

Time to look in/at anger: A theoretical provocation on the position and policing of young people's anger

Abstract

Mental and emotional well-being is steadily overtaking physical difficulty as the biggest health challenge facing young people. As a result young people's emotional well-being and needs is a significant concern within contemporary youth studies. However, the intricacies of 'managing emotion' have been somewhat neglected in the context of youth studies. In particular the role of discourses of emotional well-being to produce "feeling rules" (Boler, 1999), to discipline, and to restrict expressions of emotion has been unconsidered. This article explores this problematic further with the intention of provoking a larger concentration on relationship between the policing of emotion and youth well-being discourses. Specifically it focuses on anger as one of the emotions that young people are encouraged to move away from. It outlines how young people's right to be angry is policed through the construction of angry subjectivities as characterised by incompleteness. It focuses on two – the *unresolved* subject and the *unreasoned* subject. Young people, who are already constructed as incomplete, are particularly vulnerable to this policing. Drawing on a range of theoretical interjections on the disciplining of 'adult' anger, the article explores the political importance of anger, how it is limited for young people, and the complexities of engaging with anger in the context of youth studies. Given the limited attention anger has attracted in youth studies literature the article is intentionally provocative. However, as the article notes, this is a complex debate with many challenges and a much more detailed investigation is necessary.

Introduction

Young people's emotional well-being is subject to increasing concern. Such concerns are a response to the disconnect between improvements in young people's physical health and rapid decline in young people's mental health (Furlong, 2012). The economic, social and educational pressures facing young people have resulted in a situation where two of the most common health complaints among the young are depression and anxiety (Furlong, 2012; Eckersley, 2011). In response to this, both policy-makers and youth studies have argued that strategies for improving young people's well-being need to support their emotional needs and help them, in Wyn's (2007) phrasing, "become somebody well".

However, laudable as the aim to facilitate young people's coping mechanisms and emotional 'well-ness' is, this discourse implicitly reinforces the disciplining of emotion and imposes "feeling rules" (Boler, 1999; Ruddick, 1990). To illustrate the relationship between emotional control and well-being this article uses the example of anger. Anger has received little attention in youth studies literature. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Ahmed (2004; 2006), Lorde (1984) and Lyman (2004), the article demonstrates how anger has been both demonised and domesticated through discourses of care. Although the work of these authors is derived from the experience of adults, their observations resonate strongly with the experiences of young people. The article identifies the subtle manifestations of this demonization/domestication through notions of personal and social progression embodied in

the notion of “moving on” and “being well”. The result of these discourses, the article suggests, is twofold. First is the construction of the angry subject as disordered and socially undesirable. Those who express anger apart from (and inhibits) overall social contentment (Ahmed, 2004) and interrupts social order (Shilling, 1990; Lyman, 2004). In the context of youth this subject is articulated through the language of ‘childishness’ and immaturity (James and Prout, 1990). Second is the obfuscation of the divide between expressions of anger and social and political change (Lorde, 1984). The blurring restricts individuals or groups from expressing their anger by positioning these emotions as (for adults) part of an interruptive political performativity or (for young people) as characteristic of immaturity, underdevelopment and emotional unwellness.

The article proposes that the disciplining of anger is not just a problem for individual young people, it is also politically problematic. This is due to the fact, as the theorists cited in the article have noted, anger is potentially the most politically generative emotion. The expression of anger can provide an impetus for radical political disruption and change. That said, as Holmes (2004) notes, not all anger is political and it is important not to construct a binary of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ anger. Furthermore, the constructiveness of anger is interlaced with raced, classed and gendered subjectivities; for some young people (particularly young men of colour) the benefit of recognising anger needs to be counterweighted against other discursive tropes (‘angry young, black man’) which have been utilised against them and can delegitimise their complaints. However, the purpose of the article is not to advocate for more anger per se but to highlight the need to be mindful of the disciplining of anger within the campaign for young people’s ‘emotional wellness’.

Politics and policing anger

Before interrogating the disciplining of anger directly I want to explain why anger is an important concern. Anger is neither the sole nor the predominant concern of either well-being studies or the work of Ahmed, a central theorist explored in this article. However the importance of anger for political action, particularly political resistance, has long been recognised (and discussed) within philosophy. Anger, according to Lyman (1981) is the “essential political emotion” (Lyman, 1981: 61). It is “an indispensable political emotion - for without angry speech the body politic would lack the voice of the powerless questioning the justice of the dominant order” (Lyman, 2004: 133). Moreover, according to political sociology, anger occupies a special position in the catalogue of responses to social injustice as it is focused on the origins (and originators) of the injustice - a response to evil (Aquinas, 1947; see Henderson, 2008: 30) - rather than on the victims of the injustice. This argument is made by Henderson (2008) who defends anger on the basis that:

[Anger] can locate blame for injustice and tends, more than other emotions, to motivate punitive and/or preventative demands against the unjust treatment of others. In contrast to victim-focused emotions such as empathy, anger focuses on the *perpetrator* of injustice (Henderson, 2008: 30, emphasis in original)

For Henderson, Lyman and others, anger contains the greatest potential for disrupting the dominant order, facilitating political dialogue, and propelling radical democratic change. While other emotions (empathy, shame, hurt) may generate sympathy and understanding anger “puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul” (Gamson, 1992: 32). As De Rivera et al (1994) argue:

although sympathy for the unfortunate may provide the motivation for personal helping when a person is in a direct relationship [...] behaviour to secure justice in indirect relationships - is motivated by anger at injustice, by moral outrage, rather than sympathy (De Rivera et al, 1994: 103)

From this perspective, while sympathy is important, without anger political change does not become an imperative.

The need for anger is also reinforced by the status of young people. Arguably, given the limitations on their engagement with traditional democratic politics (specifically voting), anger is more important for young people than ever. Within the present geopolitical and global economic context young people are frequently the group most negatively impacted by policy. The restrictions on and in education, introduction of age limits on welfare payments, and changes in employee pay and benefits the most obvious examples of this. Without suffrage, young people have limited recourse to express their discontent or exert a claim for fairer treatment. This argument resonates with the writing of feminist and post-colonial theorists who argue that “public anger [...] constitutes a demand for action on issues that have proven stubbornly resistant to other kinds of claims” (Sparks, 2015: 32).

Despite recognition of their political worth, expressions of anger are frequently subject to discursive disciplining and silencing, particularly when they come from particular groups. This speaks to the impact of socio-cultural discourses and power relations on the interpretation of anger. As Bauman suggests, anger is not universally available; social, political and economic elites can more readily express their anger:

the angry rich [...] have the right to be angry; they are allowed to pump their anger through loudspeakers installed on public squares in front of the offices of supreme powers - without any fear of being charged with selfishness, breaking solidarity, anarchy, anti-Americanism, or the mentality of a Luo tribesman (Bauman, 2012: 35-6)

Bauman’s critique highlights the connection between having the right to be angry and class-based privilege. This echoes a Bourdieu-inspired understanding of the interaction between the interpretation of subject’s actions and class-based identities. The angry rich (or angry elite) are interpreted as passionate whereas the angry poor are interpreted as riotous.

Similarly, Boler (1999) and Holmes (2004) both argue that the right to be angry is also restricted based on gender. According to Boler women who show anger are policed through labels such as ‘shrill’ or the accusation that they are ‘too manly’ (Boler, 1999). Such policing is very much connected to what earlier feminist theorists such as Charlotte Gilman Perkins and

Simone de Beauvoir described as the socialisation of women to be docile, less emotionally open and, ultimately, subservient to men. In terms of anger, its association with masculine performativity has prohibited women from expressing their anger on the basis that it subverts norms of femininity. As Holmes writes, “shifting sets of conventions have had some continuity in discouraging women in Western nations [...] from showing anger” (Holmes, 2004: 209).

The qualification of legitimate anger based on the subjectivities of the expressers is further explored by Sparks (2015). Like Bauman and Holmes she describes how certain communities have their anger more readily constructed as uncivil or hostile regardless of the nature of their expressions. To support this she draws on Cristina Beltrán’s (2010) analysis of pro-immigration rallies describing how despite the ‘festive’ and ‘celebratory’ aspects of the marches (they included families, colourful placards and music) they were presented in the conservative media as resolutely un- or anti-American and hostile due to the racial profile of the protestors.

That said, as I will discuss later on, it is important not to reify anger as a political motivator. To do so, according to Holmes (2004) risks suggesting that anger can be evaluated by how effectively it propels political action and change. The result of this is a scale of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ anger which excludes anger which is not visibly ‘political’ and valorizes the anger of the oppressed and inherently more valid or valuable (Sparks, 2015). Moreover, in defending the need for angry expression, it is important not to understate the potential for anger to be directed against ‘innocent’ bystanders or to ignore the different forms angry expression can take (from rudeness to violence) and suggest all angry expression is the same.

However these considerations are not the primary interest of this article. Nor, indeed are they the main contribution of the above interjections. Rather these perspectives indicate the performative character of anger. This is detailed by Sparks who argues that the characteristics of the angry subject - as riotous or politically engaged - are publicly constructed and shaped by discourse. As such, the poor, for example, are not disciplined through holding anger away from them but through the construction of the angry poor as problematic. What I want to argue here then is that young people also fall into the category of groups who have their right to be angry restricted in this way. Efforts to move young people away from anger remove it from the catalogue of emotions available to them. Moreover, what I want to contend is that, although the aim to help young people channel frustrations discussed by well-being advocates appears relatively positive, they also facilitate this kind of disciplinary process.

Centrally this article proposes that, as with the subjects analysed by the theorists above, the disciplining of young people’s anger is achieved through the construction of young people’s anger as part of a problematic performativity. For young people being angry is a performance of a problematised subjectivity characterised by *incompleteness*. While the disciplining operation of such subjectivities has to date been explored solely in the context of adults, it also resonates with the experience and treatment of young people. This is not to say that there is an agelessness to anger (i.e. that all anger looks the same) but that in the case of the ‘adult-located’ theorisation and young people’s anger, the angry subject is constructed as incomplete and this is used to silence anger. These subjectivities sustain a discourse which promotes either

encouraging young people to move on from their anger or providing them with opportunities to “channel” their frustrations. These discursive themes are both implicitly and explicitly conveyed in youth policy and youth studies through programmes to support young people’s emotional development, for example, or increase their emotional well-being.

Having proposed this argument I now wish to outline two of the subjectivities which serve to construct anger as indicative of being incomplete and as a result enable the disciplining of anger. These subjectivities I will address as the *unresolved subject* and the *unreasoned subject*.

Disciplining anger

The unresolved subject

One way anger is controlled is through the production of the unresolved subject who has yet, due to at best emotional illiteracy (Boler, 1999; Holmes, 2004) and at worst wilful resistance (Ahmed, 2004; Lorde, 1984), to find resolution to the challenges they face or have faced and, ultimately, achieve contentment. According to feminist analyses of emotion – particularly the work of Sara Ahmed and Audre Lorde – it is through the use of linguistic terms such as “don’t be bitter” and “move on” that the governance of emotion is both most visible and most subtle. While this corpus of work is derived analysis of adults, its key arguments are also identifiable in relation to young people, albeit articulated differently. In the context of young people, this governance is articulated through the association of expressions of anger with childishness and, by implication, a child-like inability to ‘cope’ with the difficulties they are presented with. Children, as James and Prout (1990) argue, have been socially constructed as lacking competence and passively accepting their situations rather than actively seeking to change or resolve them. This is reinforced by neuroscientific discourses - which dominate well-being agendas - which project ‘the teen brain’ as underformed.

Theorists have outlined the policing of emotion in a variety of ways. Ahmed (2004, 2007/8) argues that the ‘happiness turn’ and promotion of a project for societal well-being concerned with ‘moving on’ has delegitimized unhappy emotions such as anger. Writing on happiness, Ahmed argues that embedded within programmes to help people ‘move on’ is a command to stop highlighting social problems or conflicts as these undermine public joyfulness and contentment. Those who refuse to adhere to such commands are constructed as ‘unhappy subjects’, ‘kill-joys’ or carriers of melancholia (Ahmed, 2004). Using the example of the ‘feminist killjoy’ as an unhappy subject, Ahmed highlights and critiques how unhappiness and discontent are depicted as failed sentiments within a social discourse which positions happiness as an innate social good. According to Ahmed, the possibility for subjects to express their frustrations with their current social position or to highlight the systems of oppression they may be subject to is removed by the presentation of happiness – not justice or recognition – as the ultimate “object of human desire” (Ahmed, 2007/08: 7). Campbell tackles this dynamic more overtly. Writing on the regulatory power of phrases such as “you’re so bitter”, Campbell (1994) explains:

[...][The] strategic force of ‘you’re so bitter’ is to block the strategy of anger by both shifting attention away from blameworthy behaviour to the mode of expressive blame, and by shifting something about the blameworthy behaviour to the expresser herself, who is now meant to account for her behaviour. The expresser cannot account for or defend her intended anger, however, because her interpreters are no longer listening. ‘You’re so bitter’ is meant to be not challenging but silencing (Campbell, 1994: 51)

Here, like Ahmed, Campbell highlights how commands such as ‘move on’ and ‘don’t be bitter’ can silence subjects and negate their ability to express their anger, frustration or complaint. In the context of youth, accusations of emotional immaturity or childishness operate in a similar fashion. While young people are unlikely to be told not to be ‘bitter’, they are frequently both told and trained to not to express their emotions ‘childishly’ or to act like children. This is the substance of writing both on the ‘new sociology of childhood’ (James and Prout, 1990) and critical pedagogy (Amsler, 2011; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009; hooks, 1994). Writers in these fields depict the systematic silencing of children and young people’s emotions through the deployment of accusations of childishness which suggest the expresser is disharmonious, “asocial”, “incompetent”, and even “deviant” (James and Prout, 1990: 13-4) and the embedding of emotional training in the process of education. Contentment is not just an object of human desire - as it is in Ahmed’s happiness turn - but a characteristic of having successfully moved beyond childhood and developed into an advanced human being. As James and Prout state, “failure to be harmoniously socialised into society’s function meant, in effect, a failure to be human” (James and Prout, 1990: 14). As with Ahmed’s ‘feminist killjoy’ and melancholy migrant, both the young people who express anger and the anger they express are constructed as deviant and asocial.

Notably, as Lorde (1984) argues, the disciplining of anger and delegitimisation of certain groups’ “right” to be angry is not solely articulated through top-down commands. Speaking of her experience as an African American involved in predominantly white feminist organisations, Lorde recounts how her analysis of the oppression she and other women of colour had experienced as intersectional, and the anger she expressed at it, was silenced by feminists who had not experienced or had indeed been complicit in race-based discrimination. To illustrate this silencing Lorde uses the example on an instance at a conference when:

I [used] direct and particular anger [and] a white woman says “Tell me how you feel but don’t say it too harshly or I cannot hear you” (Lorde, 1984)

Holmes (2004) and Lorde (1981, 1984) identify the position of anger within counter-patriarchal campaigns as a consistent dilemma within the feminist movement of the 1970s. As Holmes writes:

Part of the problem for feminists was its close association with cultures of violence and antagonism that many felt were central to patriarchy. The political value of anger in challenging ‘ingrained attitudes’ was recognized by feminists but they also wanted to value caring rather than simply emulating the kinds of aggression stereotyped as masculine [...] This kind of angriness was [...] criticized for being inauthentic and ‘twisted’. Certainly it threatened feminist fantasies of women as full of ‘good’ emotions (Holmes, 2004: 218)

Lorde and Holmes’ interjections highlight the role of counter-hegemonic movements in perpetuating the modes of disciplining anger Ahmed describes. Feminists expressing anger, or advocating the expression of anger as Lorde does, are positioned as having not moved on from the emotional vocabulary epitomised by patriarchal, masculine violence. By not embracing the more naturalistic, from a cultural or difference feminism perspective (King, 1989; Daly, 1990), caring emotional dictums they are prohibiting the emergence of a “gynocentric” feminist solidarity which resists the masculinist prioritisation of “violence and individualism” over experiential learning and collectivity (Young, 1985: 173). Angry feminists occupy an unresolved subjectivity fractured between past oppression and future happiness or socially progressive politics.

Lorde’s critiques are also resonant with the experience of young people. Organisations which are committed to allowing space for young people’s expression frequently espouse logics which serve to construct anger as antithetical to young people’s progress. For example, the emphasis in youth well-being policy and youth work on supporting young people express their emotions productively or to support young people develop emotional coping mechanisms suggests that young people who express their anger too ‘harshly’ are not able to cope or lack competency. They occupy an unresolved subjectivity between current challenges and competent, emotionally stable future selves.

The disciplining of anger through the figure of the ‘unresolved subject’ is particularly important for youth studies as it both shows how notions of ‘happiness’ and positive ways of being can be mobilised as silencing measures and how movements targeted at supporting those who are angry can be complicit in this silencing. Analysing the project of supporting young people’s well-being and helping them develop skills to manage their anger through this lens illustrates the commands embedded in these seemingly supportive efforts. If moving beyond anger is praiseworthy then remaining in contact with anger – even if it is not vocalised – is problematic almost by default, regardless of the roots of this anger. As with Ahmed’s ‘feminist killjoy’, the angry young person, as the ‘unresolved subject’ of youth studies, is disciplined by the discourse of becoming well. This discourse both delegitimizes their anger and deflects critical commentary away from the reason behind that anger to the expression of it.

The unreasoned subject

According to Lyman (2004) and Ahmed (2004, 2007/8) a central tactic in the discursive disciplining of anger is the imagining of anger as antithetical to a subject capable of reason.

Lyman (2004) identifies caring narratives which encourage helping people 'channel' their visceral anger – such as those present in youth well-being studies - as supporting the separation of anger from reason. Care and well-being discourses, according to Lyman, position 'channelling' as a means to increase the efficacy of complaint through making it more 'reasonable' and palatable in the current social order. Like the figure of the *unresolved subject*, the result of these narratives is the association of anger which does not adhere to certain norms of expression and debate with an *unreasoned subject*. This subjectivity enables the disciplining of anger. Like the unresolved subject, the unreasoned subject is constructed and articulated in the context of young people through the language of helping young people become more emotionally mature or supporting their emotional development. This language is central to the discourse of socialisation criticised by advocates of the new sociology of childhood (Prout and James, 1990; James, 2004) and therapeutic education opposed by critical educationalists (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009; Amsler, 2011).

This form of governmentality resonates with the broader treatment of emotion under discourses of reason. Within philosophical discussions on what constitutes advanced societies, reason occupies a special position. It is not necessarily appropriate here to provide an overview of all philosophical discussions on reason from Aristotle onwards. Rather my intent is to demonstrate how notions of reason are used to limit subjects' anger through positioning emotions (including anger) as incompatible with advanced reasoned thinking.

According to Sartre ([1962] 1994) emotional responses (particularly anger) are deployed when particular ways of acting are too difficult:

We can well conceive that emotional behaviour [...] is an organized pattern of means directed to an end. And these means are *summoned up* in order to mask, replace or reject a line of conduct that one cannot or will not pursue. At the same time, the explanation of the diversity of emotions becomes easy: they represent, each one of them, a different way of eluding a difficulty, a particular way of escape, a special trick (Sartre, [1962] 1994: 22)

Sartre's conception of anger is important in terms of understanding how anger is disciplined and silenced. Sartre's characterisation (and critique) of anger moves away from an imagining of anger as solely unbribed, visceral emotion towards an imagining of anger as a rejection of advanced and more difficult thinking. The angry subject is not problematic because they are uncontrollable, it is because they are refusing to engage in reasoned thought, instead opting for an easy, 'inferior' (ibid: 25) reaction to difficulty:

Being unable, in a state of high tension, to find the delicate and precise answer to a problem, we act upon ourselves, we abase and transform ourselves into a being for whom the grossest and least adapted solutions are good enough [...]. Thus anger now appears as an escape [...]. And the 'angry' conduct, though less well adapted to the problem

than the superior – and impossible – behaviour that would solve it, is still precisely and perfectly adapted to [the subject's] need (ibid: 25-6)

Boler (1999) points to similar grounds for opposing anger in her critical assessment of writing on 'emotional intelligence' particularly the work of Goleman (1995). This body of writing is predominantly concerned with educating children and young people on how to maximise their 'emotional quotient' and develop further their emotional intelligence. However, as Boler notes, underpinning this project is a problematisation – and pathologisation – of certain forms of emotional expression on the grounds that they do not adhere to norms of 'rationality' and reasoned behaviour (Boler, 1997). These discourses, Boler argues, "overlap with or include scientific discourses which codify, categorize, and/or universalize emotions" (Boler, 1997: 205). As with Sartre, emotional education/intelligence discourses do not oppose emotion *per se*, rather they oppose emotion which is not embedded in reasoned debate:

Emotions are permitted or legitimate, for example, when channelled into rational debate: we speak of "passionate" or "heated" debate; the speaker "felt strongly" about his position, and so forth [...]. Examples of the rational discourse in common language include: "He was barely able to contain his rage"; "She lost her head." (Boler, 1997: 205)

The polarisation of reason and anger is also a feature of Weber's writing on the conduct and behaviour of scientists. Technical rationality, considered the epitome of advanced scientific reasoning by Weber, is not laden with emotion. The first step to achieving this is to remove individual values from processes of reasoning. Without remaining emotionally neutral, scientists become "demagogues" (1958: 146), using passionate rhetoric rather than reasoned, evidenced argument.

The association of unreason with anger is also conveyed by educational discourses promoting contentment and self-control (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009). As Boler argues, opposition to anger is an explicit element of contemporary education discourses which construct "'good temper,' self-control, and self-policing as the keys to harmony and efficiency within societies" (Boler, 1999: 35). In formal education settings opposition to anger and the need to control it in order to become educated are made explicit. This is shown by Kulz's research into the discourses of social control and exclusion manifest in secondary schooling (Kulz, 2014). Based on interviews with staff and students at a London academy, Kulz shows how angry speech is policed through a combination of student charters and disciplinary measures (for example suspension and exclusion).

According to Lyman (2004), the separation of angry speech from reasoned debate and implication that there is an acceptable form of reasoned anger and an unacceptable unreasoned anger, facilitates the disciplining and "domestication" of anger. Lyman argues that through the imposition of normative understandings of reason (largely derived from the Weberian model of technical rationality) angry speech which does not take particular forms is delegitimised as forms of unreason. Helping young people develop ways to effectively express and channel their

frustrations can, from this perspective, result in anger expressed outside normative understandings of 'reasoned speech' being restricted.

A troublesome project

Thus far this article has highlighted some of the ways anger is disciplined, namely through the problematisation of anger as emblematic of unresolved or unreasoned subjects. At this juncture it would be easy to campaign for the acceptance of anger wholesale. Yet such a defence is overly simplistic and misrepresents the nuances of anger. Ultimately, this serves to create an equally troublesome dichotomy of 'good youth well-being studies' (which allows for anger) and 'bad youth well-being studies' (which doesn't). Allowing anger space within the lives of young people is neither straightforward nor unproblematic as considerations of anger in social and political theory highlight the potential for anger to be 'used and abused' (Lyman, 2004). Writing on communities of conflict or post-conflict societies Hattam and Zembylas (2010) outline how anger can be naturalized, reified and reiterated almost *ad infinitum* through anticipation of anger as a necessary emotion for those who have suffered injustice:

Communities of conflict are often stuck in anger [...] [T]o perceive anger as naturalized is to assume that there is no way out of it. In that way, the cycle of indignation is perpetuated (Hattam and Zembylas, 2010: 29)

Here anger is not an emotion that is available to communities of conflict but one which is expected of them, suggesting a universality of experience and reaction across these communities. Anger is enforced rather than accepted. Lyman (2004) presents a similar critique of anger presenting the social expectation of anger in reaction to particular circumstances as indicative of moral education and indoctrination. Within Lyman's analysis of the 'use and abuse of anger', political order in contemporary societies is sustained through the mobilisation of self-righteous moral indignation. Individuals are conditioned to be angry in response to actions or events which deviate from social norms, thereby ensuring hegemonic social structures are maintained.

A further problematisation of anger is presented in Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* which includes anger at prior injustices, addressed in the *Genealogy of Morals*. While Nietzsche notes that anger at past injustice can generate creative thought and innovative behaviour by the slave (Owen, 2007: 71), the failure "to discharge or shrug off *ressentiment*" (ibid: 86), the inability to move past anger at previous injustices, "is part of a victorious slave morality that enshrines, not challenges, domination" (Holmes, 2004: 211). As Nietzsche outlines in the *Genealogy* a defining feature of the noble is the ability to:

Regress to the innocence of the predator's conscience, as rejoicing monsters, capable of high spirits as they walk away without qualm from a horrific succession of murder, arson, violence and torture, as if it were

nothing more than a student prank, something new for the poets to sing and celebrate for some time to come (Nietzsche, in Owen, 2007: 86)

Anger, as Holmes notes, although frequently considered as uncontrollable (Hattam and Zembylas, *op cit*) can be as much a form of ‘feeling rules’ – rules on how to feel - as any other emotion. Holmes, however, argues that such a critique of anger is only valid when anger, as in Hattam and Zembylas’s account, is embedded in an individual’s or a community’s identity. Such an argument suggests that the naturalized anger which Hattam and Zembylas and others find so problematic is a symptom of the conflation of identity and emotional expression. The community of conflict or oppressed subject is inherently angry and they are restricted to anger.

While the depiction of moving on from anger as a necessary step for the oppression whose anger has been ‘naturalised’ (Hattam and Zembylas, *op cit*) seems reasonable, there is a risk here in simply re-exerting the disciplinary command structures embodied in the *unresolved subject*. Holmes’s work points to Wendy Brown as providing a way out of this restrictive anger without reinforcing this disciplinary subjectivity. Emphasising the recognition that anger can lead to creative thinking within Nietzsche’s *ressentiment*, Brown proposes moving from identity to politics of desire. Anger at past injury within Brown’s model is not solely the means through which the subject “resubjugates itself through investment in its own pain” (Brown, 1995: 74) but a vehicle for moving the subject/subjects towards a consideration of their desires. That said, according to Holmes, anger is only emancipatory when it is ambivalent. Desiring, moving anger, directed at achieving specific goals or moving from particular subject positions (for example moving women ‘out of the kitchen’) can and has enabled the policing of anger based on whether and how it will achieve specific political goals. To circumvent this policing Holmes argues that anger needs to be conceptualised as mobile but irregular in its momentum and non-specific and variable in its destination.

While Holmes’ promotion of politically useful and beneficial ambivalent anger seems to circumvent the problematic of Hattam and Zembylas’s ‘anger identity’ and Nietzsche’s *ressentiment*, it requires a commitment to constant movement and change that some youth studies scholars may find equally – if not doubly - problematic. Such thinking requires an acceptance of what Bell (2010) labels *nomadic utopianism*. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Bell describes how nomadic flight, a process of constant change and movement, “opens up spaces for active life and [allows] the creation of the new” (Bell, 2010: 24). This nomadic flight is made utopian because it lacks an object or goal, it changes without either aiming to achieve a specific goal or moving from a particular subject position. The anger in ambivalent motion promoted by Holmes resonates with this nomadic utopianist model. However, youth studies scholars focused on well-being, with their commitment to improving young people’s lives, may well find the disavowal of achieving specific goals and commitment to constant disruption unpalatable. Although the radical rupture that anger in motion can bring may be political progressive for Holmes, for young people it can be entirely distressing and tumultuous. As Furlong (2012) argues in the context of precarity, while precarious life can be liberating for some young people (particularly those from more socio-economically privileged backgrounds)

for others instability is painful. Radical ruptures, including emotional ones, are to be avoided not embraced.

Furlong's critique of precarity is a particularly important comparator here for two reasons. First it again highlights the classed, gendered and raced histories that need to be borne in mind when critiquing the 'domestication' of anger. Anger, like precarity, is not an equal opportunities experience. As I have already noted, its relationship with discourse is interlaced with classed, raced, gendered and age-based subjectivities. While the ambivalent, remembering anger defended by Lorde and Ahmed may generate and facilitate political resistance to racist and post-colonial oppression for some, for others (particularly men) it can reinforce discriminatory subjectivities and tropes, e.g. the 'angry, young, black man'. These subjectivities can be used to silence expressions of discontent by interpreting them as part of the performativity of a particular subject rather than based on a specific problem. This point is raised by Sparks (2015) who suggests that "angriness is not just a feeling a political actor experiences [...] but also [...] a 'doing' that constitutes angry political subjects" (Sparks, 2015: 34). The implications of this for youth anger is highly significant as it indicates that a demand for young people to be - or to be allowed to be - angry potentially reinforces a youthful subjectivity characterised by a natural angriness. Such a performativity already significantly empowered by the neuroscientific arguments on the naturally angry teen brain. This, according to Sparks' analysis, provides opportunities for the complaints of young people to be constructed as reflective of young people's natural angriness and not a state of injustice. In light of this problem, attempts to reshape anger to meet dominant models of political action – which Lyman condemns as 'domestication' and Holmes considers as debilitating to ambivalent anger's emancipatory potential – can be read as part of a project of highlighting the legitimacy of young people's angry speech. The disciplining of anger that takes place is, from this perspective, a necessary evil.

Second, Furlong's argument also reflects the tension between the defense of ambivalent anger and project of helping young people develop strategies for targeted social and political action contemporary youth work leans towards (Davies, 2005; Harrison and Wise, 2009). The rationale behind disciplining anger is to find a way to support young people develop coping mechanisms for the daily pressures facing them without becoming subsumed by their anger. This reading of disciplining anger is conveyed through youth well-being and youth work writing which speaks to supporting young people develop coping mechanisms for managing frustrations (Davies, 2005), maintaining their "emotional good health" (Eckersley, 2011) and embedding emotional wellness in more holistically-driven education. Couched in the language of care and moving forward to more positive states of being, opposing anger is framed as being for the young person's benefit (Boler, 1999).

On the other hand, as outlined by Ahmed and others, to accept this association of helping young people and channelling or managing frustration uncritically ignores the disciplining emotional expressions counter to 'progress' (personal or social) they enable. While the approach of youth well-being advocates is well-intentioned, the closing down of anger through the promotion of moving past anger also serves to limit the possibilities for young people to develop and exercise

their political voice – a political voice necessary to resisting the political, social and economic precarity young people are subject to.

The interpretation of the project of helping young people achieve stability in tumultuous and precarious times as limiting development of transformative, affective political sensibilities amongst them is a common theme of educationalist writing on the oppression of young people under neoliberalism. As Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) argue, the imposition and prioritisation of contentment and well-being limits young people's opportunities for engaging in politically-oriented, critical thinking about the reasons for their anger, deflecting their attention away from issues of inequality and structural violence towards how they can be happy. Amsler (2011) extends this argument, suggesting that disruptive emotions – such as anger but also love, despair and passion – are essential facilitators of both critical learning and challenging the social order which is so damaging for young people's well-being.

The interpretations of advocates of discomfort such as Ecclestone and Hayes and Amsler are heavily influenced by writing on critical pedagogy or education for social transformation. Thinkers such as Friere and Illich, while proposing very different visions of critical education, both emphasise the need for participants in education for social change to be disrupted rather than satisfied. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere (1970) positions feelings of anger and discontent (and recognition of such feelings) as the starting point for radical political action through collaborative learning. In *Deschooling Society*, Illich (1971) begins with a tirade against the neoliberal conflation of 'education' with 'learning' which has robbed people of their ability to be angry. Similar themes emerge in the critical pedagogy writing of hooks (1994) who promotes the necessity of emotional disruption and interruptions – for example loudness, screaming, laughing or crying - to the unsettling of neoliberal hegemonic oppression within and outside the classroom. Counter to the view that in light of the social, political and economic pressures facing them young people should be helped achieve "emotional well-ness" (the position taken by Wyn, Davies and others), critical pedagogy argues that "emotional well-ness" limits young people's capacity to challenge the social, political and economic pressures which lead to them becoming "unwell". Far from advocating making pressured young people become content, critical pedagogues such as Illich argue that it is only through *discontent* that any real change for young people is achieved. Such a position brings us back through the work of Holmes to that of Lyman – anger which is visceral, interruptive and in production is the fundamental political emotion and needs to be defended.

However, there is another, potentially more obvious problem with the positioning of anger as progressive or politically generative - not all anger or expression of anger is positive or used positively. Sparks (2015) argues that this is under-recognised by advocates of political anger. According to Sparks, feminist accounts of public anger as the primary tool of the disempowered or politically silenced, depicts the anger of the oppressed as inherently socially conscious and justifiable. Sparks argues that this is problematic as it suggests that the impact of angry expression (as politically generative or oppressive) can be predicted. As Sparks contends:

Prohibiting *conservative* anger assumes we can determine in advance how that anger would function within any given democratic struggle (Sparks, 2015: 32)

While, as Bauman describes, the angry poor are treated as far less acceptable than the angry rich, this does not mean that their anger is somehow more just or socially conscious. If Holmes is correct and anger is ambivalent then it is not clear that anger will always be directed in a socially just way. As recent writing on the growth of Far Right politics among socio-economically disadvantaged communities (Ford and Goodwin, 2014) indicates, the angry poor can be just as discriminatory as the angry rich. In light of this efforts to train young people how to express discontent and direct their anger so that the agentic power of anger (as a political tool) is not misused are slightly more justifiable. That said assuming young people's anger needs to be trained could, following Rose (1990), facilitate the pathologisation of particular articulations based on the judgements of experts.

Connected with this consideration is the issue of the form through which anger is expressed. This is analysed in depth by Sparks (2015) in her critique of the lumpen approach to angry speech within writing on civility which fails to delineate between different levels of anger. Sparks argues that this failure leads to anger expressed through rudeness or complaint as being treated the same as more violent behaviours. In trying to allow anger room it is important then not to treat all angry expresses as equal. Given that anger's form or direction cannot, according to Sparks and Holmes, be predetermined, training or controlling anger is potentially necessary.

Conclusion

This article started from the perspective that more attention needs to be paid to the disciplining of emotion by youth studies. In particular the potential for the project of helping young people manage their frustrations or channel their anger to support the removal of young people's right to be angry. The article provided a robust review of both the importance of anger and how it could be disciplined through the deployment of problematised subjectivities – focusing on the *unresolved* subject and the *unreasoned* subject. These subjectivities are articulated through the language of 'childishness' or emotional immaturity or supporting young people's emotional development and well-ness. It then explored the tensions which arise when attempting to allow anger a space, considering the notions of 'good' and 'bad' anger and the fact that anger may not be a positive or productive experience for all young people. That said, following critical pedagogy writing, emotional disruption is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed interruptions such as anger are necessary for generating critical thinking and, potentially, enlivening resistance to the societal and political pressures which are a source of emotional strain for young people.

Overall the article has aimed to be provocative. It has intentionally drawn on theoretical work at some distance from youth well-being studies in order to suggest the resonances between these writings and attitudes to youth anger. Yet in attempting to make such wide-ranging theoretical provocations there are important debates the article has not engaged with fully. This includes the differences - or not - between the political agency or intent of angry speech of

adults and that of young people. A question mark still remains over whether the political generativity of the practice of being angry can ever been used to mobilise political change without neutralising levels of interferences. A further debate which the article has tried to engage with albeit very superficially is the unpredictability of anger and the need to recognise that anger can - and frequently is - misdirected and harmful. Finally, young people's perspectives on anger are notably absent from the article and there is a clear need for more information on their attitudes to how acceptable their anger is or what their perceptions of societal responses to anger are.

However, these absences are potentially less a series of flaws with this article and more a further indication of the need for more study on anger and young people specifically. Clearly, as the literature suggests, the dynamics and problematics of anger require much more sustained critical engagement and discussion. Without this discussion taking place young people's right and their opportunities to express their anger, regardless of the circumstances, may be removed.

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