

Is ‘giving voice’ an incitement to confess?

Anna Anderson

Over the last fifteen years, ‘giving young people a voice’ is an aim and practice that has come to dominate education and youth related discourses, policies and programmes under the headings of ‘student’ or ‘youth voice’ and ‘youth’ or ‘student participation’. This has been the case particularly in Australia, the United Kingdom and across Europe (e.g. Czerniawski and Kidd 2011). Today we can find an extensive literature dedicated to advocating, celebrating and critically evaluating such initiatives, ranging from journal special issues (e.g. *Forum* 2001, 43: 2; *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 2006, 28: 3) to manuals and how-to guides on realising the aims of student or youth voice in practice (e.g. Mokwena 2006). As I have discussed elsewhere (Anderson 2013), advocates of youth or student participation initiatives see that giving young people a voice can not only achieve individual transformation through empowerment, but also institutional transformation and reform. Indeed, such initiatives are typically understood and advocated as part of a larger emancipatory project, concerned with democratising traditional oppressive hierarchies within educational and other social institutions and thereby transforming young people from ‘passive objects’ to ‘active players’ in the educational and democratic system (e.g. Rudduck 2007: 587), in turn helping them learn how to be active citizens (e.g. Holdsworth 2011). The historical roots of such projects are typically located in late nineteenth century ‘radical’ and ‘progressive educational movements’ (Rudduck and Fielding 2006) and their underlying ideals are situated within the critical theory tradition, including the critical pedagogy of Freire and Giroux (Robinson and Taylor 2007). Youth or student voice projects are thus accorded a significant role in critiques of traditional schooling and modes of governing youth and in radical and progressive educational and social visions for change.

Discourses of ‘giving voice’

The importance attributed to giving young people a voice therefore follows from a particular reasoning. In the discourse of youth and student participation or voice, it is conceived as nothing less than a matter of young people’s liberation from a tradition of repressive pedagogic and other youth governance practices. It is

imagined in terms of a replacement of power that silences and prohibits young people's voice and agency with the freedom that permits young people to speak out and realise themselves, developing their full potential, as self-determining agents and active citizens. It is assumed that by giving young people a voice we will discover young people's 'true' or 'real' opinions, needs, experiences and so on, and thus youth or student voice initiatives are part of the project to free truth from power. The assumption of repression and the necessity of giving voice refer back to one another; they are mutually reinforcing (Anderson 2011). The youth or student voice imperative is a product of the way the question of voice has been constituted in terms of exclusion, repression, oppression, domination. To believe that power is only effective in a repressive mode, to believe that it simply represses voice, subjectivity or agency, is to believe that the expression and promotion of voice, subjectivity or agency can combat this repression. As speaking out is imagined as an exercise of freedom in terms of self-realisation, self-expression and self-determination or autonomy, young people exercising agency and speaking out is considered in effect a confrontation of power with freedom. Informed by this reasoning is also much of the critique of these initiatives, which is concerned with measuring the extent to which voice or participation is able to be expressed and empowerment achieved as well as the genuineness or otherwise ideological intentions of such projects (e.g. Fielding 2001). This reasoning makes it seem both radical and of the utmost importance to young people's personal and collective liberation and the pursuit of democracy and truth that we give young people a voice through creating opportunities for them to participate in their government.

A Foucauldian critique

Foucault (1978: 58–60) shows however, how one has to be completely taken in by a conventional negative image of power as repression 'to consider that those who repeat the injunction to tell what one is and what one is thinking and not thinking, are speaking to us of freedom'. To attribute to power the role of repression regarding thinking, speaking and subjectivity, one also has to be taken in by a corresponding conventional image of truth as the antithesis of power and of subjectivity as natural or essential rather than constituted. Drawing on Foucault's (1978, 1986, 1990) research permits one to consider that such a conventional view neglects that modern modes of power work not just as a negative, repressive, prohibitive force, but also as a positive, productive and enabling force. The productivity of power is realised precisely through practices that enable and promote, rather than repress, silence or deny the expression of voice and the formation of subjectivity and truth. The conventional view thus blinds one to the mutually constitutive relationship of power and true knowledge and to the ways that practices of self-reflection and self-expression do not simply discover and express an inner truth or essential subjectivity. Rather, these 'techniques of the self' or 'ethical practices', as Foucault (1988) calls them, are part of forming and reforming an identity for one's self.

Foucault (1978) illustrates how the productivity of modern power is realised through practices that allow for and promote the expression of voice, subjectivity, truth and agency. Included here is the positive form of power Foucault (2000: 342) terms 'government', describing its exercise using his notion of 'governmentality', as a 'conduct of conducts' or 'action upon action' that requires an active and to some extent free subject as a condition and instrument of its effective operation. Within this modern governmental mode of power, liberty to participate and speak out or have a voice is not the opposite of power, but the very vehicle through which power is exercised and self-governing subjects of various kinds brought forth and governed. This positive mode of power is able to operate by using what Foucault (1988: 47–8) refers to as 'techniques of verbalisation' and 'self-examination', which he shows derive from ancient Christian pastoral practices of confession and an accompanying hermeneutics. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) traces how beginning in the eighteenth century the practice of the confessional diverges from a religious context and becomes a central tactic of secular institutional practices, not only in the exercise of power, but the production of truth and the formation of subjectivity. In educational, psychiatric, medical and legal procedures, individuals are solicited and encouraged to speak about themselves, to divulge their inner most feelings in the presence of an authority who requires the confession, prescribes the form it must take, appreciates it, and intervenes in order to teach, console, treat, judge, punish or reconcile (Foucault 1978: 61–2). The difference between the Christian confessional and contemporary verbalisation techniques is that no longer is it considered a case of hidden thoughts and absolution, but repressed thoughts and a need for emancipation and liberation through self-expression or having a voice.

For Foucault, then, confession is an example of a certain form of subjectification that renders us governable at the very moment we articulate an identity. It is a technology that makes the indirect exercise of governmental power possible by providing a means by which the way of conducting individuals and the way they conduct and form themselves can be linked, allowing the exercise of power to work through the self-forming and self-governing practices of the governed; what Foucault (2000) calls 'governmentality'. It is in these terms that Foucault's work enables us to examine not only if and how confessional technology is mobilised today in student or youth voice and participation initiatives, but also the regulatory, subject shaping, knowledge producing effects of such confessional technology. In so doing, it makes it possible to interpret and problematise such projects as part of the confessional requirements of a contemporary governmentality.

Analysing the confessional aspects of a youth participation project

Drawing on research into one youth participation project, the 'Youth Round Tables' undertaken between 2000 and 2002 in Australia (Anderson 2011), this chapter explores how far Foucault's work on confession, care of the self and

governmentality may offer a different understanding and analysis of the power relations embedded in and animating such initiatives and their effects. From this perspective, such projects may be read as technical incitements to practices of confessional truth-telling where young people learn to produce truths about themselves, governing themselves accordingly as certain kinds of subjects, in accordance with a contemporary strategy of governmentality. While the research examined only one project aimed at giving young people a voice, the significance of this analysis is that a youth round table (henceforth YRT), as a means by which to give young people a voice, has been, and still is, one of the leading technologies recommended and used today (e.g. Community Service Society 2013). Today YRT technology, together with similar technologies (i.e. youth or student representative councils), continues to be used both within and outside Australia by both educational and non-educational authorities and organisations seeking to realise the aims and objectives of student or youth participation (e.g. Community Service Society 2013; Holdsworth 2011). This case study analysis can therefore serve as an example of what may happen in wider and similar such contexts. It can also serve as an example of how a critical analysis of such programmes can be produced; avoiding the limitations of critiques informed by the critical theory tradition and making problematic the very grounds on which youth or student voice initiatives rest and rely for their validity.

Mobilising and shaping ‘freedom’ through confession: the Youth Round Table

The Australian state of Victoria’s Youth Round Tables programme therefore serves as a site for a detailed analysis of how a confessional technology is mobilised within a youth voice project today and with what regulatory, truth producing and subject (re)forming effects. The YRT programme was used to realise in practice a policy of youth participation introduced with the stated aim of ‘giving young people a real voice in Government’ (Madden 2000: 2). It was considered to be ‘an important means for empowering young people as citizens and as contributors to the development of solutions to social problems’ (Madden 2002: 2) Indeed, it was stated that:

Victorian Youth Round Tables are highly valued by the Minister of Youth Affairs and the Government as a whole as a way of learning firsthand what young people think about current issues. They are an important means of ensuring that young people have a voice into Government decision-making, provide a valuable source of ideas and make community building a more democratic practice.

(Office of Youth 2001: 3)

Each YRT was a one-day event conducted by the Victorian Government’s Office for Youth (OFY hereafter) and most of the young people who participated were

drawn from local secondary schools in the area where each YRT was held. The YRTs each addressed a particular predetermined topic and operated according to a strictly time structured agenda marshalled by a 'main YRT facilitator' and this role was fulfilled by an education 'expert' working at a local university. Although the topic and content of each YRT was different, they all followed a particular model. The model involved alternating between large group discussions and activities directed by the main YRT facilitator and then the large group dividing off into a number of small group discussions and activity sessions guided by small group facilitators – the OFY typically employed local youth workers and their own officers to fill this role. The number of young people participating in each of the YRTs ranged from as little as thirty-seven to as many as eighty-four. Also invited to each YRT were a range of so called 'stakeholders' (service providers, teachers, government officers) to 'observe and listen' and at the end, 'respond' to what participants had to say (Office for Youth 2001). There were eleven YRTs held between 2000 and 2002. The following topics were addressed at each of the YRTs:

- YRT 1 – Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways
- YRT 2 – Drugs and Young People
- YRT 3 – Opportunities for Rural Young People for Self-expression and Participation through Music, the Arts, Recreation and Sport
- YRT 4 – Young People Planning for Melbourne's Future
- YRT 5 – Designing Accessible Youth Services
- YRT 6 – Youth Perceptions and Identity in Rural and Regional Victoria
- YRT 7 – Living in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Society
- YRT 8 – Speak Out about Sport
- YRT 9 – Highway to Health
- YRT 10 – Harmful Behaviours
- YRT 11 – Your Space, You're Safe

Resourced by Foucault's (1977, 1978) work, one can see how the YRT as a technology for giving young people a voice was assembled and operationalised through a combination of disciplinary and confessional techniques. Several disciplinary techniques (i.e. timetabling, ranking, partitioning, classification) enabled the YRT to function as a technology for organising and distributing individuals in a material and conceptual space, for producing and maintaining active, productive and trainable individuals, for supervising (observing and listening), and for producing knowledge. While various confessional techniques were embedded and integrated into the disciplined space of the YRT making it possible for it to function as a technical incitement to practices of self-examination and speaking out or truth-telling by the young people participating in it.

The stated objective of the first activity session at each of the YRT events was to incite and guide participants to examine themselves, 'to start participants thinking about' and reflecting on their identity, their needs, views and conduct through the specified YRT topic (Office for Youth 2001a, c; 2002a, b, c, d). For example, At

YRT six where the topic was 'Youth Perceptions and Identity in Rural and Regional Victoria' the second activity of session one involved 'exploring individual identity'. The main facilitator prescribed how participants were to conduct an examination of themselves, of their conscience and self-knowledge. He directed them to the kinds of questions they needed to ask themselves so that they could scrutinise and discover how they feel about themselves and how they think others see them:

Basically what we are going to start with is questions of individual identity . . . how do I see myself? How do other people see me? What we want you to do is pair up with somebody that you trust, we want you to lie down and get the other person to silhouette you onto a bit of paper . . . then we would like to know how do you feel about yourself on the inside and what sort of picture do you think other people get. So how do people see me and how do I see myself?

(YRT six transcript)

Through participating in the prescribed activities of self-examination, participants were meant to discover the 'truth' about themselves, their real needs, views and so on, which would then enable them to 'speak out' and voice this truth 'discovered' about themselves to others.

In the case of YRT eight where the topic was 'Speak Out about Sport', the objective of the first activity session was '[t]o start participants thinking about their involvement in sport, the pros and cons of involvement, the pros and cons of non-involvement, and the barriers to involvement' (Office for Youth 2002a: 4). Thus the objective was to elicit participant's self-reflection and self-examination, where they would make themselves, their conduct and thoughts the object of their own analysis, evaluation and interpretation according to the defined topic of sport. These practices of self-examination involved participants undertaking what Foucault (1993: 44) calls a 'hermeneutics of the self', where one's self is considered as a field of subjective data which has to be interpreted and known. The aim of such self-examination 'is not to close self-awareness in upon itself but to enable it to open up entirely to its director – to unveil to him the depth of the soul' (Foucault 2000: 310). This was however, not a Christian hermeneutics of the self but one directed by social scientific language and concepts such as sport, health, identity and so on.

The way in which the participants conducted this examination and evaluation of themselves was, therefore, not a matter of their own choosing but was itself prescribed through the facilitator and made available through the activities they conducted. Guided by their facilitator, participants in small groups analysed their thoughts, interpreted, judged and organised their experience of themselves and assigned meaning to their conduct using the techniques, vocabulary, criteria and standards prescribed at each YRT. At all the YRTs these prescriptions were made in a number of ways. For example, prior to the first session of YRT eight, the main YRT facilitator instructed participants on the three different definitions of sport

they were to use to reflect on and speak out about their involvement in sport. As part of the 'Getting to know you' activity of session one at YRT eight, participants had to declare 'the types of sports they're involved in as per definitions from the 10:20 session.' (Office for Youth 2002a: 5). This activity required each participant to first examine, interpret and identify themselves and then classify their conduct according to the three definitions of sport provided, in order that they could tell others which of the three sporting types they were involved in.

Constituting truth of the self

Underlying the YRT endeavour to discover the truth about young people themselves, their 'true' identity, needs and views, is the conventional image of the person possessing a true self that is hidden or repressed, the liberation of which is achieved through a free and rational self-examination. Such a conception however ignores the technical character of self-examination and the productivity of power in shaping and forming human capacities and attributes and thus is ignorant to the ways knowledge of the self is produced by the very practices and discourses that seek to enable it to be known. Through participating in these practices of self-examination participants did not simply discover the truth about themselves, but constituted and identified themselves as particular kinds of self-realising or knowing subjects where the meanings and truth they ascribed to themselves and their conduct were already effects of power. In the case of YRT eight, participants experienced themselves as particular kinds of sporting subjects using the prescribed practices of self-examination and sporting discourse and norms of sporting involvement, in the process formulating through these prescriptions a truth about themselves and their self-identity. It is in this way that confessing works on the assumption that there is a truth to be confessed, hidden within one's nature, which if discovered and enabled to surface leads to empowerment, but if it fails to be voiced, it is because 'a constraint holds it in place, the violence of power weighs it down' (Foucault 1978: 60). Thus, speaking out about oneself, one's needs, beliefs, feelings and so on is conceived as itself empowering. Implicit in this assumption, as with those assumptions underlying self-examination, is, however, the conventional way of understanding truth, power and subjectivity.

It was by inciting and eliciting participation in confessional practices that the YRT operated to enable and oblige participants to articulate and verbalise to others this 'truth' produced about themselves through the practices and procedures of self-examination. These confessional practices were forms of 'speaking out' or acts of truth-telling, which required not just that the young person tell the truth, but that he or she tell the truth about themselves, their thoughts, needs, feelings, motivations and so on, to reveal to others their identity by articulating it. At each YRT event these confessional practices took a number of forms. At YRT six the participants disclosed their interpretations of 'how they see themselves' and 'how they feel others see them' by producing a picture of themselves (Office for Youth 2001c: 2). Participants then had to 'talk about their creations with their partners

and parade them as they moved back into the main group' (ibid.: 2). Their confessions were therefore expressed in the form of a picture of themselves, a verbal account to their partner of their picture of themselves, and a public parading of their picture of themselves to the large group, observed by all the stakeholders and others present at the YRT.

At YRT eleven, confessing took the form of an autobiographical narrative where participants were 'encouraged to share stories about times when they felt safe in public spaces, and times when they have felt unsafe' (Office for Youth 2002d: 3). Participants told their stories to their small groups and then the group had to select two stories, 'one focussing on feeling safe and one on feeling unsafe, to be shared with the larger group', including all the stakeholders and other observers (ibid.: 4). At YRTs three to five, eight and ten, the confession took the form of a consultation and enquiry where in response to being asked a number of questions, participants disclosed personal information about themselves and their conduct in their small groups, which was later reported to the large group. For example, at YRT five, participants were asked to talk about: 'What youth services do you use? Why? [and] What youth services do you know about but do not use? Why?' (Office for Youth 2001b). The 'report back' that followed each small group session at all of the YRT events was also a form of confession. It was however a kind of double confession where representatives from each small group confessed their own as well as their group members' thoughts and views, already confessed in their small group, to the large group, including the stakeholders and observers present.

Within the very space of power–knowledge

Drawing on by Foucault's (1978) work, we can see that these confessions are not constituted and do not work outside of, or against power, but in the very space of power and as an effective means of its exercise. These acts of confessing unfolded within a relation of power and knowledge, where in confessing the participants became subject to the authority of another at the same time as being the author of their own confession – simultaneously an active knowing subject and an object being acted upon. The YRT participants opened up and told the truth about how they see themselves and their conduct with the assistance, and in the presence of a facilitator who prescribed the form of the confession, the words and activities through which it should be made and the focus it must take. The facilitators did not simply free the way for and guide the confession, but enabled, elicited, prescribed and supervised the confession on behalf of the authorities who required it, appreciated it, listened to and understood it, and then intervened in order to comment, judge, and act on it. These authorities included government agencies such as the Office for Youth as well as all those other expert authorities (teachers, youth sector professionals and organisations) identified as 'stakeholders' and invited to observe the YRT's and who were involved in the planning, promotion and operationalisation of the YRT.

At the same time as the confessions unfolded within relations of power and knowledge, they also generated more knowledge and further power relations. By

enabling, inciting and obliging participants to express themselves, aspects of the self that had hitherto remained unspoken came under surveillance and were opened up for expert judgement and normative evaluation, for classification and correction. Moreover confessing rendered subjectivity knowable in an inscribable and calculable form. The inscription of subjectivity took a number of forms where the confessions were not only verbalised but also literally transcribed onto 'flip-charts' which were collected by the OFY and assembled into dossiers of each YRT and then used to write a report on each. Each YRT report thus transformed the attitudes (thoughts and views) of the participants into a form where they could be used as 'evidence' in the calculations of policy makers, service providers and others, with the reports being disseminated to local, state and federal governments, schools, youth sector professionals. These confessional practices therefore enabled an extension of relations of discipline and professional control over immediate everyday life, establishing new possibilities for the regulation and administration of the population 'youth' through a knowledge of the individual attitudes of the population. The YRT thus united the exercise of power with the production of knowledge or expertise, not in the negative sense of ideology but through confessional techniques that functioned to bring new domains of government into being.

Educating in ethical practices through incitements to speak out

Inciting participants to examine and express themselves not only made previously unspoken aspects of self-identity (subjectivity) known and open to disciplinary mechanisms. By making the self identifiable it was simultaneously rendered amenable to problematisation and transformation. If a self-determining subjectivity does not develop naturally or spontaneously, but is the result of practices of the self, then the YRT functioned not simply to increase it or merely allow it to realise and express itself, but to constitute, alter and shape it in relation to certain governmental ends such as 'minimisation of harmful behaviours'. Within the carefully constructed activities, the facilitators not only elicited an identity, but at the same time, and through the elicitation, called this identity into question by inciting and training participants in certain ethical practices of self-concern, self-examination and self-expression. For instance, at YRT ten participants were incited and guided to examine, question and classify their behaviour and attitudes as 'risky' or 'not risky' or, at YRT eleven, as 'safe' or 'unsafe', and through these prescribed ethical practices to (re)form and govern themselves as risky or harm minimising subjects. At each YRT participants were also asked to identify and propose effective programmes and services for promoting each of the themes such as, participation in sport, good health, risk minimisation or safety in public spaces. Participants were therefore not only educated in practices and languages for evaluating the self and diagnosing its problems, but also in techniques and procedures for improving and cultivating the self, for realigning and reforming the self in accordance with certain prescribed goals and aspirations.

It was precisely because the YRT provided a space in which to exercise freedom or agency, for participants to open up and express themselves and their thoughts, that participants could, through the small group activities, be accorded all kinds of new technical possibilities of self-reflection and self-government enabling the YRT to operate as a means to transform them by equipping them with a specific ethical capacity and competence. The techniques of the self accorded to participants, as with all ethical practices, each embodied a code of morality. As Rose (1989: 245) points out when writing about ‘technologies of autonomy’, this code is embodied ‘in the languages they use, the ethical territory they map out, the attributes of the person they identify as of ethical significance, the ways of calibrating and evaluating them they propose, the pitfalls to be avoided and the goals to pursue’. For example, at YRT ten where the theme was ‘Harmful Behaviours’ the first activity prescribed a specific ethical capacity expressed in terms of the participants’ ‘need to be able to identify those obstacles that might get in the way of lifelong health . . . [and] the things that make the Highway of health run smoothly’ (Office for Youth 2002b: 3). The moral goal to pursue is expressed in terms of ‘lifelong health’ and the ethical territory mapped out is the capacity to identify those things that obstruct one’s pursuit of lifelong health and those things that protect and enhance it. The way proposed for participants to calibrate and evaluate their capacity to identify barriers and promoters of lifelong health was through a prescribed self-testing activity which required them to draw a highway to health, identifying along the road the barriers and promoters of health using the symbols and vocabulary provided. The theme of each YRT also marked out a territory of morality, which included minimising one’s participation in harmful behaviours, leading an active life by participating in sport and ensuring one’s safety in public places.

By accounting for themselves using the self-techniques provided, participants could therefore come to incorporate desirable aspirations, values and moral goals (i.e. safety, harm minimisation, lifelong health) as integral and defining elements of their subjectivity, making different ways of identifying and choosing to conduct themselves, conceivable, desirable and achievable. Indeed, making it a matter of their self-actualisation, empowerment and freedom. Thus, it is only by examining the subjectifying aspect of the YRT at the level of ethics that we can see how by mobilising confessional technology, it was able to work as a kind of pedagogy, educating in techniques of the self which enabled it to transform participants through establishing a potentially lasting hermeneutics of the self. While each YRT lasted only one day, the techniques of the self that participants learned may well have continued to influence their self-forming and self-governing activities.

Drawing on Foucault’s work thus enables us to see how by mobilising confessional technology the YRT was assembled and operationalised as a technical incitement to practices of speaking out. These practices were then instrumentalised, becoming a pedagogic activity through which participants were initiated into new techniques of self-expression, self-formation and self-regulation. Far from being disinterested ways of giving voice through an incitement to practices of self-expression, these were ethical practices accorded to participants and were specific

and implicated in the pursuit of particular goals such as the minimisation of harmful behaviours. These techniques of self-examination and self-expression or speaking out allowed for the self to be both formed and subjected within the relations of power and knowledge that constituted part of a contemporary mode of government. It is in this way that the YRT can be understood to work as a confessional and pedagogical technology of governmentality, where techniques to ensure that people behave in certain ways, to form them, involved procedures through which individuals produced true and false statements about who they are and what they should become. In giving young people a voice, the YRT thus allowed the way in which participants practiced their freedom or agency to become part of the exercise of power where the problematisation, expression and regulation of one's identity and conduct became an integral part of being governed. In so doing, the YRT technology linked together what the discourses of youth or student voice and participation like to separate: regulation and self-expression, discipline and self-determination, constraint and freedom, truth and falsity, normative examination and participatory democracy.

An alternative analysis of 'giving young people a voice'

In summary, it is only by stepping outside the normative framework of conventional understandings of power, true knowledge and subjectivity that one can consider the critical purchase of Foucault's analysis of confession both more generally, and particularly for producing a critical analysis of contemporary youth voice projects. The reasoning upon which youth or student voice projects rests prevents us from seeing how control in modern societies is achieved not through direct repression of voice but through more indirect strategies that rely on and work through forms of self-expression and practices of speaking out. So too, the introspective search for a truth held to lie in our innermost identity prevents us from recognising the 'constructed' nature of subjectivity and, hence from understanding how activities of self-formation and self-expression become linked to activities of regulation and thus, blind us to the potentiality for change, experimentation and resistance.

Resourced by Foucault's work, including his analysis of confession, youth voice projects can be analysed in terms of the confessional technology mobilised and its effects. Thus, how they operate in ways that produce rather than simply discover a true knowledge of youth, and actively incite and prescribe rather than simply allow practices of the exercise of freedom, bringing forth, rather than merely liberating, subjects with particular self-governing capacities and making them a means of achieving certain governmental objectives.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate the critical purchase of Foucault's work and his analysis of confessional practices. In particular, the sort of critical analysis it opens up and makes possible and the different reading it offers in examining the set of assumptions that underpin the contemporary discourse,

policy and practice that seeks to 'give young people a voice'. Against this conventional thought Foucault's work on confession allows a rethinking of concepts of power, truth and subjectivity and provides resources to produce a different analysis of the power relations embedded in and operationalising youth voice projects and their possible effects. In particular, they enable one to consider the possible regulatory, knowledge producing and subject shaping effects of such projects. The implications of this analysis for any discourse, policy and practice of student or youth voice is that we can no longer think about student or youth voice projects in a taken for granted manner. Any belief that enabling young people to have a voice and participate in the governance of their institutions is a rejection of regulation or a replacement of power with freedom must be subject to radical questioning. This then opens up a space for us to think and act differently in relation to such discourses and projects and consider and problematise them as confessional requirements of contemporary forms of governmentality. It also opens up a space for us to consider the broader implications of this analysis including questions such as, do all youth or student voice projects operate as confessional forms? Is a similar discourse and confessional technology in operation in today's efforts by the media, governments and other institutions to solicit and encourage the public to have their say and to voice their opinions, or is this something different to youth voice projects? And if they are similar, do we want to govern or be governed in this way?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Robin Usher, my friend, colleague and former PhD supervisor for his contribution to the writing of this chapter through his encouragement, our critical discussions and his reading of parts of the early draft.

References

- Anderson, A. (2013) 'The critical purchase of genealogy: critiquing student participation projects', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Published 15 August online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01596306.2013.828417>
- Anderson, A. (2011) 'The constitution of youth: toward a genealogy of the discourse and government of youth', unpublished PhD thesis, RMIT University.
- Community Service Society (2013) 'The Youth Round Table', viewed 11 November 2013, <http://www.cssny.org/pages/the-youth-roundtable>
- Czerniawski, G. and Kidd, W. (2011) *The Student Voice Handbook: Bridging the academic/practitioner divide*, Bingley: Emerald.
- Fielding, M. (2001) 'Beyond the rhetoric of student voice: New departures or new constraints in the transformation of 21st century schooling?' *Forum*, 43: 100–9.
- Fejes, A. and Dahlstedt, M. (2013) *The Confessing Society: Foucault, confession and practices of lifelong learning*, New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Ontario: Penguin Books.

- Foucault, M. (1986) *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1988) 'Technologies of the self', in L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (eds), *Technologies of the Self. A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1990) *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1993) 'About the beginning of the hermeneutics of the self: two lectures at Dartmouth', *Political theory*, 21: 198–227.
- Foucault, M. (2000) 'The subject and power', in J. Faubion (ed.) *The Essential Works 1954–1984*, vol. 3, *Power*, London: Allen Lane.
- Holdsworth, R. (2011) 'Young people's engagement in education and community', in S. Beadle, R. Holdsworth and J. Wyn (eds), *For we are young and . . . ? Young people in a time of uncertainty*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Madden, J. (2000) *Youth At the Centre – Governing with Young Victorians*, Ministerial Statement, Melbourne: State Government of Victoria.
- Mokwena, S. (2006) *Putting Youth Engagement into Practice: A Tool Kit For Action*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Office for Youth. (2001) *Report of Victorian Youth Round Table 4: Young People Planning for Melbourne's Future*, Victoria: Department of Education, Employment and Training.
- Robinson, C. and Taylor, C. (2007) 'Theorizing student voice: values and perspectives', *Improving Schools*, 10: 5–17.
- Rose, N. (1989) *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd edn, London: Free Association Books.
- Rudduck, J. (2007) 'Student voice, student engagement, and school reform', in D. Thiessen and A. Cook-Sather (eds), *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School*, Dordrecht: Springer.
- Rudduck, J. and Fielding, M. (2006) 'Student voice and the perils of popularity', *Educational Review*, 58: 219–31.

Unpublished material

- Office for Youth 2001a, Youth Round Table 2 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2001b, Youth Round Table 5 Agenda, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2001c, Youth Round Table 6 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2002a, Youth Round Table 8 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2002b, Youth Round Table 9 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2002c, Youth Round Table 10 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Office for Youth 2002d, Youth Round Table 11 facilitation guide, Melbourne.
- Youth Round Table six transcript 16/11/01, Anna Anderson, Melbourne.