of beginning with people’s lived experience as a source of learning and social transformation was confirmed once again.

Moreover, being in Nimbin enabled community involvement to flourish. When we wanted a stage that could work for both formal presentations and more relaxed panel discussions, the Nimbin Hemp Embassy willingly decked out the stage with sofas and a coffee table for a lounge-room feel. The Aquarius Foundation regularly decorated the hall for cabarets and balls, and so for the conference it was festooned with Benny Zable’s banners of peace and imagination. A local group who had a portable photographic exhibition on local countercultural history was able to set up at the rear of the hall. The overall event was in its place and it was this that grounded all that happened: discussion was opened to the rigor of the street, and to the multiplicity of the place. It felt real.

The move to Nimbin did, of course, challenge us. Community accessibility, for example, is more than physical; financial considerations accompanied wider participation infusing event management and the budget with ethical dimensions. Our initial budget based on the norm of utilizing professional conference management together with credit card prepayment yielded a \$150 entry fee to break even. The \$150 fee would also effectively fence off the event from many locals who are on subsistence incomes. After a visit to Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre for advice, I was given the

clear message about “the way we do things here”: we don’t use credit cards; we make sure people get well fed; and we keep it local—local caterer, local produce, vegan, and vegetarian. I drove the 30 kilometers back to Lismore feeling as if I had arrived in Nimbin unsuitably dressed in a suit and carrying a patent leather briefcase.

The sensible option was to reorganize Nimbin-style. There would be no outsourced conference management and we would take cash only at the door. We organized a local caterer. Southern Cross University supplied, as an “in-kind” contribution, a technician and van packed with sound, lighting, and recording equipment for the conference; a video setup for one-on-one cultural history interviews; scanning equipment for document archiving; and a photographic studio setup for a “photobooth”. After the initial setup all students ran all the technical services. With a budget recalculation and some wishful thinking we set the price at \$30 for the 2 days.

And still there were issues. When I publicized *Aquarius and Beyond* with a \$30 entry fee on the popular local Facebook grapevine “Nimbin Hookups”, the second theme of the 1973 *Aquarius Festival*, “we do not need to be sold our culture” (May Manifesto in Jiggins 1983), was quoted in protest. Comments about the cost of “hearing our own history” quickly appeared with growing numbers of “likes”. A rapid response was needed to preserve the integrity of and goodwill toward the project. From our organizers’ point of view the fee was justified because of the known expenses, and yet there is still the issue that despite the ‘oily rag’ on which the event was run, the university does have resources and perceived riches, as do staff members such as me. To us \$30 might be a trifle but on a precarious income the price was significant. So along with an explanation of why there was a fee, I took a leap of faith into “karma pricing”, a locally well-understood price mechanism: pay the suggested price, what you think it is worth, or what you can afford. After tallying the door takings that ranged from a freshly picked flower to \$150, we broke even.

Another instance where university culture had an exclusionary impact was the “Call for Papers” and “Expressions of Interest”. Our hope was for performances of all kinds and ‘papers’ of all kinds. Nevertheless in my correspondence I did ask for a title and an “abstract or outline” of the contribution. In an email exchange with an influential community member who was worried about coming up with a title and an outline, I wrote to say not to “make a big thing out of it but just write in your own words what you want to talk about”. I also suggested a title. I didn’t think more of this until a number of miscommunications created enough fuel for an outpouring of feedback, which in essence, suggested that on the one hand I would use words like “collaborative event” in event emails, but that in effect this collaboration was token. For example, enquirers asked, “what support was there for community members to work out their own title for a talk and put together words for a so-called abstract or outline?”

On reflection, but too late for *Aquarius and Beyond*, I perceived an academic-shaped cultural void in the organizing. This void could have been addressed with preliminary workshops for those wanting to be part of the event but for whom the academic cultural artifacts of “title and abstract” were foreign objects. Here was a chance to take the educational and collaborative potential of the project another step forward by learning together about each others’ cultural practices and ways. This lack of critical cultural awareness was an embarrassing revelation. While *Aquarius and Beyond* was successful, the opportunities for improvement of process are many.

These instances demonstrate how a community of onlookers provides a form of rigor that is not focused on robust methods and appropriately aligned theoretical frameworks, but on other aspects of process and ethics. The ethical implications of research-as-intervention become palpable as it manifests itself in relationships with people who are ready to call a process to account when it goes astray. The accounts here regarding the charges for attending *Aquarius and Beyond* and the process for developing the program are small instances where a light is shone onto oneself within university culture and the effect of that culture on the people who are being asked to interact with it.

Nevertheless, *Aquarius and Beyond* was a significant event for both the community and the larger research project. For the community it highlighted the village’s key cultural role within the Rainbow Region, and provided a multivoiced and reflexive event, in place and with a concern for the present and future. For the ongoing research project that grew from the festival, we had in one location access to many of the key actors within that history, and most importantly, we developed relationships that would provide us with a group of peers that complements those of the academy. Then there are relationships with the community that are forged by together doing the things that constitute such education and research. Importantly, from a cultural studies perspective, what this affords is “theorizing [that can] happen ‘in place’ and not in isolation from the lived contexts of the everyday” (Tomaselli and Mboti 2013: 533).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the *Aquarius and Beyond* community conference, an event situated within a larger ongoing community-engaged research project. The event itself may be considered in a number of ways. In the context of the contemporary higher education sector within Australia it can be seen as a response to community-engagement agendas that focus research on utility and relevance to the wider community and society. Alternatively, within cultural studies, this project and the event might also be seen in terms of a turn away from textual analysis and toward ethnography: a methodological accompaniment to the utilitarian repurposing of university research. I argue that this is a limited analysis.

My argument for engaged cultural studies research is not an exclusive one. Engaged cultural studies research is one expression of an ecology of disciplinary modes of developing a research agenda. In a small regional university setting where community and university are intimately interwoven, combined with increasing demands upon the teaching-research cultural studies scholar, community-engaged research and teaching is not only a pragmatic possibility, but an ethical response. Given that many students at new generation universities are the first-in-family to attend university, community-engagement situates theory in relation to everyday experience. Techniques of critical analysis can be combined with an ethnographic approach to that which is accessible both beyond the classroom and within it. Research agendas readily emerge in this milieu. As a privileged institution amidst a plethora of local interests and needs, the academy should be at the service of the community. Not exclusively, of course, but as part of the reciprocity that constitutes everyday life and relationships.

These factors, combined with a critically aware countercultural current in the region, have nurtured a specific configuration of cultural studies at Southern Cross University—one that is overtly (self)-reflexive whether in terms of local and global concerns, self and others, everyday life and theory, or university and community. There has been a *geophilosophical* (and perhaps what might be called a minor *geopedagogical*) dynamic at work producing this cultural studies configuration.

Aquarius and Beyond is located within this milieu. The event functions as a research and pedagogical site; it is situated between university and community, and so is an intervention that has the potential to create effects in each domain. Indeed if all research is an intervention, then this aspect of cultural studies work is amplified when that research engages directly with communities. The research becomes pedagogical for all involved: it teaches communities about universities and vice versa, and the outcomes are neither predictable nor always complimentary. The risk that the research process itself might go horribly wrong, thereby decreasing the fund of community goodwill between the academy and the community, intensifies the research experience. From processes of collaboration, to the ethics of ownership of cultural knowledge, to the politics of representation while living as a researcher amidst the community of research participants, engaged research generates a critically reflexive research environment. Research outcomes are both substantive with regard to explicit research aims, and emerge from reflexively occupying the roles into which academic research interpellates all involved. And each role—researcher, researched, onlooker, expert—is variously occupied by the same individual at different times.

Thus, as an example of a research event, the *Aquarius and Beyond* community conference carries within it a countercultural impetus. It stimulates a critical reflection on recent regional history and on academic research and pedagogical processes. Community, place, and academy are put into relationship with each other and for the academy and cultural studies this

opens our practices and processes to the outside. Opening any system to a wider environment involves risks, but it also multiplies the possibilities for enriching life. This is just one sense in which community-engaged research resonates with the very purpose of cultural studies as a critical pedagogical project. And just as it opens possibilities for that project, so too does it potentially enliven the communities in which it is actively situated.

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3 Learning to be Men Masculinities, Pedagogy, and Science Fiction

Linda Wight

Like many cultural studies practitioners, my research, learning, and teaching are concerned with critiquing and contesting taken-for-granted assumptions that posit that human identities and social structures are fixed, natural, and inevitable. These are assumptions that can contribute to social disadvantage, oppression, and inequity. My research has focused in particular on problematizing hegemonic ideals of masculinity and in exploring the potential for science fiction to critique and offer alternatives to these dominant models. This chapter reflects on the embodied experience of doing this form of cultural studies in the classroom, of exploring these ideas in the context of a pedagogical exchange with undergraduate university students enrolled in a fantasy and science fiction course. Both the experience of masculinity—for men and women—and the activities of learning and teaching are deeply embodied. The purposes of this chapter are therefore twofold. First, I argue that science fiction is a useful tool for encouraging students to develop their awareness of how popular culture functions as a form of public pedagogy that frames how each of us experience masculinity. While some science fiction takes hegemonic ideals of gender for granted and encourages us to do the same, other texts problematize these assumptions by showing us the potential for bodies to be lived and experienced differently. Second, by reflecting on my own embodied experience of teaching science fiction in a university classroom, this chapter aims to encourage teachers to think about how we actually do cultural studies with our students and to move beyond conceiving of the classroom as a purely intellectual space to also embrace the bodily dimension of our practice.

Learning Masculinity: Popular Culture, Public Pedagogy, and the University Classroom

Cultural studies theorists have long identified popular culture as a form of public pedagogy, both as a crucial site for the production of hegemonic identities and as a potential site for critique and imagination of counter-hegemonic possibilities (Sandlin, Schultz and Burdick 2010: 3; Wright 2010: 141). Public pedagogies include those “spaces, sites, and languages of education and learning that exist outside of the walls of the institution of schools” (Sandlin, Schultz and Burdick 2010: 1), and it is largely from

The Pedagogies of Cultural Studies

Pedagogy is foundational to cultural studies. At the very outset cultural studies positioned pedagogy as significantly more than just formalised and institutionally-centred activations of teaching and learning. For cultural studies, pedagogy is witnessed in the social practices, relationships, routines and life-ways that people engage in the living of lives.

This collection presents accounts that move beyond simple (and simplistic) articulations of pedagogy as occurring solely within the classroom. Taking the Self, the disciplinary formations and institutional settings of cultural studies as its sites of activation, *The Pedagogies of Cultural Studies* seeks to look again at the implications presented by pedagogy and the foundation that pedagogy provides for doing cultural studies. Evident not only in the objects of study prefigured by cultural studies but also in the practice of the discipline itself, pedagogy mediates cultural studies' disciplinary terrain and the signatures that shape its conduct.

Andrew Hickey is Associate Professor in Communications in the School of Arts and Communication, University of Southern Queensland, and President of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia.

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For Chris, my brother, my teacher

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