Assessment and student transformation: linking character and intellect

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ABSTRACT *This article is concerned with the complex role played by student assessment in the formation of the human subjects that are the product of higher education. Using an framework informed by the work of Foucault, it explores the productive effects of assessment régimes. Drawing on narrative data collected during in-depth, semi-structured interviews with students, it contrasts assessment régimes in two degree programmes to consider the way in which assessment may draw students into varied power relations. It is argued that in playing out these relations assessment incites students (to varying extents) to develop, consider and disclose to the lecturer, links between their intellect and character. In doing so, students expose their developing character to the interpretation and guidance of the lecturer, providing the potential for the lecturer to lead students to construct and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate for a complex contemporary State. Additionally, and significantly, such approaches may have the potential to overcome the normative effects inherent in all assessment. The extent to which assessment might assist students to develop the transformed nature that is required to purposefully and deliberately undermine the rules of the discipline is discussed.*

Introduction

In considering the role of Foucault in educational research and the development of educational theory, Mayo (2000, p. 103) contends that "While work on Foucault's implications for education helps to overcome naïve hopes about the emancipatory potential of education, he has not been sufficiently harnessed to the project of negotiating the difficult pull between domination and resistance, the process of normalisation and the formation of hyper-critical communities". By considering assessment practices in a higher education institution and the power relations that surround students as they are assessed, this paper suggests a way in which student assessment may be configured to become a force for transforming learners as

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a starting point in the development of a hyper-critical community whose members are able to constantly interrogate and revise its plans and practices.

Rowntree, (1987) describes assessment not simply as a marking and grading process but as an attempt to know the person. While assessment has many purposes, including accrediting the knowledge and performance of students (Boud, 1995) it also conveys powerful messages to students about what they should be learning during educational processes (Biggs, 1998), and how they should be shaping themselves. The extent to which assessment might incite learners to reflect on themselves, their normality or deviance as an act of "deliberate aesthetic and ethical self-forming" (Bleakley, 2000, p. 417) and thus on their progress towards meeting the transformative goals of higher education and towards being expert in their chosen discipline, is considered here.

An assessment régime embodies both disciplinary technologies and pastoral ones. In its disciplining guise, assessment is a technology of hierarchical judgement and supervision where the students' disclosure is subject to the normalising gaze of the institution and its experts in order that the student "may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1977, p. 136) curtailing aspects of behaviour which might be considered unruly. As a pastoral technology, assessment allows a student's thoughts to be subject to interpretation and guidance by subject experts. During this process students are encouraged to adjust their approach, outlook and the expression of it to those befitting educated members of society. This guidance may ultimately lead to self-inspection and self-decipherment on the part of individual students. Thus students, by their own means, come to act on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being (Martin *et al.*, 1988). Using such technologies of the self, they perform operations upon themselves which may transform them.

In this discussion, it is suggested that differing assessment régimes have differing effects on students and their path to transformation. On the one hand data gathered about students during assessment activities may be used to divide and classify students on the basis of

certain rules, for example a grading scale is used to rank a student with respect to his or her peers and separate the successful from the unsuccessful. Such ongoing analysis will develop a body that is "manipulable" or docile (Foucault, 1977, p. 177). More effectively (from the point of view of transformation) assessment régimes may also incite students to confront their self in a way that causes them establish a link between their intellectual development and their character "engaging in activities which … tell them something about themselves" (Mann, 2001, p. 14). The extent to which this self-examination is revealed to the gaze of the lecturer or assessor, and therefore might form a point used by the institution to guide the present and future actions of a student, is discussed.

The Self and its development

The self may be defined as a mental construction of and by a person to form a unique biography which reflects his or her core attitudes, beliefs and values, in order that he or she might become a thinking, acting subject. In the West, it has come primarily to mean a person who has the depth and complexity to have an identity, or to be struggling to find one. This identity is worked out through a language of interpretation, the use of which allows the self to articulate the way in which things have significance for it (Taylor, 1989). Although internally formed, the formation is informed by social experience, as the person sees his- or herself reflected by others and in their reactions, and as these reactions are interpreted through one's self-perception (Jary & Jary, 2000; Rose, 1996b) leading one to reflexively create and sustain a self-identity. Thus the self is not a passive entity (Giddens, 1991). Rather it is subject to the influence of the historical and cultural practices in which it develops and in which (in a hermeneutic exercise) it uses background practices to understand and cope with people, institutions and things.

Technologies of the Self

In his later studies, Foucault examines the relationship of the self to itself in a study he labels 'ethics', seeking to emphasise (as Davidson puts it) "how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions" (Davidson, 1986, p. 228) how individuals "affect certain operations on their own souls, their own thoughts and conduct, and

in this manner to transform themselves (and) modify themselves …" (Foucault, 1980, p. 202). The practice of confession is at the heart of Foucault's ethical study. He contends that confession is the West's most valued method for producing truth, playing a "part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of family life and in the most solemn rites", constituting Western man as a "confessing animal" (Foucault, 1978, p. 59). It accompanies the view that for one's salvation one needs to know as exactly as possible who one is and to tell this to someone else (Foucault, 1980).

Confession creates a hermeneutic system through the ongoing verbalisation and discovery of movement in our selves and the constitution of thought as a subjective data to be interpreted by another, or the self, and acted on by the self (Foucault, 1980; 1987; 1988). Foucault contends that the framework built on the basis of Christian confession enables the self to be subjected to a system of truth and to the authority of an authoritative individual (Foucault, 1980) – whether this is theological and priestly, psychological and therapeutic, or disciplinary and tutelary (Rose, 1996b). This framework leads individuals to develop a manner of conducting oneself in the various aspects of one's life (Rose, 1996b), and forms a controlling discourse so that people become individuals of a certain sort (Marshall, 1996).

Forming the Educated Self

In the higher education system, students place themselves in a changing web of pastoral power constituted by the authority vested in the institution and lecturers in order to become an educated self. The notion of the 'educated self' is a contested one and one subject to change. The predominant and commonsense vision of the Western 'educated self' is a legacy of the Enlightenment. In this view, educated students are considered to be rational, thinking individuals, inculcated with a personal autonomy that frees them from the authority and dogma of others (Marshall, 1996; Matthews, 1980). However, Lyotard (among others) contends that in contemporary higher education institutions the curriculum is becoming increasingly functional resulting in a loss of this speculative spirit with the system increasingly charged with supplying the social system with experts, capable of fulfilling a role in society's institutions (Lyotard, 1984) and of organising communities and individuals.

Thus, in educating them, institutions lead students through a process of specialisation and development of expertise encouraging them to internalise the objective knowledge, routines, techniques and attitudes of the expert (Rose, 1996b) and to become proficient with the specialised discourse of the discipline. These students will develop the capacity to shape, channel, organise and direct the capacities and selves of other individuals under a claim of objectivity, neutrality and technical efficiency (Rose, 1996b) eventually being authorised to act through mechanisms such as licensing, professionalisation and bureaucratisation (Rose, 1996a).

The Study

In order to illustrate a theoretical consideration of the effect that assessment has on the production of the educated subject, the researcher interviewed students who were within one semester of completing their study in a range of degree programmes in order to gain an understanding of their perceptions of their assessment experience.

The institution in which the study was conducted has a vocational mission. It is organised and funded by the State to produce graduates who are capable of filling posts required by society and its institutions (Lyotard, 1984). While its educational offerings might be seen as having a purely pragmatic or even practical character (Barnett, 1997) the students in this study were enrolled in degree programmes. This suggests an expectation of an additional and associated overlay of academic tradition supplementing what might otherwise be seen as a "reductionist" education (Giroux, 1996) of pure pragmatism.

In this paper the data from two groups of students have been used to illustrate some of the possible effect of different assessment regimes. One group was enrolled in a three-year Bachelor of Business programme designed to meet the requirements for membership of the accountancy profession. This degree seeks to develop the technical skills of accountancy and an appreciation of the place of accountancy in the wider context of society that such membership requires. The other group was enrolled in a four-year Bachelor of Design which

was developed to "accommodate a diversity of directions and approaches to design practice … in graduates who will seek employment in design practices, as freelance designers or will set up their own design practices" (Unitec, 2002, p. 5).

The primary research method used in the study was the in-depth interview. There was, in the gathering of data, no attempt to identify a representative sample of students required to draw any general conclusions. Rather the researcher sought to identify a small number of purposive cases in order to elucidate different phenomena, conducting interviews that encouraged the informants to focus on their "perception[s] of self, life and experience" and to express these in their own words (Minichiello *et al.*, 1995, p. 61) to illuminate important aspects of their experiences.

A scheme, based on the research objectives, was developed to classify the data. This scheme was supplemented by additional categories suggested by interview transcripts (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The result was a set of coding categories based on concepts, generated from cluster word groups which indicated particular ideas, and themes created from concepts linked together by the researcher (Minichiello *et al.* 1995).

Assessment as a Technology of the Self

During the assessment process students attain a certain kind of knowledge about themselves and their progress to becoming educated. Educators hope that the student will use this knowledge to regulate his or her actions and renounce those that belong to the other, the uneducated self (see Rabinow, 1997). In combining disciplinary technologies and technologies of the self, assessment plays an important role in the moulding of individuals to manifest certain skills, behaviours and attitudes. Altering the balance between these two technologies in an assessment régime causes students to consider their links to the traditions and rules of the discipline in different ways. The teacher may use the assessment technology in an individualising way, to know the student and – through the use of dividing practices – guide the student to recognise his or her strengths and weaknesses as a disciple of the discipline. As the student advances through the education system, he or she is

increasingly expected to have the ability to measure his or her own work against the standards that have been inculcated by the teacher and to judge him- or herself against those standards. By equipping the student with the ability to do this the teacher is preparing the student to take care of his or her self. By contrasting the way in which the students reacted to assessment, it is possible to consider the way in which their assessment experience affected their consideration of themselves in relation to the discipline and to the professional world for which they were preparing.

Business students stated that the assessment they completed was, to a greater or lesser extent, designed to provide the lecturer with information which was used to judge the extent to which they had absorbed the material that had been presented to them. During preparation for end-of-course examinations students reported that they were forced to consider all the information provided and gathered during a course, to make connections within this information and to 'internalise' it. Having done this, the students were expected to be able to apply the knowledge to situations presented to them in the examination. The students reported that success in the examination was based on demonstrating ability in application, without necessarily being expected to demonstrate that one was able to understand the theoretical underpinning of the task. For example:

> Anyone can open the book, copy the formula, write it down. So many assessments for those kind of courses are actually assessing something which is not the application, is just copying. They give you questions in the examples, and they change numbers for the exam. OK yeah – learn the formula copy that down – excellent. And then you get an A or something and you still do not know what it does (Paul[1], business student).

> The main purpose of [tests and exams] is to find out if the students, have the students studied well and understand what they have learned and can they put their study into practice. Just test them, test to see if they grasp what they have learned. That is the main purpose, I think … if you've got a test, you just need to read through the handouts and understand and give examples. It is reasonably simple (Yvonne, business student).

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used to maintain participant confidentiality.

As students progressed through the degree they were more likely to be involved in a greater range of assessment tasks; for example, the presentation of case studies and research assignments. During these exercises considerable emphasis was placed on the application of theoretical understanding to 'real' situations, or the expectation that the students would integrate researched material into a coherent and cogent personal argument. In these assessments, more than in the examination, students were expected to confront issues for business and develop and expound a personal view of these, thus beginning to recognise power relations of the 'real world' for which they were preparing.

The business students interviewed expressed a generally cynical and critical view of assessment particularly those students who had experience of the workplace. Teresa expressed them forcibly. For example, on the restriction imposed by having to produce the work alone:

> in the real life you can always go to someone and ask for help and if you can't then you shouldn't be working there;

on the writing of essays:

> writing essays and things like that which don't actually help you apart from you know they help you to write an essay which you don't really do many of in real life anyway;

on tests and examinations:

> I don't think that that is real life, like I haven't had one like that ever in the industry.

While these reservations were probably more strongly stated by Teresa than by the others, all the business students were concerned about the efficacy of assessment. That is, would the assessment experience assist them in dealing with the 'real' power relations of the world of work?

While the assessment events were clearly designed to gather information that the institution used to gauge the students' understanding or otherwise of the technical, analytical and conceptual skills required in financial accounting, the nature of this information was primarily, in the students' view, about their ability or otherwise to reproduce knowledge and information.

In this instance the teacher, knowing more than the student tells the student what he or she must do, teaches and transmits knowledge (Foucault, 1997a). Assessment monitors the success of this transmission.

The business students' concern about the mismatch between the output of assessment expected by the institution and the 'real world' for which they were preparing had the effect of limiting the extent to which assessment prompted students to think about their own being as experience. In order to have this effect assessment has to link the public self with the private and cause the student to consider the norms of the discipline as an integral part of the self. It is argued that the type of assessment experienced by business students did not do this. Thus, such assessment was not likely to act as a technology that enables the individual to understand his or her self in relation to the rules that bound the production of 'truth' in the discipline.

The attitude to assessment of the business students contrasted with that of design students, especially with respect to views about its authenticity or reflection of the 'real world' of the designer for which the students were preparing. The participating students from this degree viewed the studio courses and the assessment of the work they produced during them as being the heart of their learning experience. It was the view of the students that the 'world of the studio course' (including the assessment associated with it) and the 'real world' of the designer were equivalent worlds, and that one's success in the studio would be a good indicator of future success as a designer.

During studio assessment the students were judged on the production of design objects and also on supplementary material which accompanied them. The supplementary material (a 'learning diary' or 'journal') illustrated, for the assessor, the methods and intellectual processes that the student used to develop and produce the final objects. The assessor made his or her judgement of the student on the basis of both the objects presented and the supporting materials, and used these to evaluate both the final products and the journey that the student had taken during the production of them.

There was an overt expectation that, in the production of the supporting material, the design student would display a personal connection with the work, illustrating the objects' relationship with earlier works produced as well as communicating the artistic, social and political underpinnings of the work.

> [Assessment] is not just to put a drawing there. There are many things to draw, but it is something that has to be recognisable, something that says something about you (Belinda, design student).

The criteria for assessment included these factors within them. Through the students' application of the criteria to their work in studio, they were constantly encouraged to consider themselves in relation to the discipline of design monitoring their own development as designers.

The application of assessment processes within the design programme is worthy of note here also. As well as the summative end-of-year assessment that is applied to students, students were provided with formal feedback on progress to date in a formative assessment exercise which occurs at the middle of the course. At this point the students were given advice on the extent to which the assessment criteria were being met. The assessors also provided students with a summary of strengths and weaknesses and with guidance about actions that might be taken from that point. This advice frequently provided the student with direction for the next six months with the hope that the student would improve upon his or her formative grades.

Both the formative feedback and the summative grades are based on explicit assessment criteria which provide a mechanism which each student used to monitor his or her own development as a designer. The constant application of the criteria, which encapsulate the rules for the production of 'truth' in the discipline and the expectation that the student would demonstrate his or her link with these in his or her work means that the assessment process incited the student to consider constantly his or her being in relation to this 'truth'.

The contrasting assessment régimes to which the two groups of students were exposed illustrates the difference that assessment might make in connecting a student with his or her own being, and considering his or her self in relation to the truth game of the discipline. In guiding the student to learn the rules, 'truths' and prescriptions of the discipline and ways in which to measure him- or herself against these, assessment fosters in the student the potential to be better able to care for the self.

Assessment as a Confessional Tool

This section considers the extent to which assessment's confessional nature might contribute to its development as a technology of the self. That is, is assessment designed to incite students to disclose themselves to their lecturer who acts as expert, judge, mentor, and guide in order that a student might better know himself or herself? Is it also a process which moves students beyond the acts of doing, which are part of the assessment, "towards a more subjective itemisation of the private feelings surrounding" these acts (McNay, 1994, p. 97)? If the assessment régime encourages "the discovery and formulation of the truth concerning oneself" (Foucault, 1980, p. 203), then it becomes an individualising technique inciting students to a hermeneutics of their own thoughts; it enables the student to take expert knowledge about himself or herself into "subjective interiority" (see Goldstein, 1994, p. 109) and leads the student to become aware of his or her own activity and of the processes which form himself or herself (see Taylor, 1989).

Throughout the progress of the studio course, but particularly in mid-course formative assessment and end-of-course summative assessment, the 'learning diary' maintained by the design `students is available to the lecturer as a chronological record that traces the development of the students' thoughts and the manner in which they have used the freedom they have been given in the studio. Thus the act of producing objects for assessment becomes a focus for the student displaying his or her feelings about that act. In an iterative process the 'diary' statements are informed by the act of production and in turn influence the next act of production.

It is like not just about making one piece of work and that's it, you're making one piece of work and it is informing your next piece. So [through the diary, the assessors] are looking at your process and how you evaluate and analyse what you are doing and synthesise and all those things … I know in my first year I made all these one-offs and I got quite a bad mark and mid-year and I was like 'well why did I do that'. And the first year is … when that starts. Its like it is not about making one-offs it is about process so that by fourth year you just naturally do that (Elizabeth, design student).

[Assessment] has taught me to analyse what I do … almost constantly and not just produce things, or things that I am not thinking about, because it is essential for a designer to be critical … that's the most important thing. And it's given you impetus to research and to think in other areas and it's taught you a conversation is involved and it's allowed you to talk about your own work as well to be informed of what you are doing (Nicholas, design student).

During the assessment, the students are in an individualised process of learning who they are as designers and they are expected to disclose this process to the assessor. The ongoing nature of the assessment task and the imperative not to produce "one-offs" requires the students to sustain a coherent narrative about their working processes and their thoughts and feelings about the developing body of work. In this process they are constantly updating and revising the narrative through the ongoing analysis of what they are doing now. As a result, the students begin to develop and set their own rules of conduct with respect to their work. For example, Angela said her works "take on political and environmental and issues to do with our whole lives … I am not going to go out there and put something up that has no meaning or anything". This statement serves to illustrate the extent to which, through the design process, her life-as-designer was taking on personal aesthetic values and stylistic criteria.

At the assessment points, a student's work and learning diary are closely scrutinised by the assessor. Using the assessment criteria as a guide the assessor interprets the student's responses in relation to the 'true' discourse of the discipline and judges the responses as normal or pathological (outside the norms of the discipline) (see Foucault, 1978)). Using his or her feedback the assessor seeks to guide the student, influencing his or her future thoughts and actions. In order to maintain or improve grades, the student is required to

demonstrate at the next assessment point how the feedback and result of the last assessment has been dealt with, and the way in which his or her work, processes, thoughts and feelings have been modified.

Thus, the assessment régime to which these students are subjected may be considered a technology of the self. It acts as a confessional tool that incites the student to embark on a hermeneutic process, with the assessment criteria ensuring that the hermeneutic process occurs within the bounds of the design discipline. A significant influence on the ability of assessment in the design degree to act in this way is the extent to which the 'truth' of the discipline rests in the implementation of a design process, rather than in the production of an object which fulfils pre-defined requirements to be considered normal. Of further significance is the extent to which the implementation of the design process described by the assessment criteria requires students to make explicit the steps that they have taken to reach a conclusion.

In business (in contrast to design) the assessment régime does not incite the student to 'confess' his or her self to the lecturer, or to develop within himself or herself a coherent biography. While the assessment resulted in changes to the students and their self-concept, it is unlikely that the assessment régime that prompted these changes to the same extent as it did in design.

Business students considered the assessment compartmentalised and discrete, checking that learning has occurred but not the process by which it had taken place:

> the tutor just sees your work; they don't know what process make up [sic] that. I mean, I know that a lot of students will copy other students, you know, from previous exams. All that depends on if they have peers. If they have a group of people they know each other so they will be more help (Jenny, business student).

Whilst there was an acknowledgement that the assessment is a prompt for learning, James, for example, considered that

the only thing [assessments] do is reinforce what you have learnt, what you have been taught. So in effect they complete the learning cycle. So in that sense, yes I do think that they are very important. Um, because you only learn things properly by doing it yourself. It is all very well somebody talking to you. So the assessments yes they do test your ability, without doubt (James, business student).

While expecting the student to display increasing knowledge and application of the facts of the discipline, the business lecturer is not asking the student to show any evidence related to the development of a sustained narrative about his or her development as an educated self. The interviewed students' general impression – that the 'truth' of the business discipline is found in the display of knowing, rather than in displaying the process of becoming knowing – means that there was nothing to persuade them to engage in a hermeneutics of the self. Thus the assessment that these business students were subject to did not contain the characteristics that would enable it to act as a confessional tool diminishing assessment's action as a technology of the self.

In this section it has been argued that the different assessment régimes to which the students in this study were subjected caused different effects in the subjectivation of the individuals. In addition it has been argued that it is the nature of these effects which one might use to classify the régimes as a technology of the self, or not. All assessment has a role in evaluating the students' normalcy or deviance according to the norms of the discipline. The business assessment exemplifies this most fully. It primarily functions to "manoeuvre (students) into 'correct' and functional' forms of thinking" (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p. 17) in preparation for their future role in society. However, some assessment régimes incite the individual to consider his or her being in relation to the 'truths' of the discipline. The design studio assessment exposes the developing character of the student to the evaluative gaze of the expert lecturer. The guidance of the lecturer is then used by the student to set his or her own rules of conduct and to further develop his or her character. In acting to provide the framework for this hermeneutic process, design degree's assessment régime is a technology of the self.

Assessment and Ethical Analysis

The remainder of this paper considers the extent to which, having explored the limits of his or her character under the pastoral care of the lecturer, the design students might have been able or ready to surpass the limits of the discipline and thus resist the normalising boundaries which the technologies of the self would inevitably have imposed (see McNay, 1994). Put another way, having caused the student to engage in self-reflection and self-examination, in the deciphering of the self by oneself, and now seeing oneself as an object for development (Foucault, 1985) the next step in developing a

> critical ontology of ourselves must be considered not, certainly as a theory, a doctrine or even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (Foucault, 1997b, p. 319).

This ethical moment arrives when the "forms of identity that are regarded as natural and inevitable are questioned, thereby opening up a space for new forms of experience" (McNay, 1994, p. 115) which will be achieved by ethical analysis.

Rabinow (1997) extrapolates from *The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault, 1985) to suggest that ethical analysis can be examined under four divisions. The first is 'ethical substance', the search for a moral framework or 'will to truth' that the subject develops. It is through consideration in this area that the subject is concerned with "finding a sense to life", a "quest for sense" in order to avoid meaninglessness (Taylor, 1989, p. 18). Within the framework the student develops he or she will incorporate a "set of qualitative distinctions", enabling some feeling for a mode of life or mode of feeling that is 'higher' (in a generic sense) than others (Taylor, 1989) in order to "constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct" (Foucault, 1985, p. 26). Secondly, one needs to consider the 'mode of subjection', or the "way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognises himself as obliged to put it into practice" (Foucault, 1983, p. 27). Thirdly, Rabinow lists 'ethical work', the critical activity and thought experience that one uses to establish the link between intellect and character in the context of practical activity: How one might step

back from one's thought actions, problematising what one is, what one does, and strive to invent a new way of life, even if one never attains it. Taylor (1989) likens this to people being on a quest. Whereas traditions might be (tentatively) embraced, people go beyond them, developing their own versions or semi-inventions within them. Finally, Foucault posits that *telos*, the act of disassembling the self, needs to be considered. Rabinow (1997) points out that Foucault is obscure in his explanation of this term. However, he goes on to suggest that it consists of an individual, having recognised the norm, and being sure of his or her place within it, being able to err from the norm in a deliberate and considered way.

Design assessment is an individualising technology, which facilitates individualised attention to the character of each student. By considering the works and learning diary of each student, the lecturer gains knowledge of the student's conscience and an ability to direct it (Foucault, 1983). Thus in the design programme the lecturer is in a position to guide and encourage, in the student, a self-examination of his or her own relationship to the discipline, intervening to "judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile" (Foucault, 1978, p. 61). Over time, the design lecturer is in a position to track the development of the student's thoughts, encouraging him or her to renounce those thoughts that do not conform to the discipline and to retain those that do (Foucault, 1988). Thus, the lecturer is intimately involved with shaping the student's individuality. The placement of the design students in this web begins the process of leading them to "finding a sense to life" (Taylor, 1989, p. 18) and a will to truth which is the basis of ethical substance.

The students in the design degree gained a greater awareness of their path to maturity and independence from the assessor and the assessment process. For example Nicholas (a design student) states:

> I think you get to a stage in third and fourth year when you realise that what you are mainly doing is preparing for when you go out and there is no assessment and there is no marks or assessment criteria and you are not trying to think how can I do stuff that will get good grades. The game becomes less important than what you do and the tutors can't formalise that.

According to Rabinow, Foucault hopes that such an ethos of self-assessment will be "a practice of thought formed in direct contact with social and political realities" (Rabinow, 1997, p. xxxii). Assessment and education processes do this by making the student aware of the horizons of the discipline into which the student is being inducted. The design students were encouraged to shape their individuality or self-identity into a new form (Foucault, 1983). They had been encouraged to recognise themselves as obliged to act in this way and to have a rationale for this obligation; for example, because of tradition, because of a feeling of nobility or perfection it engenders (Foucault, 1985). The assessment in the design degree incited such a hermeneutic process within the student, making the assessment process a mode of subjection.

Assessment may be considered as encouraging the student to undertake ethical work, moving beyond subjection, if it encourages a move from alienation to agency and facilitates a movement from lack of authenticity to being "true to oneself" (Mezirow, 1995, p. 48). It will also encourage the student to be 'political' (but political without a programme) giving new forms to relational activities. In carrying out ethical work one is able to use thought processes to step back from certain conducts and their meanings and, by detaching oneself from them, to present them to oneself and question their meanings, conditions and goals (Rabinow, 1997). The earlier examples of students in the design degree being expected to consider and manifest (through their work) their relationship with broader social and personal agendas indicate that the assessment régime in this programme caused the students to examine their character in relation to what they were doing in design. Thus Elizabeth is able, in saying that her performance art makes a political and intellectual statement, to be sure that "I know in my performance art there is a line I won't cross where a lot of other people will cross that line". Business students did not provide examples of this type of activity. As a result of their assessment, design students may be able to "take charge of the processes by which associations form and shape [their] character and outlook", making them objects and subjecting them to "radical scrutiny and remaking" (Taylor, 1989, p. 178). To encourage the carrying out of ethical work, assessment would require students to begin the "disentangling

and re-forming of the (power and thought) relationships within which and from which the self is shaped and takes shape" (Rabinow, 1997, p.xxxvi, his enclosure).

Finally, and importantly, assessment activities may act to encourage the student to think differently, "instead of legitimating what is already known" (Rabinow, 1997, p. xxxviii) in the *telos,* or completion, of the moral subject. By doing so they would contribute to the transformation of the learner. The individual becomes committed to actions that are always in conformity with values and rules and to "a certain mode of being characteristic of the ethical subject" (Foucault, 1985, p. 28). This person is self-monitoring, able to examine the parts of the self and identifying those that "need to be repaired or replaced" (Rabinow, 1997, p. xxxviii). The assessment of the design students' studio performance is judged against a set of criteria that itemise processes which need to be evidenced in the students' output. The apparent rejection of the idea that there might be a 'right answer', which is suggested in the studio assessment criteria, provides the scope and confidence for design students to be able to explore the boundaries of the discipline, leaving open the possibility that they may go beyond them. Thus Nicholas, a design student, stated that "it (assessment) gives people a structure, not to cling to, but to negotiate with". This encourages agency, with the student acknowledging that a reassessment of one's self-concept as 'a designer' is threatening, emotionally charged and very difficult, but nevertheless can be done (Mezirow, 1995). For example, Derek (a design student) summarised his progress, saying:

> I go through a process that I now recognise as mine; different to everyone else's perhaps – similar in some respects but different in others – which leads to a production that I wouldn't have recognised in myself before.

Thinking in this way the students may be able to escape the kind of individualisation that has been imposed on them (Peters, 1996), to wander from the norm in a calculated way in order to adapt, to create new objects and understandings (see Rabinow, 1997). The assessment régime in design is more likely to encourage this possibility.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to consider whether or not the assessment régimes to which students were subjected might be considered as technologies of the self. It has been argued that of the two assessment régimes that have been observed through the eyes of the students, only one – that of the Bachelor of Design – incites the self to act on the self in a process of reflexive subject-making.

All assessment places students in a web of power in which they are subject to the application of the expert knowledge of the lecturer who is acting as an assessor. The type of assessment régime will determine the nature of the productive effect the régime might have. The lecturer will use information gathered from and about the student during assessment to guide the student to organise and manage his or her thoughts, feeling and actions. This is done with the intention that by the end of the education process, the student will have become so habituated in his or her thoughts and actions that he or she will be a transformed individual, able to manage him- or herself as a citizen of contemporary society.

To act as a technology of the self, the assessment régime to which the student is exposed must cause the individual actively to consider his or her own being in relation to the 'truth' of the particular discipline. It must also cause him or her to generate and continuously revise a coherent biographical narrative that places the self within the rules and traditions of the discipline. Within the tutelary relationship the student exposes his or her being to the gaze of the lecturer, so that a judgement might be made as how closely the student subject's thoughts, feelings and processes fit the norms of the discipline.

The assessment régime in the Bachelor of Business does not fulfil the requirements to be considered technologies of the self. Rather its nature confines it to acting as a disciplinary technology. However, in the Bachelor of Design, where students are expected to produce a journal or diary in preparation for studio assessment they display for the assessor the progress of their thoughts, feeling and actions as they have gone about the production of a set of works. The assessor provides feedback to the student on the material that the student

has provided, evaluating it against a set of criteria developed to summarise the traditions of design, and providing comments and grades for the guidance of the student. In order to maintain or improve his or her grade the student must, for future assessment, show the lecturer how previous feedback has affected new work and the thoughts and processes that surround the production of it. The practice in this assessment régime, of inciting student confession (through diary-keeping) within the controlled context of the design assessment criteria, causes the students to know themselves and to consider their being in relation to the ensemble of rules for the production of 'truth' within the discipline of design.

While all assessment acts as a disciplinary technology subjecting all students to a normalising effect assessment does not always have a uniform effect on students. Rather, in this study, a range of effects was observed depending on the type of assessment régime to which the student was subjected. Unlike the assessment observed in the Bachelor of Design, assessment of the type observed in business did not incite the student to consider his or her being. Therefore such assessment was less effective in contributing to the meeting of the speculative goals of higher education. Only the activities made possible by the criterion-referenced assessment régime of the design degree had the properties required to encourage students into reflexive subject-making inciting them to activity which links their intellect and character (the moral and ethical framework of their being). This process provided the potential for the students to transform themselves becoming empowered to consider and re-conceptualise the discipline and its limits.

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