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The Ethics of Postgraduate Supervision: A View From Cultural Studies

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Introduction

To make the comparison that one should never otherwise make, Higher Degree Research (HDR hereafter) supervision shares one thing with parenting: it is a topic about which every person has an opinion. Watching other people supervise can be as excruciating as observing a nonchalant parent whose child is throwing food in a café. When postgraduates fail to meet expectations, we might imagine that better training was possible, that bad choices were made at crucial junctures, and that somewhere sits a parent reading the newspaper while the floor is covered in spaghetti. The neglectful supervisor, like the neglectful parent, is easily viewed as a person of a certain type, and quotidian discussions of supervision practices quickly

deteriorate into moral appraisals of virtues and vices. Although providing short-lived pleasures, the impulse to piety can distract from uneven historical transformations in higher degree training *tout court*. Supervision practices need to be understood not as expressions of a moral disposition (friendly, mean, forgiving) or achievements of profound intelligence (the cult of the eccentric genius), but as provisional responses to a turbulent global industry that produces many contradictory messages about the purposes and outcomes of higher degree programs.

This chapter links the development of teaching skills around HDR supervision to broader institutional issues around working conditions and knowledge production. In particular, we identify key questions facing higher degree supervisors in the humanities and social sciences, citing Australian cultural studies research as an example. By drawing from the contemporary sociology of education, we examine different forms that supervision can take, the professional expectations placed upon supervisors, the impacts of affective accumulation in the production of social capital, and the challenges associated with HDR supervision for cultural studies practitioners in Australia. In doing so, the chapter draws together literature on research learning communities to sociological studies of class-based stratification and increased casualization within the tertiary sector, noting the ways that intersecting issues around expertise, hierarchy, and inter-dependency can shape supervisors' teaching practices.

The chapter begins by comparing critical approaches to HDR supervision, including the recent turn towards supervisors' ethical responsibilities in relation to what Christine Halse and Peter Bansel (2012) call 'learning alliances'. While endorsing conceptions of learning as a collective practice, we foreground instances where the language of moral obligation can risk displacing important conversations about affective labour and contractual precarity in an

increasingly casualized tertiary sector. Building on these observations, we argue for critical engagement with the value- and community-making functions that HDR supervisors perform. Finally, specific challenges are identified for postgraduate (a.k.a. 'graduate') students working in cultural studies, especially when faced with inter-disciplinary restlessness and methodological experimentation. Throughout, the chapter does not make strong prescriptions about what best practice supervision should look like, because the diversity of institutional circumstances makes the 'actionable quality' of such prescriptions somewhat negligible (Morris, 2008, p. 433). Nevertheless, we do identify points of tension between what good supervision practices hope to achieve, and the changing institutional contexts within which these practices take place.

Collective Responsibility and Learning Alliances

Across the last two decades in Australia, doctoral populations have expanded significantly (Pearson, Evans, and Macauley, 2008) and government funding bodies have placed increased pressures on supervisors to produce timely postgraduate completions.[i] In this context, attention has been directed towards producing more efficient and reliable postgraduate pathways (P. Green and Usher 2003; McCallin and Nayar, 2012; Harrison, Trudgett, and Page, 2017), leading to institutional changes in admission requirements (e.g. elaborated metrics for assessing candidate suitability and reliability),[ii] forms of assessment (e.g. a proliferation of interim reviews and presentations during candidature), and models of supervision (e.g. larger, inter-disciplinary supervision panels). Yet despite the proliferation of support systems, supervisors are still primary nodes of guidance and responsibility for the

HDR student. Supervisors continue to orchestrate thesis timelines, endorse special administrative provisions, select examiners, and act as formal and informal referees.

Unfortunately, few universities provide reliable opportunities for disseminating good supervision practices. In most instances observed, formal induction sessions linked to supervisor accreditation eschew sustained discussion of 'bad' supervision experiences, supervisors' 'self protective measures' (Halse, 2011), negotiation strategies in the allocation of students, or labour considerations around supervision workload. Feedback mechanisms around supervision are less developed than those for undergraduate teaching and, in this respect, the private character of supervision is both its strength and its weakness. On the one hand, supervision can sometimes create unique spaces for students to be intellectually vulnerable and to work through any complications arising from personal experiences. On the other hand, poor supervision relationships are often tolerated by supervisees and supervisors alike because few comparative yardsticks are available. Furthermore, while postgraduates' negative experiences can travel quickly by word-of-mouth (Tsai, 2008), supervision horror stories easily become naturalised as inevitable failings of already imperfect institutions. In the Australian postgraduate sector, few avenues are provided to identify systemic failures in supervision practices at an institutional level. For these reasons, many academics can little awareness about the spectrum of available supervision practices. Among these practices and conceptions, Anne Lee lists five:

> (1) functional: where the issue is one of project management; (2) enculturation: where the student is encouraged to become a member of the disciplinary community; (3) critical thinking: where the student is encouraged to question and analyse their work; (4) emancipation: where the student is encouraged to question and develop themselves;

> [and] (5) developing a quality relationship: where the student is enthused, inspired and cared for. (Lee, 2008, pp. 270-271, see Table 1, p. 268)

Those supervisors who prioritise functional outcomes and critical thinking fit comfortably within the 'master-apprentice' model discussed by Christine Halse and Peter Bansel (2012), and to which we briefly turn.

The master-apprentice model is described by Halse and Bansel as 'based on a hierarchical power relationship whereby the doctoral student is constituted as requiring instruction and discipline by an academic supervisor who is able and authorised to accomplish this task by virtue of his or her knowledge, skills and expertise' (2012, p. 379). Taking a psychoanalytic approach, an oblique argument for the master-apprentice model of supervision has been made by John Frow, who characterises the process for PhD students as involving a temporary loss of ego, entry into 'a community of novitiates', a period in a liminal state, and the crossing of multiple thresholds into academic maturity (1988, p. 318). Higher degree research cultures are commonly shaped by supervisees' desires for the approval of senior staff members; by libidinal investments in disciplinary figureheads, texts, and journals; and by the wonderfully Freudian tendency for postgraduates to dismiss their original thesis proposals as 'shit'. In the humanities and social sciences, the plethora of theoretical frameworks available is matched only by the ever-expanding repertoire of criticisms and dismissals that could be directed towards one's work. The disorienting collision of assertions and criticisms heightens the demand for reliable signs of mastery to secure one's sense of intellectual credibility. The supervisee must therefore place faith in the existence of a 'subject who is supposed to know' (Frow, 1988, p. 314). In this context, the supervisor can perform an important prohibitive

function while providing intellectual securities in the face of unknown risks: ‘you *cannot* say this, but it *is* possible to do that’.

The master is neither infinitely brilliant nor infinitely generous, and obedience to the supervisor’s every whim does not necessarily make for a healthy supervision relationship. Eve Sedgwick’s observation about undergraduate students may resonate with HDR teaching: ‘There are students who view their teachers’ hard work as a servile offering in their honor – a distasteful one to boot. There are other students who accept the proffered formulations gratefully, as a gift, but without thinking to mimic the process of their production’ (2003, p. 154). Insofar as learning can take place through well-timed disagreement and discord, it may be more appropriate to heed Gilles Deleuze’s suggestion that ‘[we] never learn by doing *like* someone, but by doing *with* someone, who has no relation of resemblance to what we are learning’ (1972, p. 22, emphasis in original). Furthermore, as the widely circulating cliché would have it, postgraduates upon completion will know more about their topics than their supervisors. This shift can happen much earlier – too early, sometimes, for the supervisor to adopt the position of master. In such cases, supervision may require creative dialogues that allow both supervisee and supervisor, ‘apprentice’ and ‘master’, to learn.

The drawbacks of the master-apprentice model are well documented. Supervisors can feel overly responsible for supervisees’ progress; the dyad can be isolating and dysfunctional practices can remain invisible to others; and the fetishization of mastery can cement existing institutional hierarchies, working ‘to shore up outdated knowledge, traditions and practices by replicating the supervisor’s prior work and reproducing an exclusionary elite’ (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 379). Travelling anecdotes about disaster supervisions often involve supervisors strictly asserting mastery and escalating disagreements into irresolvable

antagonisms (Grealy, 2016). As an alternative to the master-apprentice model, supervisors may tend towards a 'socio-cultural' approach by facilitating access to a shared world of practicing teachers and researchers (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 378), integrating students into learning communities that can sustain them throughout candidature (see Amundsen and McAlpine, 2009). David Boud and Alison Lee shift their focus away from 'supervision' and 'provisionism' and focus instead on 'distributed' and 'horizontalized' pedagogies, 'with an associated dispersal of responsibility and of agency' (Boud and Lee, 2005, pp. 501-502; see also B. Green, 2005). Peer-activated learning communities can provide forums for discussing projects, for sharing institutional knowledge, and for personal support (Connell, 1985). Boud and Lee recommend 'programmes of seminars and workshops, supervisor selection and training and linking of students with active research groups', as well as 'monthly meetings of research students around topics of concern, the use of an online environment and, notably, a research student conference' (Boud and Lee, 2005, p. 506). Postgraduate writing groups also have demonstrable benefits for research students (McCallin and Nayar, 2012).

One of the most developed models of collective learning practices is what Halse and Bansel call 'the learning alliance'. The learning alliance prescribes 'an ethical approach for the "morally-committed" actions necessary for praxis' linked to 'the moral grammar of doctoral education' and structured by 'ethical relations of responsibility' that require scholars to consider 'relations among multiple actors, and their practices and policies' (Halse and Bansel, 2012, pp. 384-385). The goal of doctoral supervision, Halse and Bansel suggest, is 'praxis' involving an alliance 'between multiple institutional agents grounded in a relational ethics of mutual responsibility' (p. 377). The concept is elaborated as follows:

> Praxis is concerned with the shared practices, including policies, procedures and processes, of individuals and organisations 'who are conscious and self-aware that their actions are "morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions" – like the traditions that orient the work, the being and the becoming of people' (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 5). Thus, the learning alliance is much more than a pedagogy of doctoral education. (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 378)

Supervision work is expanded beyond outcomes-based learning to a more holistic model of care. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, the notion of 'work' deployed is intended to signal a 'fruitful, creative activity that produces long-lasting objects and effects' and as 'the prerequisite for the possibility of action – the unique and visible acts that produce change and constitute the realm of great deeds and words' (Halse and Malfroy, 2010, p. 83). Supervision work can foster extended social relationships; cultivate habits of mind that maintain interest in the student's needs; enhance students' 'techne' as 'the creative, productive use of expert knowledge to bring something into existence or accomplish a particular objective'; and implement contextual expertise to facilitate the student's progress and achievement (p. 87).

The learning alliance is a moral community to be distinguished from the alienation engendered by university bureaucracy. Halse and Bansel appear to advocate overlaying professionalised social structures with unmediated social attachments guided by principles of responsibility:

> Whilst we may not be responsible for the design and implementation of the policies and managerial practices through which doctoral programmes, candidature and supervision are regulated, they create the conditions under which we must assume responsibility

> and that responsibility is collective rather than individual.... This is not an ethics where a certain end justifies the means to achieve it – timely completions, publications, etc. – but an ethics of responsibility that is attuned to the consequences of human conduct in the existing context and willingness to take responsibility for them. (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 387)

The learning alliance enlarges the scope of what ‘good supervision’ looks like and expands the university’s obligations well beyond ‘administrative matters of risk control, audit, surveillance or crisis management when a problem arises with a student, supervisor, or in the supervisory relationship’ (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 384). Ethical learning communities promise alternatives to market-based logics of competitive enterprise; as Raewyn Connell and Catherine Manathunga put it, ‘a supervisor’s role is to protect the student from the institution, as far as one can, and encourage originality and radical thinking’ (2012, p. 8).

The learning alliance urges academics to diversify the resources and relationships available to supervisees. However, the appeal to ethical justifications for forming learning communities can cut in multiple directions. Learning alliances are not formed through collective consensus: professional communities are assembled through uneven desires, compromises, and coercions, wherein informal gift economies may consolidate nestled enclaves of power and influence. Brown, Goodman, and Yasukawa (2010) suggest that casual and sessional staff can feel wedged between feelings of ethical obligation to continue teaching and mentoring others, and the unreasonable demands of workplaces in which ‘managers enjoy a relatively secure income flow, but choose to impose income insecurity on an increasing proportion of the staff responsible for face-to-face teaching’ (p. 170). We cannot endorse learning communities without remaining attentive to the cumulative effects of such wedgings.

The following section argues that learning alliances are embedded in professional communities fractured in two ways: inwardly, through the uneven distribution of labour within social hierarchies; and outwardly, through processes of social capital accumulation. Reflecting on the necessary move made towards collective responsibility in Halse and Bansel, we argue that learning alliances need to be understood in tandem with tendencies toward individualisation and casualization in the academy.

The Casual Supervisor

Working conditions vary widely among those charged with building learning alliances. These variations are frequently masked by the 'myth of egalitarianism' (see Gill, 2014, p. 24) cultivated by university upper management through the rhetoric of 'shared' purpose and 'collective' enterprise. In seeking to go beyond the dyadic form of supervision, Halse and Bansel make important connections between academic duties and other kinds of 'ethical' social relationships. This is, however, a risky move. Casual, sessional and contract-based employees are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. 'Lacking income security,' write Brown, Goodman, and Yasukawa, 'casual teachers become a highly responsive and manipulable pool of labour, bent to the will of the contract' (2010, p. 179). In 2012, it was estimated in Australia 'that less than 36% of university employees are employed on a secure basis' (Mayhew, 2014, p. 265),[iii] and for Mayhew, the attendant 'culture of anxiety and resentment has a pernicious effect on academic research cultures' (p. 268). In institutions where women are 'overrepresented in lower grades and temporary positions' (Gill, 2014, p. 19), increased casualization can also be a crucial pivot in the reproduction of gendered organisational hierarchies. Evidence from the United States suggests that similar imbalances

can hold around the intersections between race, class and gender, albeit with discipline-based variations (see the studies collected in Muhs et al., 2012).

Casualization produces a labourer that is simultaneously the subject of responsibility (in relation to students) and the object of responsibility (in relation to senior staff). This can impact HDR students directly, who – alongside Early Career Researchers (ECRs hereafter) – are frequently 'charged with delivering mass undergraduate programs without training or support' (Gill, 2014, p. 19). Supervisors are required to train HDR students in more skills across shorter durations, or what Pam Green and Robin Usher call 'fast supervision' (2003, p. 44), and the same institutional pressures that shorten research candidature also contribute to employment insecurity for supervisors themselves, as well as placing HDR candidates in competition for future employment. Supervisors can often experience contractual precarity within the communities that their students hope to join, and the notion of 'opening doors' for supervisees becomes fraught for those supervisors who do not yet have office doors.

Furthermore, the labour of those academic workers within the 'learning alliances' of HDR supervision is not evenly distributed. Casualization individualises responsibility for the quality of university services, and casuals may engage in 'self-exploitation' either out of a sense of personal obligation to students, or because they need to over-perform their competency in anticipation of possible contracts in the future (Brown, Goodman, and Yasukawa, 2010, p. 179). Furthermore, in the United Kingdom those who are perceived as embodying social diversity within the university (e.g. around class, gender, race, sexuality, religion) are frequently required to do informal and affective labour in supporting marginalised HDR students, legitimating diversity initiatives and diversifying curricula, and navigating colleagues' conflicting expectations around the 'diversity work' required of them

(Ahmed, 2012; Taylor, 2013). Affective labour performed by supervisors, especially in instances when they have been singled out to work with vulnerable or marginalised students, can remain invisible within the extant 'metric assemblages' around academic performance (see Grealy and Laurie, 2017). For example, the capacity for interpersonal care is commonly treated as a requirement for women but a special achievement for men, and this produces imbalances in the amount of work expected of female supervisors and the professional recognition received for such work.[iv]

The professional subjectivities of inexperienced supervisors also merit special consideration. Most academics receive little formal training in supervision practices and find themselves 'becoming a supervisor' as an improvised by-product of becoming an academic (see Barcan, 2015). The preparation processes that do exist are largely informal and tacit, and often unsatisfactorily addressed by institutional training focused on 'techne' and 'contextual expertise' (Halse and Malfroy, 2010, p. 88). Elspeth Probyn notes that 'feeling like a fraud is routine in the modern university' (cited in Barcan, 2013, p. 192), and Ruth Barcan argues that such feelings of fraudulence are exacerbated by post-disciplinarity (the porous borders of conventional disciplinary expertise), globalisation (the geographical mobility of researchers), productivism ('one can never, by definition, have done "enough"') and casualization, where 'overworked permanent staff and the undervalued casual staff are two sides of the same coin' (Barcan, 2013, pp. 199-200). Claims that 'a deep substantive knowledge of their discipline or specialization [is] essential for supervising doctoral students', and about the importance of professional networks for facilitating supervisees' examination and future employment (Halse and Malfroy, 2010, pp. 86-88; Lee, 2008), can further consolidate a sense of incompetence for ECR supervisors.

Feelings of fraudulence can sometimes be useful. The relative vulnerabilities of junior supervisors can provide opportunities to build bridges across institutional gulfs, in keeping with Barcan's analysis of academic insecurity: 'refusing to allow our students to feel that they are not the only person in the room who doesn't know enough, or shouldn't be there, or doesn't understand, or isn't convinced, or doesn't have the right background for this, is not only an ethical imperative, but also a political pedagogical challenge' (Barcan, 2013, p. 193). Acknowledging insecurity may allow supervisors to model important lessons about limitation, failure, humility, and intellectual generosity, as well as to affirm a collective confidence in the 'right to be somewhere' (203). This can be particularly important for doctoral students whose communities and cultures have been historically excluded from Western tertiary institutions and hierarchies of knowledge production (see Trudgett 2011, p. 393; Gidley et al., 2010). Elsewhere, studies of primary and secondary education have noted that students can benefit from adopting the position of teacher (Harris and Lemon, 2012), and some higher education researchers recommend that the 'breaking down of barriers between the "experts" and the learners is … necessary for engaging in a genuine dialogue' (Durden, Govender, and Reddy, 2014, p. 150).

Given these tensions around the conditions shaping supervision as a labour practice, our argument is not simply that the pedagogical problem of good supervision can be solved by improving industrial relations – although it would certainly help. By pointing to what Rosalind Gill (2014, p. 25) calls 'the hidden injuries of academic labouring in the Western University', we also heed her caution about not disavowing the privileges and desires of academic workers. Teaching work can involve many unexpected pleasures and always contains some 'room for manoeuvre' or even possibilities for 'exhilaration' (Ross Chambers in Morris, 2013, p. 450). Nevertheless, the labour of community building is uneven in its

social distribution and imbalanced in the rewards it can deliver. The first step in producing viable learning alliances may not necessarily be collective altruism but rather pragmatic self-interest. We need to create security and balance in the working lives of teachers, and to ensure that any ‘relational ethics of mutual responsibility’ is grounded in sustainable relationships with the university itself.

The Social Life of Knowledge

The issue of working conditions for supervisors leads to a second issue for learning alliances concerning the formation of disciplinary communities. In extant literature on supervision practices, the rewards of completing a thesis are often couched in humanist terms for the student (who contributes to knowledge), to the supervisor (who guides and learns from this contribution), and to the discipline (which is reinvigorated with new perspectives, approaches, and concepts). Some studies also frame the production of higher degree knowledge as a contribution to ‘knowledge economies’ intended to make ‘a significant contribution to change and development in the workplace’ (McCallin and Nayar, 2012, p. 69). When noted at all, ambiguities around the virtue of knowledge production are mostly attributed to external influences, like ‘economic competitiveness’ (Halse and Bansel, 2012, p. 387) or ‘adversarial models’ of education (Bartlett and Mercer, 2000, p. 197).

However, knowledge is always produced in a particular place, for a particular professional community, and within the parameters of what is already considered to matter culturally, historically, and politically (Trudgett 2011; Connell, 2007). Universities are classifying machines: they rank and punish, emplace and displace, include and exclude. Practices of

HDR supervision and research accreditation bring together historically specific ways of certifying and remunerating knowledge production; of separating individuals on the basis of authority (e.g. tutors, lecturers, professors), discipline (e.g. archaeology, cultural studies), and institutional tier (e.g. technical colleges, 'Oxbridge', the enterprise university); and of stratifying non-tertiary spaces in relation to mandatory educational qualifications (e.g. professional gatekeeping). The possession of knowledge does not automatically place an individual in an academic 'class' (Devlin, 2013; Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, and Bereded-Samuel, 2010), and correspondingly, those claiming membership in the 'knowledge class' do not necessarily possess more knowledge than others (Frow, 1995, p. 117). Nevertheless, some persons are equipped with resources – social capital, cultural capital, embodied capital – that allow them to make stronger claims over knowledge in bounded institutional settings (Bourdieu, 1997). Research in Australia has considered the trajectories of students from Low Socio-Economic Status (LSES) areas passing into higher education, noting the impact of both cultural and social capital in students' university experiences (Devlin et al., 2012; Devlin, 2013). John Frow characterises this relationship in the following way:

> The knowledge class acquires legitimacy through the acquisition of credentials, and at the same time achieves a measure of class closure by integrating the community of those with appropriate credentials and excluding those without it; it structures its Other in terms of its own claim to knowledge. (1995, p. 126)

To paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu (1984), the knowledge class is defined by its capacity to classify knowledge, and in doing so, to classify itself in relation to the institutions that authorise such claims to knowledge.

In the context of academic communities formed through the classification and authorisation of specialised knowledge, HDR trajectories are strongly marked by social capital, or 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition' (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 51). The HDR dissertation is not a commodity as such, but functions rather as an instrument of commoditisation in an inter-institutional market formation, and can thus be understood 'as a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being' (Kopytoff, 1984, p. 63). For those situated in Australia's research-focused Group of Eight (Go8) research-intensive universities,[v] the latent value of a dissertation is frequently converted into social and cultural capital, both through the immediate tie between supervisor and supervisee, and what Granovetter (1985) calls the 'weak ties' of extended professional affiliations to which senior supervisors may grant access. For the postgraduate student, social capital is crucial in 'providing access to key scholarly networks or opportunity structures, and investment in deciphering the unwritten rules of the institutional culture and the larger discipline' (Zambrana et al., 2015, p. 5). Consider Lee's account of supervision as a pivot of institutional power:

> [Supervisors] will provide some specific expertise, but will also be a gatekeeper to many more learning resources, specialist opinions and networks. The supervisor can choose which gates to open, particularly in the early stages of the researcher's life…. The struggle can be political on several levels. The student needs to be aware of how powerful (or not) their supervisor is in the institution, and discussion about enculturation as a concept or an expectation could help the student to make realistic decisions. (2008, p. 272)

Supervisors must balance a sense of responsibility to supervisees with the risk of heightening or consolidating their own investments in what Philippe Ariès, commenting on bourgeois education, concisely characterised as ‘a host of little societies’ (1962, p. 414). Relatively little is known about the relationship between HDR research trajectories and social capital accumulation, despite a handful of longitudinal studies pointing toward these issues (e.g. Walpole, 2003; Zweigenhaft, 1993). The aggregated labour-market effects of embedded social networks have not been studied at the level of an entire discipline, but we can find clues about tendencies. Recent research in the United States indicates that scholars from ‘minority’ backgrounds ‘are hindered by limited access to material resources, social capital, and prior experiences in segregated or underserved neighborhoods and schools’ (Zambrana et al., 2015, p. 44). Comparable nation-wide research is yet to be conducted across the Australian tertiary sector, but evidence suggests that social and cultural capital may be significant factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students (see Trudgett, 2011). In saying this, we do not want to posit a simple deficit model, wherein students understood to ‘lack’ social capital and cultural capital must automatically seek to overcome this lack. Rather, we must take into account ‘the lived realities of such students as subjects of particular histories, social situations and affective states that have a significant impact on their expectations and aspirations with regard to higher education’ (Low, 2013, p. 20). In this context, we might treat social capital as part of an analytics of power, without presuming that social capital acquisition is the *telos* of all student subjectivities.

As noted in our discussion of casualization above, discipline-based social capital is something that a supervisor may offer. Institutional expectations that supervisors support supervisees’ social and institutional progress (see Connell, 1985, p. 41) are buttressed by an affective component linked to memory and trauma. Most students experience the supervision

relationship as ground zero for the accumulation of social capital in its disciplinary aspect (or 'disciplinary capital'), as distinct from existing social networks. The interpersonal tribulations between supervisor and supervisee – deferred and missed deadlines, arguments and tears, prohibition and warning, conciliation and congratulations – accumulate as shared affective memory. If the student pursues an academic career, the spoils of affective accumulation may be converted into mobile social capital. Even fraught supervision relationships can produce enduring social connections, because traumatic supervision can heighten the supervisor's own investment in the candidate and the project. Affective labour in supervision therefore has two distinct faces. Facing inwards is the uncounted social work by supervisors who subscribe to what Lee calls the 'quality relationship' model of practice. Facing outwards is the extraction of social capital from HDR candidature enabled through affective accumulation. These may be two expressions of the same general tendency. As market-based interactions are increasingly embedded within academic life,[vi] affective relations and informal circuits of social capital provide relative securities in otherwise volatile and unpredictable environments. Affective connectivity is not only a site for strategic exploitation by the neoliberal university, but is also a tactical response to the social erosions and displacements of an unpredictable labour market.[vii]

For some of the issues raised so far, a range of simple correctives may be available. When supporting peer-based networks of learning among postgraduates, staff could make sure to include part-time students, students off campus, international students, or interested students from other universities. When casual or sessional staff are engaged in supervision, other staff could make sure to include them in 'teaching alliances' that provide social supports and offer opportunities for difficult supervision relationships to be mediated by supervisors with greater job security. In this final section, we outline specific issues around research

supervision for cultural studies practitioners, noting the ways that social relationships can acquire disciplinary value.

Higher Degree Research in a Cultural Studies Context

Cultural studies can find itself unexpectedly conflicted in the HDR environment. On the one hand, higher degree research programs can be formative spaces where students develop critical approaches to knowledge production itself, and for those not intending to pursue academic careers, such critical approaches can contribute to a broader public good elsewhere. On the other hand, the supervision dyad and the gatekeeping functions of doctoral assessment challenge cultural studies to confront practices seemingly incongruent with its own political orientations. These latter include the articulation of strict hierarchies between institutional and non-institutional forms of expertise; the exercise of institutional authority often linked to punitive mechanisms; the commonplace reification of 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' in some (primarily humanities) HDR programs; the valorisation of the mind over the body, or the being of ideas over the pragmatic doing of ideas; and the enforcement of distinctions between what cultural studies is and what cultural studies is not. To support this line of inquiry, we need to first pinpoint distinctive features of cultural studies as a research framework.

Cultural studies in Australia is described by Frow (2007) as both a 'common project' (p. 72) and as 'a kind of "clumping" of intellectual energies at key places and times' (p. 71), including the formation of a number of new academic journals and the communities that underpinned them; increased government investment into the culture industries in the 1970s

and 1980s; and new (or 'non-sandstone') education institutions which sought to distinguish themselves from the established universities through their interdisciplinary programs. It matters whether we transmit the history of cultural studies through the legacy of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies,[viii] or through those critical social movements that created the political and intellectual spaces that cultural studies now fruitfully occupies, including feminism (e.g. Morris, 1988) and critical responses to multiculturalism, often themselves framed in feminist terms (e.g. Gunew, 1988). For the sake of brevity, we will focus on features of cultural studies most relevant to teaching.

Let's say that if the social sciences are defined by their methods, cultural studies is defined by its problems. Cultural studies' problems require drawing from 'whatever fields are necessary to produce the knowledge for a particular project' (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler, 1992, p. 2), and the resulting problem-spaces become 'an interrelated set of questions that generates a body of knowledge – with the proviso that the singularity of this problematic is as much self-consciously constructed as it is given in advance' (Frow, 2007, p. 68). For this reason, cultural studies does not appear to have attachments to particular facts or fact-gathering methods. And yet, in order to sustain its own radical heterogeneity, cultural studies must have attachments to the circumstances that support its own existence: namely, the circumstances of institutionalised education. Cultural studies has firm intellectual investments in cultivating institutional spaces where unexpected ideas can be explored. For this reason, Graeme Turner foregrounds undergraduate teaching as an important base from which cultural studies programs have developed in Australia, and as a crucial site for the pedagogical interventions that cultural studies is readily, if not uniquely, equipped to make. '[Early] cultural studies programmes were taught in ways that explicitly and deliberately built on their own students' popular cultural capital', suggests Turner, and 'their focus upon the media and popular

culture enabled students to immediately engage in conversation with the discipline' (2011, p. 79). Just as cultural studies research takes seriously the phenomena of everyday life – its pleasures, frustrations, contradictions, aspirations – so too should the discipline enable students 'to learn something new about their own experiences, location or patterns of consumption' (p. 87). In this way, cultural studies' pedagogical orientations dovetail with John Dewey's philosophy of education, which prioritises the 'capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction', and seeks to articulate 'purposes' through 'cooperative enterprise' and 'social intelligence' (Dewey, 1997 [1938]).[ix] For similar reasons, some cultural studies scholars have expressed concerns about canon formation in the discipline (e.g. Grossberg, 2010; Rodman, 2014), and Turner strongly recommends against the 'mystificatory approach to the teaching of cultural studies theory that privileges the authority of the knowing teacher rather than enables the curious student' (2011, p. 78; see also Turner, 2013).

The scandal of cultural studies teaching is that it does not necessarily require the existence of cultural studies texts or cultural studies subjects. Problem-spaces and intellectual conjunctures can emerge from the intersection of many different disciplines, where 'cultural studies' may simply name the transit across this intersection. If, as Tony Bennett argues, 'cultural studies matters as a meeting place for heterogeneous forms of socio-cultural and cultural-economic analysis that have diverse forms of practical engagement' (2013, p. 439), the cultural studies pedagogue takes on the role of traffic conductor in a busy metropolitan intersection. Successful cultural studies teaching may therefore involve introducing a philosophy student to sociology, or a documentary film-maker to postcolonial literary theory, rather than enacting a conversion to cultural studies *tout court*.

Higher Degree Research programs accentuate the challenges of undergraduate cultural studies teaching. While research students may continue to benefit from the adage that *learning is doing* (see Durden, Govender, and Reddy, 2014, p. 149), the kinds of reflexive identity work and peer-based discussion commonplace in cultural studies' undergraduate classrooms are unlikely to fulfil the criteria for HDR projects. Supervisors cannot always engage supervisees through the same kinds of experience-based learning activities that continue to inspire and exhilarate undergraduates, and ongoing coursework is rarely a feature of HDR experience in Australian universities. This marks an important point of difference between the Deweyian ideals of the 'bottom-up' undergraduate classroom, and the more unwieldy demands of the cultural studies postgraduate space. Just as importantly, cultural studies cannot know in advance what kinds of research projects will be relevant to its purposes. Supervisors and supervisees must place a great deal of confidence in 'immanent' criteria linked to the particular problems posed by the research piece at hand. Undergraduate teaching can accommodate a degree of intellectual dilettantism, linked in part to the pedagogical device of exploring everyday experiences and adapting scholarship to suit these purposes. Where undergraduates are invited to explore different methods and approaches, postgraduates are expected not only to demonstrate mastery over one or several methods, but also to justify their methodological choices in historical terms: how is this problem being approached in and for the present? Producing convincing answers to such questions can also become important for facilitating candidates' transitions into non-academic labour markets (Frow, 2013), and we must remember that these links outside the university are important for sustaining cultural studies as a lively social and political project.

From the issues discussed thus far, it should be evident that cultural studies research can produce unique forms of intellectual vulnerability. In the absence of a mandated suite of

methods, postgraduates must learn to navigate tacit collective understandings of which problems are currently viable, which pathways have been exhausted, and which concepts remain salvageable from adjacent humanities and social science disciplines. Criticisms of canonical authority in cultural studies can be re-evaluated in this context. In contrast to Stuart Hall's formulation of a 'Marxism without guarantees' open to the 'relative indeterminacy' of 'political action given by the terrain on which it operates' (1996, p. 44), HDR programs produce terrains where guarantees are most furiously sought after, and where indeterminacy creates the greatest anxiety for those most vulnerable to failure. The researcher who is encouraged to draw on phenomenological or auto-ethnographic ways of knowing must remain confident in the authority of those who are seen to license these methods. The prized canonical names of cultural studies, its 'host of little societies', and the authority of a supervisor can be indispensable resources for those seeking to secure a voice within the discipline. In this context, the phylogenetic development of cultural studies – the emergence of great names and works over the last five decades – provides a speculative roadmap for the ontogenetic growth of the postgraduate's own research identity.

Postgraduate learning trajectories in cultural studies also involve complex social attachments. Academic communities produced through networks of affiliation and association can be joyful in addition to their 'capitalising' functions, and in the context of cultural studies, Meaghan Morris notes the importance of 'any self-motivating group that is sustained, within as well as without the silos of highly industrialized sectors, by a shared commitment to an educative project that acts as a source of ethical and emotional value for those involved' (2011, p. 126). As indicated in our discussion of learning alliances above, we must introduce a small caveat to such claims. In order to promote ethical and emotional value within educative projects, we must also promote sustainable and non-precarious industrial

arrangements, wherein the ravages of casualization can no longer ‘capture’ emotional and ethical investments as sites for further exploitation.

Conclusion

This chapter has moved between two distinct kinds of discourse that circulate within the sociology of higher education. One discourse considers the practices required to achieve a single broad outcome: best teaching practice. For those teaching HDR students, the criteria for best practice may involve progressing students toward a timely completion and creating the best conditions for the student to pursue a career. At the same time, we have interrogated the perceived outcomes of higher degree research in broader institutional contexts, noting key points of tension across the tertiary sector. In addition to focusing on the phenomenological experiences of teaching and learning, we must keep in view the patterns and cycles that shape the reproduction of programs, disciplines and institutions. There is no absolute separation to be made between teaching as a discrete activity and its broader institutional contexts, and boundaries are frequently blurred between teaching and socialising, instruction and collaboration, and mentorship and exploitation. This blurring can produce unexpected joy, relief, excitement, security, anticipation, and disappointment. For this reason, when promoting learning alliances as responses to deficiencies in the master-apprentice model of supervision, we also need to be sensitive to the organisational structures and working conditions within which such alliances are embedded. The informal allocation of pastoral responsibilities for supervisors can disproportionately affect casual or sessional workers, for whom professional aspirations can mix unpleasantly with the concrete challenges of precarious employment. Acknowledging the demands placed by universities on postgraduate

productivity, supervisors should remain committed to multiplying and diversity resources to support supervisees, while remaining prepared to engage with the institutional politics that continue to distribute teaching obligations and rewards unevenly across the tertiary sector.

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[i] A recent evaluation of trends in postgraduate performance is the Australian Government Department of Education and Training’s “Key findings from the ‘Completion Rates of Higher Education Students - Cohort Analysis, 2005-2015’ report” (2017).
[ii] On metrics and HDR supervision, see Grealy and Laurie (2017).
[iii] These figures refer to academic and professional staff, where ‘secure’ refers to employment on a permanent (or ‘tenured’) basis. Similar figures hold in the United Kingdom and the United States (see Gill, 2014, p. 19).
[iv] On gender and affective labour in the modern university, see Gregg (2010).
[v] The University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne, the University of Adelaide, The University of Western Australia, The University of Queensland, The University of New South Wales, Australian National University and Monash University.
[vi] See Granovetter (1985) on socially embedded markets.
[vii] On this distinction between strategies and tactics, see Michel de Certeau (1988).
[viii] See, for example, recent commentaries in Bennett (2015), Frow (2007) and Turner (2011).
[ix] What education researchers call problem-based learning (PBL) follows principles already welcomed by cultural studies scholars working with this Deweyian disposition. Universities are now more holistically placing emphasis on the development of HDR students’ transferable skills, such as ‘problem solving, collaborative work, leadership and knowledge application’ (Green and Usher, 2003, p. 39).