

Future Subjects? Education, Activism and Parental Practices

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This paper considers the 'coming forward' of certain classed subjects through the fields of education, parenting and activism. Questions of the future pose who, where and when questions: who is 'stuck' in the past, who is capacitated as taking 'us' forward, and what embodied, spatial and material collisions occur in these renderings of past-present-future? I locate feminist questions in educational trajectories, parental practices and forms of activism, and highlight the implicatedness of past and present in 'travelling' beyond research trajectories. As some are recognized as activating their own (and their families') futures, others are condemned as failing, irresponsible and out-of-place. This is a distinctly classed process, witnessed in educational journeys and the parental - even activist - claims enacted therein. In these encounters, class 'sticks' as waste and as wrong, as a past residue attached to those behind the times and without worthy futures.

Keywords: Class, Education, Gender, Parenting, Futures, Activism

Introduction: Class as a future subject?

This paper considers the 'coming forward'¹ of certain classed subjects through the fields of education, parenting and activism. In these locations, some subjects are praised as future orientated while others are condemned as stuck in the past, redundant and wasteful. Processes of mobilization and capitalization, often esteemed as success, care and mobility, are located alongside sticky issues of failure, waste and immobility. I argue that only certain subjects can make legitimate claims on the future - as educated, knowing and

responsible citizens and parents (or 'parenting citizens'). Even when these claims are rendered precarious they are, in the case of non-normative ('queer') lesbian and gay parents, still recuperated and accumulative, buffering middle-class children as future citizens (Ahmed 2002; Skeggs 2004; Parker 2010). Gender inequalities also impact on these claims with many feminist researchers speaking to the gendering of social futures, as women are welcomed and celebrated as now-included in the worlds of work and education, becoming unstuck from family cares and all-consum-

ing parental practices (Adkins 2002; McRobbie 2009; Taylor 2012a). The interconnected spheres of family, education and employment are located as sites of change, offering new, capacitated and equalized futures, to be activated by achieving subjects. Women in particular are called upon to be present, to be new future subjects standing-in as visible signs of gender equity (McRobbie 2009). At the same time, many have queried this celebrated post-gender arrival, given that inequalities are re-configured rather than erased within the still profoundly gendered sites of family, education, and employment (Armstrong 2010; Evans 2010). As some women are recognized as activating their own (and their families') futures, others are condemned as failing, irresponsible and out-of-place (Parker 2010). This is a distinctly classed process, witnessed in educational journeys and the parental - even activist - claims enacted therein. In these encounters, class 'sticks' as waste and as wrong, as a past residue attached to those behind the times and without worthy futures (Allen and Taylor 2011).

To argue that this is so, is not to efface the inevitably intersectional collisions of, for example, class, gender and race, which re-emerge in struggles over futures, and the right and entitlement to be present and legitimate within key sites of parenting and education (Caballero 2007; Gillies 2007; Reynolds 2010, 2012; Taylor 2009). Empirically, I

have always hoped to be attentive and resistant to class, in mapping my own sense of place in and outside of academia and in keeping class present on academic agendas, as I see it misplaced and absent (particularly in sexualities research, see Taylor 2011c for an overview). Attention is increasingly given to identities as fluid, flexible, multifaceted and de-territorialised, rather than located in distinct, solid markers of a person's position (fixed employment positions, stable regional identities). Such 'fluidities' often centre those entitled and mobile in relation to geographical residence and lifestyle variety, anticipating how, who and where to be, as a future orientation and self-becoming (Addison 2012). Notions of choice and change also shape research preferences where new sociological methods are proposed to focus '... upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon a stasis, structure and social order' (Urry 2000, 18 in Adkins 2002, 4). Such a call variously recognises the ways that class, gender, race and nationhood are redone anew and often aims to take account of social paradoxes and contradictions (Tolia-Kelly 2010). Despite this, less is said of the retention of identities and enduring inequalities as class in particular is dismissed as a relic of the past, even as it re-emerges in fields of 'future-making': it is remade in the construction and claiming of familial identities, located here

in the spheres of education, activism and parental practices (Taylor 2009; Browne 2011; Dixon 2011). These are sites of enduring feminist concerns - they are also sites of belonging and welfare where 'future citizens' (and 'parenting citizens') are made, mobilized and excluded.

Pressing classed intersections reside in, and are reproduced through, new-old labours, research projects, and academic productions. Where others have pointed to the 'stickiness' of race (Ahmed 2002; Toilia-Kelly 2010) as a blockage and a stopping or curtailing, of futures, I point to class and sexuality as also bound up in 'sticking', 'blocking' and facilitating futures. The stories that I tell are themselves 'sticky'; they are re-told by me through my particular empirical and theoretical stances (class and sexual positions are also 'stuck' to me as biographical realities and points of dis-identification²) and they collide as intersectional, slippery and lived concerns rather than as points which can be neatly added to constitute *the* future subject. Many have argued for a more intersectional framing of class, with Linda McDowell (2008) claiming that any re-focus on class must not marginalize gender, or sexuality; it must not make claims to a simple return-to-class as abandonment of intersectionality and other lines of difference (see Binnie 2011; Taylor 2012a). In empirically and theoretically turning to classed lives - including my own - I both take seriously

the necessity of 'intersectionality' while refusing a reduction of class analysis, and classed lives, as never enough (Taylor et al. 2010). As I will hope to make clear, middle-class lives, futures and even 'failures' are worthy of comment, rather than being left simply unstated, obvious or celebrated: many have pointed to the worth of interrogating normative identities and positioning (such as whiteness, able-bodiedness, heterosexuality) and I hope to join this conversation on a level which is empirically plausible and which questions class and sexuality in framing futures.

Questions of the future pose who, where and when questions: who is 'stuck' in the past, who is capacitated as taking 'us' forward, and what embodied, spatial and material collisions occur in these rendering of past-present-future? In times of global economic, environmental and social crisis, I seek to highlight whose paths get marked as urgent, and which routes get facilitated and endorsed. Here, I dwell on these questions in relation to intersecting UK and US research projects and travels, which have all been variously concerned with matters of social inequality and justice; of bringing forward attention to enduring inequalities and their new-old shape. In 2010, I was granted a Fulbright Distinguished Scholars Award held at Rutgers University in the US, which enabled a temporary exit from the changing UK landscape of high-

er education at a time of mass public outrage about increased tuition fees and devastating welfare reforms (Taylor 2010). In 2012 I spent time at the University of California, Berkeley as a visiting professor and, again, colleagues congratulated me on my protected status as someone able to enjoy time away from UK higher education³ (productive academic labour did not seem to carry despite the rhetoric of 'internationalisation', 'diverse' academic routes and a more 'global university' economy). Many warned of empty, depleted returns and shifting balances between research-teaching in an all change 'no future' moment. Being geographically near and far away in inhabiting UK and US academia, and being aware of, for example, the different meanings and experiences of class and sexuality, leaves me wondering about what is held between educational journeys and distances. These are questions that I map on to my own (non)academic trajectories just as they are mapped onto interviewees' accounts and experiences. In writing, and researching, I am aware that I may well be producing only myself as a global moving academic subject (Skeggs 2002; Taylor 2012). Yet these projects have all variously 'failed' too, in that they don't by and through themselves create *the future feminist* subject⁴, capacitating only my own professional mobility (Taylor 2012). The question of broader social futures both 'theirs' and 'mine' is

one I hope to hold close as an urgent measure of feminist engagement and practice across time and place. This calls for a different attentiveness to claims made for and by 'future subjects', rather than wholly rejecting or discarding these complicated intersections.

As I locate feminist concerns and interventions in educational trajectories, parental practices and forms of activism, I highlight the implicatedness of past and present in travelling beyond research trajectories. I urge attentiveness to enduring disparities rather than ending with personal, or even politicized 'failure' as a transgressive non-normative 'art' (Taylor et al. 2010; Taylor 2011c; Halberstam 2012). Judith Halberstam (2012) points to the queer art of failure, as a stepping out of the expectations and binds of femininity, family and even feminism - as it is located onto perhaps surprising (if non-academic is indeed a surprise) celebrity icons (such as Lady Gaga). This holds an appeal, a loud, proud coming-forward of youthful, playful femininity, removed from the everyday of education and employment, into the realm of subversion and performativity. Despite the appeal, not everyone gets to re-brand their 'failures' as successes; some of these act not as performative openings, but as sticking points, where the wrong type of femininity, family, feminism and 'failure' is read as fact (Gillies 2006; Taylor 2012a). Awareness of the classing of such

futures or failures sits uneasily with Lee Edelman's (2004) notion of queer politics as one which explicitly rejects reproductive futurism - any queer concerns over education and family are not really queerly political, simply parental and parochial. His call to 'fuck the child' while dramatic and dystopian, sidelines the ways that some classed bodies/citizens/families/futures are already 'lost' and dis-invested in; some bodies simply do not get imagined as having a presence or a future (Taylor, 2011a). As such it is important to ask who has the discursive and material power to construct and enact Edelman's call for a certain queer politics and non-responsiveness to 'future subjects'. When the UK Prime Minister David Cameron is arguably 'fucking' over a whole generation of children, can Edelman's call really be understood as transgressive?

Academics have brought critical perspectives to bear on the complex educational, familial and employment causes and consequences of the 2011 summer's UK riots, as questions of what the future holds for 'today's youth' are dramatically highlighted. These interventions have unsettled the easy answers offered by some politicians, media outlets and the police. And they unsettle again notions of performativity, failure and a 'fucking' of the future which is already denied to some, with waste, loss and failure stuck to specific bodies ('youth')

and locations (Black and Minority Ethnic and working-class neighbourhoods). Important questions have been raised about the relationship between 'rioting' and the increasingly hostile conditions of neoliberalism and Coalition policies, including; growing unemployment, rising tuition fees, the withdrawal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, cuts to Sure Start and an overhaul of welfare provision (Allen and Taylor 2012). There are distances and cross-overs between UK and US provision in changing climates. With my health insurance certificate tucked safely away every time I enter the US, along with other visa documents, approvals and invites, I am conscious of the borders we re-create around belonging and entitlement at local as well as (inter) national levels. Futures are created and extended across local, regional, national and international spaces, affectively and materially. Facts and figures could undoubtedly be pored over here, including respective spending on healthcare in different countries. The human cost in lives and deaths produces much more intimate and urgent concerns and negate a romanticized appeal to 'fail' and step out the system (Taylor 2012b).

Pragmatic reorientations to future subjects and attentiveness to the emplacement of subjects in and through the university (see Back 2007), could begin to remedy the classed binary between future po-

tential and wasteful subjects (Evans 2010; Parker 2010). Understandings of whose future, where and when may be pragmatically and practically orientated to the inequalities which exist in the present, with the hope of working towards different, plural, inclusive futures (rather than failing-failed futures as normatively lamented or non-normatively celebrated). What this reorientation means in the research context is subject to challenge where income and impact are increased measures of a successful viable even enterprising future, involving individual accumulation via CV additions ('income', 'impact') (Back 2007; Taylor and Addison 2011). As the editors point out, changing social and educational dynamics shape upon research and the 'future subjects' that are constituted therein; we fail them in giving up on other possible futures negotiated and engaged in by researcher-researched-research.

Educational Futures: Theirs and Mine

If we strive for positive futures in and through academia, what does this now look like in a changing educational landscape? How do we negotiate the spatial and temporal collisions of impact agendas and a hierarchy of universities as future-orientated regenerators, bringing forward capacitated citizens? The entrepreneurial university – and indeed the 'entrepreneurial' funded researcher – has been tasked with

making an impact in responsabilising citizens to come forward and make a difference as part of a 'Big Society' (as conveyed in shifting funding priorities). The discourse of the entrepreneur has directly influenced the role of universities in, among other things, developing more intense collaborations with industry and increased involvement in regional economic development. Within this model, enterprise and entrepreneur are striking concepts that have become synonymous with the colonisation of academia by the market (Allen et al. 2012). What and who are our future subjects (future students) and how can different pasts-presences be mapped onto this? There are several points on the map, rather than a start and finishing line. So I first turn to the University as one of my present, pressing locations. The promise of entering and achieving in Higher Education is at once seductive (CVs produced, academic stars circulated internationally) and disturbing, felt and encountered across the university environment, via administrative, teaching and research concerns. These points of arriving, departing and travelling through institutional space intersect with occupying academia in particular recessionary times where the future of education is in threat.

As a visiting scholar at US 'premier public university', the University of California, Berkeley⁵ (2012), I see commonalities in the 'happy, diverse student' urgently en-

gaged in disseminating value and distinction as cure for future educational and economic crises - their place is best, their choice correct. At Berkeley, even the 'old' history of activism, radicalism and institutional dis-engagement is re-invoked and made safe, or somewhat safer, in the name of variety, where everyone is present, and even the (activist) past is recast with future value. The 'first', 'best' and 'biggest' would be words likely to be found elsewhere - as on my guided campus tour - and one can wonder about the room for improvement, gaps, and 'failure' in these well-defined university maps.

Cynical sentiment was nonetheless displaced by the undergraduate Biology student leading a tour around Berkeley campus on a sunny March morning; she lead us on a hour and a half walking trip, complete with historical facts, key statistics and noteworthy venues on and off campus. She was adding to her CV, her future employability, just trying to get by and facing life-long future debts (Taylor 2008; Evans 2010). She excelled as a university representative and her enthusiasm earned her resounding applause as she related her weekly timetable, extra-curricular activities, and exam success. As Evans (2012) highlights, educational entrances require these ready, activated subject positions, with UK University Central Admissions System stating the application is '... your opportunity to

tell universities and colleges about your suitability for the course(s) that you hope to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd' (UCAS 2011, in Evans 2012).

In being duly impressed by this student standing-out-from-the-crowd, I was joined by other potential outstanding students who were informed about the 25% admissions success rate. Eager parents were keen to find out what their child should put in her or his personal statement - how to make the special child become part of the special institution, to secure that special future. While choice of activities, eateries and societies was described, I wondered how this process of alignment already demarcates a 'good fit' for future students, institutional stories, and societal success (Taylor 2010).

The sun was shining and it was hard not to 'just believe' as one banner, quoting words from a current smiling student urged us to do. Our guide was believable, committed, determined. And isn't that just what we would want from good students? On a sunny day, with an unobstructed view of the Golden Gate Bridge (this line of sight is university owned and protected), this all seemed perfectly plausible. But the tour also hinted at presences and absences beyond these lines of sight. We tried to find the university mascot, a

Golden Bear, on the first university building (1873). I put my glasses on for the task, confident that I could master it and also achieve. The bear, so the story goes, is a guardian, a mother bear who is watching over her cubs. Many parents smiled and the journey from home to university was made safe and familial. The emergency poles, promising a 1.5 minute response time from on-campus police, if the button is pushed, also reassured of a 24/7 presence. Campus is made safe, students are located, and futures are confirmed as familiar/familial.

(Future) students are ever-more implicated in the marketing of their universities, often awkwardly displayed in costly ways (Taylor and Scurry 2011). Students appear in prospectuses and even on welcoming banners, where their eager presence and happy faces stand for institutional happiness, diversity and success (Ahmed 2009; Addison 2012). Their presence often represents a resilient endurance, where the successful face of the university shines on, despite the devastation of Higher Education. The personal and professional collide here, where standing for the university can also mean standing for and supporting your own value, now made public for a personal return ('employability', 'International' diversity and career mobility). In the UK context, students are warned that NSS scores attach to themselves, marking current status and future

employability: 'complete the survey, if you don't, you lose too'. In a time of cut-backs, there is a heightened urgency to market your university – and yourself – via institutional reputations/credentials, to ensure that the map of campus, even if cut-back and under-funded, is still resilient and responsive.

As with many UK campuses, a park-feel is maintained at Berkeley and I strolled over Strawberry Lake via a wooden bridge. Echoing many University Open Days, eager parents pushed to the front and asked their questions - this time about trees, wildlife and plants. Protection and security is naturalised, even as the construction of this pervades the architecture and ecology of campus, also present in evoking scenic sounds, taste and smells (Australian Eucalyptus trees, International House café). These scenes shifted as an all-in-pink team ran past declaring their search for a 'Berkeley personality'; we were told of opportunities to join the cheerleading squad (and even imagine ourselves as having a 'Berkeley Personality'). This kind of future may well be enticing...

But just as you reach for that university personality, as I reached for the university door, we were told that all outside door handles had been removed after student protestors chained themselves to such handles not that long ago. The student of today has, perhaps, no choice but to align; to be un-obstructive to these

directing pathways as 'good guides'. My Berkeley guide did all this with good humour, intelligence and pride. She told the story of Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, who, sitting above the arched entrance bestows knowledge on those entering the library. Because Athena is greedy, as well as knowledgeable, she takes this away as students make their exit. Universities have this knowing, yet greedy, potential, and the strategies to resist this - in times of abiding doors (without handles) - are vital. Suspicious students, we are told, choose a different exit. But what would it mean for universities to choose another entrance? To be responsive to those not included on campus and not identified as future subjects/workers/citizens and not capacitated as 'coming forward'?

But even a supposed responsiveness to those off campus can be re-worked to close down possibilities and futures; to highlight an inevitable failure rather than a more equalized plural future. 'A Smug Education' (Delbanco 2012) responded to previous US Republican Presidential Candidate, Rick Santorum's attack on American colleges as 'indoctrination mills', which we are advised not to enter. In his call, Barack Obama was named as a 'snob' for urging Americans to go to college, with universities cleverly placed as unknowing, out-of-touch and pretentious, while 'reality' and hard work are situated elsewhere. In these colliding claims, it is vital that the hard work

of students and staff is foregrounded on and off campus, where broader conceptualizations of learning may also exceed the numerical count of entrance and (employment) exits, only conferred in following specific, and often expensive, university routes and certain futures. These dis-junctures in and around university settings (mis)place young people as future citizens, subjects and workers, posing the question of who can inherit the future.

Inheriting the Future: 'I've Got You'

Despite differences in welfare regimes, educational provisioning and the private financing of post-compulsory education, debates in both the UK and US frequently position the middle-class white child as the new potential victim of a 'lottery' system which robs them of their inherent right to elite educational access. The grief – and joy – in failed/fostered futures re-appears regularly in US and UK press. *Time* magazine's front page recently declared 'The Truth About Tiger Moms'⁶ attaching future economic competitiveness between the USA and China onto children's achievements, as accumulated and transmitted through families (and specifically via mothers' gendered labour). This news feature produced much commentary on practices of good parenting as bringing forward future citizens – yet this hope/practice for the future is not to be transmitted

to all. Witness the criminalisation of Tanya McDowell, a homeless mother charged with the crime of sending her son to a better school by lying about her address in the context of locational and classed stratifications around educational provision, as reported in the *New York Times* (Applebome 2010).

Somewhat differently, *Lesbian and Gay Parenting: Securing Social and Educational Capital* (2009) explores changing welfare regimes and recognitions in the UK context. Jeffrey Weeks (2007) explores the 'coming forward' of certain subjects in moments of sexual citizenship, and sums this up as a linear success across time and place, a 'winning of worlds' in which LGBT citizens are now capacitated and filled with life (as parents, citizens, recognized subjects) as opposed to death (as criminals, deviants, sick-subjects). The increasing existence of rights gained and demanded by LGBT activists/scholars (manifest around e.g. Civil Partnership Acts, Equalities Legislation), often intersects parental claims, hopes and 'failures'. To some extent these new rights represent a success and a securing of (feminist) futures in so far as claims can be made on the State and new existences can be secured and materialized; further, individual and family futures are also protected and legitimised in these socio-cultural transformations. But even seemingly subversive 'winning' practices project specific futures aligned to –

rather than challenging of – societal and educational inequalities.

In the broader project, I argue that middle-class parental practices seek to bring forth a future capacitated citizen, as a measure of queer parents' *sameness to* and *even success against* their heterosexual counterparts: (re)producing a certain future involves a turn from social difference, disgust and abjection to one of sameness, inclusion and a desirable diversity (Taylor 2011a, b). Within this process of resourcing the good, succeeding child, others are positioned as failing, excessive and culpable. This has an embodied and spatial dimension where (social, parental) 'disgust' is re-located onto working-class bodies and practices. The shaping of children's bodies/spaces as a (middle-class) caring act involves 'choice', 'balance' and 'discernment' as indicators of diversity/difference, and as claims upon a new improved version of good parenting. By positioning working-class families as failing children, the implication is that they are also failing to bring forth a certain future, capacitated citizen; working-class families' choices and realities remain fixed through notions of risk and blame. While queer parents were once positioned rather homogeneously as gambling with social futures, this judgment now firmly attaches itself to working-class parents and re-embeds current injustices.

To turn to some empirical examples from queer 'parent citizens',

many middle-class interviewees celebrated their children's entrance to 'very graded' 'top schools', in the 'top 5%' in the UK'. Awareness of different gradations of successful and failing schools, gauged through published league tables, often generated a fear around political changes and disruption, leading 'good judgements' to be troubled. Middle-class respondents spoke of feeling nervous of changes in schools' admissions policies, which would make children's education somewhat of a 'lottery'. Jess speaks of doing her homework and selecting a better school outside of her immediate catchment area, capitalising on family connections:

It's really important that they get a good education and it has affected the choice of schools – they go to one just outside of the catchment area. We researched the local schools, their dad's a teacher and so we made him do his homework and read the Ofsted reports, which then enabled us to pick a school with good results and a nice feel. It's a state school but we've been selective.
(Jess, 43, middle-class)

These respondents, however, did not face the penalty of homeless mother Tanya McDowell, criminalized for her 'poor parenting' despite her attempted strategies at exactly this kind of maneuvering. Others, predominantly working-class respondents, in my study were more

uncertain in exercising a selective discernment, speaking instead of their children 'just being happy', where they could be provided for, socially as well as educationally. The value in proximity was gauged through access to friends, where their kids could enjoy the company of others living locally. Mostly working-class parents spoke of local schools as the 'obvious' or only 'straightforward' choice: '...I didn't think about it really. I'm not sort of a great pick and chooser' (Katerina, 52, working-class). Here, the local was 'good enough' for parents and children, while middle-class parents spoke of the local as sufficient when it was also a 'good school' – entry was not automatic but was instead sited as suitable only when it worked educationally.

Queer theorists, such as Edelman (2004), reject claims around reproductive futurism, which can be at least partly located in overlapping in parental and educational sites. Yet, this transgressive 'opting out' does not resonate with efforts made in 'getting-by' by those lost in the accumulative logics of bringing forward certain classed futures. It is not that working-class parents are 'stuck' in place but rather they are unlikely to be recognised in research, social policies, media and popular representations, which foregrounds agentic capacities, mobility and 'good parenting', or in research which poses dystopian/transgressive rejection. How then to locate

these futures and failures and to recuperate value amidst distinction and discrediting?

Edelman (2004) provides a critique of the state of play within queer theory and queer lives, where queer politics is dependent upon the rejection of reproductive futurism: 'queerness names the side of those not 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism' (2004,3, italics in original). Read in the context of a politics that centers on same-sex marriage, parenting and reproductive rights, Edelman's call to 'fuck the child' represents a rejection of reproductive futures and parental 'credentials', citizenship and claims-making. Indeed, Edelman argues that the queer subject is defined by all that is negative and non-productive. Rather than responding with calls for equality and recognition, Edelman urges queers to embrace negativity and non-futurity. For Edelman, standing outside reproductive futurism entails standing outside of futurism itself: 'Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from Les Mis; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital Is and with small; fuck the whole network of symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop' (Edelman 2004, 29). This call sidelines the ways that some classed bodies/citizens/fami-

lies/futures are already lost within these logics. In everyday practices of queer parenting, classed realities shatter and complexify measures of homo-hetero-normativity, where the 'coming forward' for some (via e.g. Civil Partnership recognition) erases the immediacy of fundamental classed presences, inequalities and endurances (Taylor 2011b).

The fantasy of the 'good parent' and the 'good child' who can be resourced and propelled into the future is a profoundly classed and (hetero-homo) normative discourse and practice which re-circulates in current times. In relation to LGBT parental sites and struggles, as with educational sites and struggles more generally, it can be asked: whose movements or 'coming forward' into citizenship take 'us' somewhere? When children act as condensed signifiers of the future of 'the family' and, by extension, the nation, it is important to trouble the linear narrative of futurity and coming forward which capacitates some (middle-class) subjects as capable, rendering others as culpable. But it is also important to carve out a claim for – rather than rejection of – plural futures, where these can be re-orientated as pragmatic, practical and as also existing in the everyday 'here and now' (Gillies 2006; Armstrong 2010).

Consider this other 'queer' everyday example: the playful video 'I've got you' by Black, female, gay US rapper, Mélange Lavonne (2008),

which represents some of the issues of raising children in LGBT households. The images and accompanying song depict the normal activities of childhood and parenting and we witness the not so unusual footage of children in play parks, held lovingly, if notably, between two (prepared) queer mums:

You weren't even here yet and I'm preparing myself,
I'm trying to give you the best, like love and help

So I'm doing everything I can even though they keep telling me Raising kids needs a woman and man.

But I met your other mama, that's the love of my life,
I got down on one knee and made her my wife

And we both wanted kids so we made it a plan.

I gave up the two seater and bought me a van.

(Lavonne 2008)

The song describes anticipated discrimination, to be dealt with and buffered by preparedness (such as education, which sets a 'good foundation'), maturity and financial investment. While an 'ordinariness' is undermined *and* mobilised throughout, responding to anticipated negative responses constructed through sexual, class and racial inequalities, there is a tension in voicing defences and 'attacks' without re-invoking normative notions of what – or who – constitutes good or bad parents:

I used to spend money now all I do is invest.

So you can go to college and be as great as you can

And accomplish all your dreams as a young woman or man.

But until then help you get an awesome education,

And make sure you're the proper age when you start dating.

(Lavonne 2008)

Sentiments of bringing forth a proper future at the right time are heard in the call for some parents to rethink their parenting skills, placed in the context of crime, drug taking and parental disinterest, summarised in the defiant declaration that 'I'm not saying I might be a better parent than you, what I'm saying is that I am a better parent than you' (Lavonne 2008). Such claims, even if subversively and defiantly made, deploy and re-inscribe distinctions of value, worth and respectability.

Education fuels parental anxieties and 'winning' victories, echoed in Lavonne's rap as well as in empirical accounts of lesbian and gay parents in the UK. Such sentiments are re-articulated over lives - and deaths - of queer youth. 'Queer suicides', including the suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi in September 2010, fuel complex educational-parental-activist responses (apparent and felt as I visited Rutgers University in 2010-11, see Taylor 2011a). Following the death

of Clementi, the 'It Gets Better' Campaign started by openly gay columnist Dan Savage was posted on Youtube; it now has its own website and book with global hopes of preventing queer suicides and sustaining the future of LGBT communities (see <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>). The campaign's sentiments of protection, danger, mobility, orientate and guide us to certain futures, away from harm.

On the website there is an opening pledge: 'THE PLEDGE: Everyone deserves to be respected for who they are. I pledge to spread this message to my friends, family and neighbors. I'll speak up against hate and intolerance whenever I see it, at school and at work. I'll provide hope for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and other bullied teens by letting them know that 'It Gets Better''. Youtube clips have been archived on this site (given the enormity of responses) providing an insight for queer youth into what the future might hold for them: 'Many LGBT youth can't picture what their lives might be like as openly gay adult ... So let's show them what our lives are like, let's show them what the future may hold in store for them' (<http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>). Celebrities and ordinary 'survivors' are invited to talk about troubled childhoods and developed, successful adulthoods as indicating full recovery, where bullies by contrast are positioned as 'losers', 'weak', 'less worthy' and 'inferior'. The youth of tomorrow are imbued

with a regenerative futurity, a multi-cultural diverse inclusivity, but this is denied to those 'already lost' to public concern and our communities – as homophobic others who should be expelled from institutions and nations⁷, removed as 'backward' and 'out of place'. Many clips from queer people dissent from the happy message of upward mobility and movement to a queer city: some don't 'get out' to be out; some don't get to 'grasp the future' via educational and geographical travels (Taylor 2007). And others too, it seems, function as the depository for the lack of tolerance, affluence and becoming. While homophobia could be located *within* university environments, 'being educated' is described as the solution to discrimination, positioning white middle-classes as rightful inheritors of futures, as liberal correctives against racialised working-class hatred (Puar 2007; Haritaworn 2010). We are asked to lament the deaths of some – those young people who could have 'been something' – while others are already excluded from this future.

Future Subjects, To Be Continued...

Children act as signifiers of the future of family and as future citizens, responsibly inserted into the spaces of education by knowing parents carving out accumulative claims on the future (as 'parenting citizens'). In empirically attending to these claims and practices it is im-

portant to trouble the linear narrative of futurity and coming forward which capacitates some (middle-class) subjects as capable, rendering others as culpable. Articulations of present inequalities and resolved futures (as expressed in *The World We've Won*, Weeks 2007) need to go beyond the map of legislative and educational rights and entitlements pursued by the good campaigner/ parent/child in celebrating our moves forward, our diverse potentialities and even in claiming our injuries and failures (e.g. 'queer suicides') as a claim and a capital.

In a time of increasing social recognition via equality legislation which carves out certain futures, it is important the current injustices are centered rather than passed over as a straight-forward linear movement of 'coming forward' (Weeks 2007; McRobbie 2009). Queer theories generally associated with the work of Leo Bersani (2009), Edelman (2004), and Halberstam (2012) provocatively assert that queer subjects should embrace non-productivity, resisting narratives of futurity explicitly bound in capitalist accumulation. But in empirically disengaging classed lives from the web of intersecting inequalities constructing (non)productive lives this queer rejection of the non-normative sidelines the practical and pragmatic classed (im)possibilities and present material injustices.

It is important to carve out a claim for – rather than rejection of – plu-

ral futures, where these can also be re-orientated as pragmatic, practical and as also 'getting-by' in the everyday 'here and now', rather than as accumulative and re-productive of (homo)normative middle-class futures (Gillies 2006; Armstrong 2010). Not everyone can flexibly cast themselves through trajectories of future potential, but a dystopian side-step away from *negotiated* futures ignores intersecting dimensions of agency and constraint. I have made a case for the importance of class within the attention to 'future subjects' as part of a continued rather than ended conversation, about which futures are celebrated and which are marginalized. The risk in leaving privileged lives unproblematised is that these are understood as fitting, standard and chosen; as the trajectories of agentic and capable future-orientated subjects now able to take full advantage of 'parenting citizenship' while being injured by others' lack, failure and culpability. Moments of pragmatism and 'getting by' are lost again and mis-placed by a queer pessimism or failure. There are research efforts and orientations compelled in inhabiting university settings - as my thoughts on inhabiting US-UK campuses across time hoped to illustrate. These professional-personal-political trajectories are recast in researcher-researched-research relations and occupations as feminist researchers necessarily make future claims. Present-future re-ori-

entations towards higher education, as 'engagement' and 'impact' bound to monetary evidencing and material measuring, rework future subjects (see Taylor and Addison 2011). The good researcher has a 'five year plan' and knows her 'five key words' (Taylor, 2009): sometimes these subjects stick and sometimes they travel. But the effort seems to be in *trying again* for the sake of bringing forth plural inclusive futures.

Endnotes

¹ Angela McRobbie (2009) argues that the 'movement of women' substitutes the 'women's movement' based on a 'coming forward' in the realms of education and the workplace, where women are placed – and self-place – as 'efficient assemblages for productivity'; their achievements can be measured, their work/life balance assessed and rated, ever-monitored on intimate scales, where, with appearance and self-presentation, this work to reinforce what are (hetero)normative and class specific constructs of successful femininity (Skeggs 1997). Unsurprisingly, there are various (im)mobilities re-constituted in such 'movements', where a 'coming forward' reproduces and rests upon a supposed 'backwardness' and 'failure', attached to specifically classed women. The centering of the mobile 'global girl' as a subject with educational and employment capacity, occurs at the expense of impoverished people somehow elsewhere: '[T]he attribution of both freedom and success to young women ... take different forms across the boundaries of class, ethnicity and sexuality, producing a range of entan-

gements of racialised and classified configurations of youthful femininity. So emphatic and so frequently repeated in this celebratory discourse that it comes to function as a key mechanism of social transformation. From being assumed to be headed towards marriage, motherhood and limited economic participation, the girl is now endowed with economic capacity' (McRobbie 2009, 58).

² As Skeggs (1997, 2004) highlights, only certain people's stories are considered worthy of telling, posing problems for feminist inspired calls of 'putting one's self' into the research process: 'By telling a story about myself, I redefine myself as a subject with a specific history and seek to persuade others of the importance of that history' (Felski 2000 in Halberstam 2005: 126).

³ In May 2010 a new UK coalition government, comprising of the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat parties, was formed. Prior to the election, these two parties had espoused considerably different views on the future of HE funding in the UK. The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, had pledged that his would work to abolish the tuition fee system. In December 2010, both the House of Commons and House of Lords voted to implement an amended version of one of the recommendations made by Lord Browne (2010) in his report on the future of HE funding, which recommended the removal of the cap to tuition fees, alongside an amended student loan system, supposedly ensuring that 'No one has to pay back the loan unless they are earning above £21,000 per year. Payments are linked to income' (Browne 2010: 37). The coalition

government voted to raise the basic threshold for fees to £6,000 per annum with a cap at £9,000 to be implemented from the academic year 2012–2013.

⁴ This raises questions of what kind of futures we might hope for and instigate. Current desires and discontents can be situated alongside debates on ‘future feminist subjects’ as emerging from somewhere, as involving a history of activism, debate and academic labour. While we mustn’t forget about where ‘we’ve’ come from, as we seek expansion of who the ‘we’ is in these shifting debates across time and place, care has to be taken to avoid rehearsal of past scholarship as a debt to pay, a truth to convey or a burden to shake off in moving to ‘new’ terrain. Several feminist authors have challenged the linearity of feminist stories of ‘now’ and ‘then’ - including Lisa Adkins and, more recently, Clare Hemmings (2011), problematising how the ‘loss’ of feminism as failure is attached to a younger generation, as incapable of heeding wise words and repeating history-as-future.

⁵ At Berkeley, approximately 64% of undergraduates receive some form of financial aid: in 2008-09, 37% of all Berkeley undergrads were eligible for Pell Grants (family incomes generally less than \$45,000 a year). Berkeley educates more economically disadvantaged students than all of the Ivy League universities combined. Some 5,700 undergraduates received a total of \$33 million in scholarships, many of them privately funded. In 2009, Berkeley received \$649.46 million in research funding. The positioning of this contrasts somewhat drastically from my current home institution, London South

Bank University, which despite its long-standing commitment to widening participation, ‘added’ value and employability cannot claim a ‘premier’ status, where ‘post-1992’ attaches negatively as a gross ‘catch-all’ by which the ‘engaged institution’ can never come forward, the ‘1992’ indicating a stick rather than a substance (Taylor and Allen 2011).

⁶ See Time Magazine, 31 January 2011 (<http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20110131,00.html>).vii Vice-President Joe Biden reassures that ‘There’s not a single thing about you that’s not normal, good or decent’, urging us to contribute and make ‘us’ feel better about ‘our country’. Even US President Barack Obama has added his own tale of survival and overcoming of hardships to the voices which echo ‘It Gets Better’ as an incentive for young queer youth to hold on, keep going and never kill themselves.

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