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Arts practice as method, urban spaces and intra-active faiths

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the research design for an arts-based interfaith research project that is intended to build relationships between children from different faiths and to increase research participants' understandings of faiths other than their own. The project is funded as an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship called *Early Start Arts to Counter Radicalization* and has a mixed method approach that brings arts-based workshop groups for children together with focus groups for parents. Early findings demonstrate the utility of art for developing a sense of belonging and self-worth in children and clearly show ways in which art facilitates comment on complex social issues even from primary school age. The nature of such socially engaged arts-based research means it must be developed or, at the least, refined, through engagement with community and social context. As such, consideration of the urban environment that shapes the lives of the young research participants and their families forms part of the discussion undertaken.

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Introduction

Discourses of Islamophobia and racism have become part of the Australian everyday. We are repeatedly reminded to beware of terrorists on public transport. Public announcements tell us to look out for 'anything suspicious' and to report such unspecified suspiciousness immediately. On national television, Pauline Hanson warns white people that they are at 'risk' of being taken over by Muslims. Human rights are violated daily in offshore detention centres: a message to asylum seekers to 'stay out' of Australia (HRLC 2015). Discourses of Islamophobia and racism are accompanied by more institutionalised strategies for governance, such as the Australian Strategic Policy Institutes' Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre's *Agenda for Change 2016: Strategic choices for the next government*. Such policy recommendations directly contribute to the legitimation of strategies for maintaining offshore gulags and on-shore detention centres in Australia. They legitimate and feed the culture of fear and xenophobia accepted as part of Australian public culture. As O'Donnell (2016a, 2016b) has shown in her exposition of the educational implications of *Prevent* and the associated deployments of epidemiological logics of contagion, infection, risk and bodily threat, such narrow social imaginaries, and the prohibitions they legitimate, shape and limit forms of community engagement. This needs to change,

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because a community in which young people from different cultural backgrounds thrive together cannot be founded on xenophobia. In this article, I offer a strategy for change through arts-based public pedagogies (Hickey-Moody, Windle, and Savage 2010) or cultural pedagogies (Savage and Hickey-Moody 2010) designed to encourage young people to refuse the racist attitudes at the heart of contemporary Australian Islamophobia. Building on my work on affect as methodology and method (Hickey-Moody 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015) I take socially engaged art practice as a cultural pedagogy, or a process and text that changes culture. Much of my work (Hickey-Moody 2009, 2013) has an ethos of practice popularised by the phrase 'the social turn' in arts practice, a name for practice that was first used around 2006 to describe the return to socially engaged art that is collaborative, participatory and involves people as the medium or material. In her 2006 essay *The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents*, art historian Clare Bishop argues that art which operates under the umbrella of social turn tends to happen outside museums or galleries, although this is not always the case. Because much of the art produced through socially engaged practice is collaborative and focuses on constructive social change, it is rarely commercial or *object based*.

Socially engaged art is an invaluable political resource. It is also a means through which young people are able to communicate complex ideas. Art can make complex issues visible, as it communicates through images, icons, feelings, colours, textures and sounds. It moves us to feel positively or negatively about subjects. Hickey-Moody's work is designed to complicate and extend the acute nature of contemporary counter-radicalisation work (Aly 2015; Mullins 2011) in Australia, which acquiesces to dominant cultural imaginaries that assume the legitimacy of the concept and process of radicalisation. As O'Donnell (2016a) has shown, radicalisation is an inherently problematic idea. Despite the lack of clarity concerning what exactly 'radicalisation' is, and numerous methodological problems associated with ideas of how people might become radical, rhetorics of 'counter-radicalisation', Islamophobia, fears of cultural contagion and xenophobia, remain the dominant discourses through which the politicisation of refugees and asylum seekers is justified. Further, such discourses become the means through which young people learn discourses of Islamophobia and racism. Through developing arts-based community engagement programmes, designed to make new kinds of 'interethnic habitus' (Harris 2014, 572), my project crafts new repertoires of feelings about multicultural and multifaith youth living in high-density urban spaces.

This is the first major arts-based child and youth interfaith research programme in Australia. The project aims to:

(1) Develop an Australian series of arts programmes for interfaith children.
(2) Document and understand if, and how, non-verbal, aesthetic and culturally coded forms of information change how children of different faiths relate to each other.
(3) Bring interfaith parents (and/or carers) into discussion around their children's experiences.

Art is an under utilised resource in the field of interfaith research (Mohyuddin et al. 2016), concerned as it is with making affective interventions in cultural logics. As a scholar known for work on affect and a socially engaged arts practitioner, I have brought together my areas of expertise to develop arts-based programmes to build interfaith relationships.

Mohyuddin et al. (2016) acknowledge that the term interfaith is often used interchangeably with, or in a similar way to, terms such as 'inter-religious, multi-religious, and multi-faith' (2016, 201). They state that 'although the research on interfaith organizations itself is still in its formative stages, the implications of this *process* of interfaith research on deepening understanding is equally important' (Mohyuddin et al. 2016, 192). Drawing on this framework, I work with the belief that interfaith research is uniquely positioned to 'advance current understandings of the processes and mechanisms that lead to reduced prejudice through interfaith practice' (2016, 192). Within my fieldwork, making shared artwork is itself an interfaith practice.

As I have suggested above, arts engagement programmes can make images depicting positive 'interethnic habitus' (Harris 2014, 572) yet the power of art to build interfaith relationships is a new field of exploration. Set against the backdrop of Australian anxiety around achieving and maintaining a successful, cohesive national identity, and accompanying fears of 'boat people' and multicultural failure, the face of the terrorist has become synonymous with the face of the Muslim. This 'faciality stands … for the very intimacy and physicality that abstract discussions of evil and fear often overlook' (Noble 2008, 220). The imagined threat of the terrorist has come to symbolise vulnerability to attack. New public faces of interfaith youth are needed to change the texture of this imaginary. My project builds interfaith relationships designed to make radicalisation less appealing and counter race-based prejudice. No major interfaith research initiative has been developed in Australia with a childhood focus. Starting young is thought to be critically important in terms of achieving social cohesion and enduring cultural change. Interfaith art workshops designed to share ideas of community, belonging, meaning, love, faith and belief can teach children that their friends can have very different religious beliefs but shared values. This can prevent feeling detached from those who do not share the same faith system.

Arts practice as method

Arts practice materialises the social in new ways, as a methodological transformation of affect theory, focusing on, activating and transforming emotional responses (Tomkins 1992, 4, 7). The project is the first childhood and interfaith (Bunge 2006) project to operate from a framework that brings theories of affect (Colman 2005; Hickey-Moody 2009, 2012, 2013; Murphie and Bertelsen 2010; Tomkins 1992) to consider the creation of new forms of interethnic, interracial community and national belonging through art. This framework focuses on non-verbal, aesthetic and culturally coded forms of information exchange. Art-making workshops maximise the potential for non-verbal communication and allow for the observation of how interfaith young people relate to each other through body language, iconography, colours and gestures. The arts workshops generate innovative data sets that include images created by children, videos and photographs of interfaith children working together. These data sources offer invaluable insight into the embodied politics of art making and the interpersonal relationships that art-making practices entail. Focus groups[1] with the families of young participants offer adult perspectives on public perceptions of minority faiths and also show the ways faith has sustained families through moves across the world and often across war-torn lives.

Methodology

My theory of 'affective pedagogy' (Hickey-Moody 2012, 2013), the way art can change what a body can do, forms my research sensibility in designing and producing the art workshops. The past 10 years have seen a burgeoning of work on affect and increasing entanglements of this work with educational ideas and practices (Ringrose and Renold 2014; Todd, Jones, and O'Donnell 2016). As I have noted elsewhere (Hickey-Moody 2009, 2012, 2013) these affect-education scholarly entanglements draw on different intellectual traditions, notably the respective lineages of Silvan Tompkins, Gilles Deleuze, Baruch Spinoza and the newer, interdisciplinary field of 'affect studies'. More recently, education has seen a turn to thinking through the emotionality of education (Hickey-Moody, Harwood, and McMahon 2016; Kenway and Youdell 2011; Watkins 2011) and an associated consideration of the 'emotional scapes' of education. An exploration of connections between feminist work on affect and contemporary discussions of emotional scapes of education is outside the scope of this paper, but the methods of art making discussed here mobilise feeling, materiality and what Bennett (2004) calls 'the force of things', in community-based education settings. Implicitly, generations of work undertaken by women's bodies, emotions, care and creativity are built on as sights and space of political and pedagogical importance in affect studies. Specifically, I would gesture towards, and acknowledge, contributions made by the work of Kristeva (1984), Gatens (1996), Probyn (2005), Ahmed (2006), Gallop (1988), Niccolini (2016) and others, in considering imagination, the body and creativity in a fashion analogous to contemporary masculinist theories of affect. An affect is an increase of a decrease in a body's capacity to act, which is effected through engagements with other bodies and contexts, such as art-making practices and other children. The politics of education is also a politics of the materiality and affectivity, a politics of socio-economic learning and teaching bodies, school spaces and the emotional lives of students and their teachers. Educationalists need theoretical frameworks responsive to these material and emotional truths and must approach these pedagogical considerations as a political project. Hickey-Moody's previous research (2015, 2016) has shown the particular value of working with socially engaged arts practices. Art communicates non-verbally through making and displaying compounds of colours, textures, icons: things you cannot necessarily cognitively 'read', and can only 'experience'. In the first set of arts methods workshops, bringing this theoretical and practical expertise to bear on contemporary conditions of Islamophobia and cultural contempt through making artworks, children aged 6–10 explored the themes of 'love', 'friendship', 'my future', 'different beliefs'. The resulting artworks transmitted feelings non-verbally, through colour, sound, texture, moving image. Aesthetics are a core means through which young people communicate (Hickey-Moody 2009, 2012), and theories of affect help us to see the unconscious ways art impacts our emotions (Hickey-Moody 2013, 2015, 2016). This project puts my theory of affective pedagogy (Hickey-Moody 2012, 2013), which is recognised as leading in the field of youth arts research (Dean 2016; Sim 2015; Wood 2010), to work in exploring aesthetics as a form of communication and art as a way of crafting new affective relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim children.

International research context

British sociological research maps 'liminal forms of ethnicity' (Back 2013, 248) developed as a means of negotiating interfaith prejudice in urban, multicultural contexts. *Prevent* clearly placed discussion about Muslim youth in the British public sphere, although the discourse is framed in terms of inclusion rather than recognition. Nancy Fraser is instructive here, in realising the need to work with recognition rather than inclusion. In her now famous response to Jurgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser (1990) argues that the lack of recognition of marginalised social groups excludes them from any possibility of belonging to a universal public sphere. Fraser contests the suggestion that such a public space, as it currently exists, is actually able to be inclusive. For Fraser, the very notion of independent 'citizens' is masculinist, because in order to function in the public sphere, one must rely on a certain level of domestic (private, female), unrecognised labour, stolen or repossessed land, ignored identity politics. Working through recognition facilitates re-making strategies for belonging, civic participation and cultural value. Recognising faith, cultural history and race are processes of identification that call forward belonging, empathy, understanding but can also conjure fear, resentment and disavowal. These politics of recognition are configured around materialities of the everyday.

Building interfaith relationships in childhood through art compliments, and also conceptually extends, existing UK policies through the methodological frame of affect and affective pedagogy. The research design discussed here is unique in theoretical framing and method, and as such some space needs to be devoted to explicating differences between existing work and this project. There is much UK work designed to build strong interfaith relationships through arts (Bartlett 2011), initiatives linked to *Prevent*, the British national anti-terrorism scheme, which has been critically reviewed by key thinkers in the philosophy of education (e.g. O'Donnell 2016a). For those unfamiliar with the initiative, in 2010 Britain launched *Prevent,* a five-year national policy aimed at terrorism prevention. In 2014, a national report on counter-terrorism (UK Government 2014) was released as an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the policy.

Underpinning *Prevent,* Britain attempted to build a public discourse for social cohesion, yet it remains a thin veil over divisive strategies that encourage teachers, community figures and publics to report 'suspicious', or non-secular, non-Christian behaviour and possibly 'radical' thoughts or beliefs. There currently are, and have been, arts-based counter-radicalisation programmes running in a research capacity in the UK, and while these projects need critical review, in this paper I focus on my Australian work. I will now offer some consideration of the immediate Australian context.

Urban Australia: multiculturalism, expansion and densification

Scholarship on multiculturalism in Australia (Hage 2003; Noble 2008, 2012) appears to be waning, in favour of discussions about diversity. However, an idea of multiculturalism remains part of Australia's social fabric in a way that 'diversity' does not. For example, ideas of multiculturalism, more than concepts of 'diversity', are mobilised as an ethic for community building. This said, and as much research on urban culture has noted, both ideas of multiculturalism and diversity are losing currency in Australia's political culture. Indeed, as Stratton (2017) has recently shown, contemporary multiculturalism

in Australia is concerned with meanings that are radically different from those the term had in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. For all intents and purposes, contemporary Australian multiculturalism is a fiscal discourse designed to facilitate and appreciate overseas (mainly Chinese) economic investment, rather than the vision of community building, cultural exchange, transformation and multicultural appreciation advanced through discourses of multiculturalism in the 1980s (Stratton 2017). To put this another way, discourses of multiculturalism in Australia have become a way of glossing overseas investment, while newly arrived economic migrants and refugees are demonised in mainstream media as potential dangers, and as 'drains' on the economy.

Australian civic life lacks appropriate discursive structures for framing shared cultures of ethnic, religious, racial diversity in relation to refugees, economic migrants and minority communities. This paucity exists alongside the rapid expansion and densification of Australia's multicultural urban regions. Melbourne and Sydney, the national centres for overseas migration arrivals, are some of the fastest growing cities in the world. According to Dodson (2016), Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, has an annual growth rate of 2.1%, so for example it grew by 91,600 residents in 2014–2015. A significant proportion of these new residents are overseas arrivals. Australia's other large cities are not growing quite as quickly but are also expanding and densifying; across 2014–2015, Sydney grew at a rate of 1.7% and Perth and Brisbane grew at a rate of 1.6% (Dodson 2016). To put this expansion and densification into some global perspective, in Australia '22.2 per cent of the population in 2006 was born overseas (compared with 18.4 per cent in Canada in 2001, 12.0 per cent in the US in 2000 and 9.1 per cent in the UK in 2005)' (Forrest and Dunn 2010, 81). It seems unlikely, then, that Sydney, a city with one of the highest migration rates in the world, would lack a public and political rhetoric that explicates the cultural value of diversity and migrant lives. More than this, the Islamophobic (and publicly named) 'Counter Terrorist' policies and associated public discourses (public transport announcements, political campaigns, underrepresentation in Australian entertainment media) actually interrupt possibilities for de-centring such discourses with appreciative or positive stories.

Unlikely as this might sound, then, contemporary Australian public culture is characterised by a paucity of discussion of the cultural value of economic migrants and refugees. To make matters worse, as noted above, the discourses about migration and refuge that do exist often mobilise rhetorics of contagion and logics of radicalisation characterised by O'Donnell (2016a, 2016b). What is needed is an entirely different approach, perhaps akin to that characterised by Nagel and Hopkins' suggestion that 'When thinking about the contemporary significance of multiculturalism, we [should] consider the on-going questioning of belonging and social membership that takes place whenever and wherever the "margins" are brought to the "centre"' (2010, 2 my parentheses). Urban spaces in Sydney are multicultural mixtures of social and economic margins that are often quite difficult to 'centre'. This is precisely what is of such great value about them.

In an attempt to redress, even in a small part, this paucity of discourse, my fieldwork is based in low socio-economic status (SES) and multicultural, multifaith areas across NSW and Victoria with an international benchmark in the UK. Areas chosen are largely those flagged in ASPI[2] documents as being locations from which the people they frame as 'Australian Terrorists' have come, or spaces discussed in ASPI Counter-Terrorism documents in relation to the need for terrorism prevention. As noted, the project began in Auburn,

NSW, a multicultural suburb with a reputation for being ethnically diverse and also for being the site of dispute about the politics of multiculturalism.

Rauscher and Momtaz (2017, 201) provide a history of Auburn, noting that prior to European settlement, the Wangal Aboriginal people lived on and around the Auburn area. As part of the genocide on which contemporary Australian culture is founded, white European settlement began in what is now known as the Auburn area in the 1790s.[3] Jumping ahead to contemporary postcolonial times, the Auburn Council was disbanded and amalgamated with Cumberland Council in 2016 after a series of legal disputes that were not directly responsible for the merger, but which certainly informed public opinion about the area and can be thought as suturing ideals of multiculturalism to community unrest and eventual dissolution.

The City of Auburn is now a Western Sydney suburb governed by the Cumberland Council, 19 kilometres from the Sydney central business district (CBD). Multiculturalism in Auburn is very different from multiculturalism in the CBD, and these differences are marked by class, SES and politics. Although Auburn prides itself as being one of the most multicultural communities in Australia, multiculturalism in Auburn has also been the cause of great public dispute. The once Anglo-Celtic European population of the suburb has been replaced by a high percentage of Vietnamese, Turkish and Lebanese migrants. In this instance, diversity has not meant happy endings. The Sydney Morning Herald (11 August 2012) proclaimed that Auburn was the suburb with the highest number of drive-by shooting incidents in the Sydney Region, with 34 incidents between 2007 and 2012. This statistic from a 5-year period is tempered, however, as '… the figures revealed that in the last two years, there were only been two drive-by incidents in Auburn. In the past two years, Merrylands recorded 13 drive-bys' (The Sydney Morning Herald 11 August 2012). In 2013, police launched an anti-gang crackdown in Auburn in response to a series of attacks involving firearms. Auburn has also notoriously been the site of arrests in relation to 'terrorism', or alleged terrorist ideations, including the arrest of a 16-year-old outside his home in connection to preparations for a terrorist attack on an ANZAC Day service in April 2016.

This media reportage of violence and unrest has become synonymous with public perceptions of the place. The 2011 Australian Census showed that there were 73,738 people in the Auburn local government area. When compared with total population growth of Australia for the periods 2001–2006 (5.78%) and 2006–2011 (8.32%), population growth in the Auburn local government area was double the national average. As I have suggested, the median income for residents within the Auburn area is lower than the national average (Auburn City Council 2016), and this is one of the factors that defines the City as a socially disadvantaged area. The 2011 Census shows the proportion of residents in the Auburn local government area with Lebanese or Chinese backgrounds was *over six times the national average* (Auburn City Council 2016; Rauscher and Momtaz 2017, 201). Rauscher and Momatz's reading of the 2011 Census suggests that 'The proportion of residents who stated an affiliation with Islam was in excess of eleven times the national average' (2017, 201). Meanwhile, the area is linguistically diverse, with Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Turkish and Korean spoken in households across the City. This very brief snapshot of the demographic of Auburn offers a sense of the shifting constitution of the population and frames the social issues that have arisen from the multicultural constitution of the community.

A recent history of moral panics, and racial and religious violence has lead to negative community images and narratives surrounding Auburn. The former Auburn Mayor was recently arrested on charges of assaulting a taxi driver (News Corp Australia 2016), after a long history of controversy surrounding his time as Mayor, relating to conflict of interest between his own real estate investments in the City of Auburn and the 'best interests' of the citizens of the City, which were seen to run against his personal investments. The social anxieties at the heart of the changing formations of multiculturalism in Auburn became subject to media debate in 2016, a year in which the then Deputy Mayor of what, at the time was Auburn Council, Salim Mehajer, became the focus of very public controversy. Mehajer incited controversy over a range of issues, but perhaps most professionally damning was speaking in an antagonistic, patronising fashion about his colleagues.[4]

The landscape of 'multiculturalism' in Auburn is factitious, divisive and media fuelled. The community divides shown up by such public disputes point towards the critique of redistribution advanced by Nancy Fraser, introduced above. In her work on redistribution and recognition, Fraser argues that redistributing an already small resource pool is not enough to effect social change in a manner aligned with social justice ideals. Fraser argues that recognition of the different kinds of value attached to minority identities needs to accompany any attempt at redistributing resources. Mehajer publicly unfairly attacked his council colleagues who apparently received social support as a young person, many years ago. In so doing, Mehajer fed existing moral panics about 'dole bludgers', although his colleagues had not received benefits for many years. He also attempted to suggest that he is the victim of a moral panic or social prejudice because of his 'olive complexion'. Given the recent arrest of Mehajer we can assume the concerns over his financial actions were not a form of racism, but his double mobilisation of forms of moral panic, both painting his colleagues as folk devils who are 'dole bludgers' and his suggestion that he himself is targeted as a 'folk devil' because he has an 'olive complexion' clearly shows that we need to make new mediated mixtures that canvass the social complexity of living with difference. This should not be a matter of folk devils and moral panics; redistribution needs to trump recognition. Race and faith relations should be about community building and multiculturalism. In the same place marked by the statistics and controversies outlined above, in a building that houses 'Auburn Diversity Services', my arts workshops crafted new relationalities between cultures and explored different faiths. Across the workshops, children opened up from being shy and unconfident to offering quite evolved takes on why religion matters. They drew pictures showing that religion offers them 'joy' and teaches them 'service'. Their pictures illustrated the values of equality, friendship, sustainability and, again, 'joy', as they drew a future world where their values and the beliefs of different religions could come together.

Intra-active faiths

Above, I introduced the work of Nancy Fraser in order to show that social justice work that facilitates comparison between minority groups often leads to competition and blaming. However, while I believe that recognition of cultural difference is a much more useful strategy than a redistribution of already limited resources, neither of these perspectives Fraser so famously develops account for the making of the social that occurs through collaborative and material processes. In showing the materiality of change, expression and

social bonding created by arts workshops I turn to examine the work of feminist physicist Karen Barad, who offers a frame for thinking through the co-constitutive qualities of bodies and things. Barad describes 'intra action' as the mutual constitution of entangled agencies which come to be by virtue of bodies and things being co-located. When bodies intra-act, they do so in co-constitutive ways. Individuals and things materialise through intra-action. Their ability to act emerges from within the relationship between them, not outside of it. Through the co-constitution of agency embedded in the idea of intra-action, the act of building interfaith relationships through art can be seen as co-creating shared faiths, a re-materialising of young bodies and beliefs that are the relationship between different faiths. Through the concept of intra-action, Barad also develops what she calls a diffractive methodology. Diffraction is an attempt to make and value new differences while recording interactions, interference and reinforcement. In response to the provocation that Barad's work is a 'critique' of many theorists' refusal to accept the material-discursive and performative nature of intra-actions, Barad advocates diffraction as a welcome alternative to the notion of critique. She points out that 'going critical' refers to the point of 'critical mass', wherein 'a single neutron enters a critical sample of nuclear material which produces a chain reaction that explodes with ideas' (2012, 49). She adds: 'As a physicist I find this metaphor chilling and ominous.' For Barad, diffractive readings are 'respectful, detailed, ethical engagements' (2012, 50). She believes that the entanglement of matter and meaning questions the dualism of nature and culture, and consequently questions the separation of humanities and sciences. Through thinking about diffraction as the differences between faiths created in the act of interfaith art, we can see that the meanings and values of faiths are expanded through creative interfaith work. An example given by Barad that explains the generative power of diffraction is water waves, or ripples, overlapping (2007, 67–68). Imagine two drops of water falling side by side into a pond. Both drops produce a circle of ripples. Being in close proximity, the ripples overlap, so that some 'circles' of ripple are composed of the intersection of both of the two drop's ripple circles. These points of intersection between two different ripples offer a way of understanding the significance of an artwork about faith made by children of different beliefs. The materiality of an artwork in which children of different faiths explore what faith means to them, like the intersection of two ripples meeting, makes a moment of intra-faith: two faiths coming together to make new beliefs about what religion could be. Such coming together, such understanding of difference and co-constitution of belief is critical in contemporary times in which religion is used repeatedly as a reason to 'other' certain demographics. Intra-faith relationships hold the possibility for building communities of understanding that hold the key to bridging what is often constructed as one of the greatest divides in contemporary times.

Research on interfaith community building in Australia is beginning to gain momentum outside the realms of psychology, international relations and politics. Thinking through diffraction and intra-action shows the agency of interfaith work, by highlighting the fact that bodies and beliefs are contextually co-constituted. This adds a new framing to the valuable work of Noble (2008, 2012), and Poynting and Mason (2008). Harris (2014, 2017), Roose and Harris (2015) and Hage (2003) also explicate the politics of multicultural citizenship in ways that provide valuable context going forward. While the issues around interfaith community have not yet been addressed through arts-based research, clinical studies show us that exactly such qualitative approaches are needed (Dernevik et al.

2009). Approaching interfaith relations through affect engenders new possibilities for intra-active (Barad 2012) community building in which materialist aspects of community are built through sharing belief systems. Arts-based practices offer an ideal way of establishing, but also of re-organising emotional investments. They provide an excellent vehicle through which to build convivial interfaith relations. My arts programmes have been designed to build significantly on existing Australian work that aims to create cohesive social texts around 'counter-radicalisation' agenda and engages arts for building multicultural society (Hickey-Moody 2011). Through art, I am attempting to make new 'sets of ordering rules' (Tomkins 1962, 334) relating to young Muslim faces. While the intra-relationships between sex, gender, race and culture and the negotiation of binaries and difference have been widely debated in gender studies and feminist theory, ideas of intra-action and diffraction offer new momentum and fresh insights into debates about interfaith subjectivities because they give us a way of understanding how community art projects make collective subjectivities, faith beliefs and collective artworks.

Conclusion

By thinking practically about how we pay attention to sharing faiths in empirical fieldwork, I want to develop children's ideas of what faith might be. The term 'interfaith', as distinct from 'counter radical', has been chosen as it is intended to challenge the idea that differences in faith could ever serve as a natural foundation of structural inequalities. Moving forward, my creative interfaith work will explore the practicalities of what happens when theory meets research, when beliefs and bodies meet and make matter. Ethnographic studies of art making as a means of articulating the non-verbal show the power of co-creation (Harris 2017). Collaborative art making can express feelings that are not able to be expressed in words by the young people involved in this research and the materiality of making is core to this process of expression (Hickey-Moody, Palmer, and Sayers 2016). The significance of this materiality is core to new materialist thought and has, in other ways, been acknowledged within art theory for many years. For example, relational aesthetics is a term developed by curator Nicholas Bourriaud in the 1990s to describe the tendency he noticed in art practice to make work based on, or inspired by, human relations and their social context. Bourriaud saw artists as facilitators or activators, rather than makers, and regarded art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewer. The artist, in this sense, was seen as someone who gives audiences access to power and the means to change the world.[5] Extending Bourriaud's position, and as noted above, the term 'socially engaged practice' describes art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work. Definitions of such practices could also be extended to involve *faith* or *belief* as the material of the work. Making diffractive, or many different, understandings of faith is the purpose of my arts workshops. Through undertaking socially engaged arts practices that work with faith, and belief, as the material of art that is crafted and re-shaped as a collective subjectivity, my interfaith childhoods project makes new epistemic and spiritual communities. Building on a history of feminist labour and activism contained in feminist affect theory and feminist art practice, I remake the social to constitute an intra-active, intra-faith collective mattering of faith relations and experiences of multicultural urban space.

Notes

1. The focus groups run for 90 minutes and are held the week after the arts workshops finish.
2. Australian Strategic Policy Institute.
3. The area was initially colonized with the ironic title 'Liberty Plains', a farming area. In 1892, Auburn was proclaimed as an independent borough, and the neighbouring area of Silverwater was amalgamated with Auburn in 1906 to create a larger council area. In 1949, the Municipalities of Auburn and Lidcombe were amalgamated to form the new Auburn Municipality. In 1993, Australian law changed and municipality ceased to be a legal category of local government area. Auburn Municipal Council became 'Auburn Council', and the same name was used to refer to the former Municipality of Auburn. A project by Auburn Council to seek city status began in 2006 and in 2009, the Governor of NSW issued a proclamation granting Auburn city status.
4. Speaking about his (then) fellow councilors, after they chose not to approve his application for a large build, Mehajer stated that: 'I'd like to remind the two of you "dole bludgers" that it is I, and indeed people like myself that is [*sic*] paying for that slice of bread and capsule of butter sitting on your kitchen bench'. 'Both of you seem to always hold such negative ideologies and have set "anti-development" ideals, yet [*sic*] when it comes to me or someone with an "olive complexion" lodging a development application, I/we are grossly targeted' (Mehajer in ABC Online 2016). Such derogatory statements about 'dole bludgers' made by someone with an 'olive complexion' shows us the self-identifying deviant from Cohen's spiral of deviance, the 'folk devil' who has been taught so often that they are deviant that they come to believe and to perform deviance.
5. Bourriaud has been substantively critiqued for positioning artists as being more powerful than their audiences and the participants in relational artworks.

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Notes on contributor

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