

Editorial / *Seven degrees?*

Close inspection of apparently disparate *Youth Studies Australia* papers often reveals commonalities that suggest youth studies can be characterised by a number of underlying themes. One of these is participation, and its presence can be identified in each of the papers in this edition.

Following on from her paper titled 'Civic participation through the curriculum', which was published in *Youth Studies Australia* last year, Rosalyn Black leads off this edition with a paper that focuses on the issues of inclusion and participation for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. She contends that insufficient attention has been paid to the relationship between these two forces and argues that 'not enough is known about the capacity of schools in low socioeconomic contexts to meet the expectation that they enable young people's participation'.

In the second paper, Kathy Edwards considers the issue of social inclusion on a related but broader basis and argues that social inclusion is a 'policy chimera' that can result in both negative and positive outcomes for young people. While the term social inclusion suggests that related policies will be concerned with social factors, Kathy argues that they frequently focus on the individual as being deficient 'and

thereby in some way responsible for their own exclusion'.

The third paper is concerned with the creation of self-identity by Gen Xs and Gen Ys. Hilary Yerbury found that participants of her study used information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create multiple identities, but also that they felt that their identities were sometimes threatened by ICTs. Participants often described their identities in participatory terms; for example, as being 'able to help different organisations and movements and issues gain traction' and being 'part of a seeing a regime change in this country'.

Participation at both individual and social levels is also a distinct theme of the fourth paper by Anthony Rodríguez-Jiménez and Sandra Gifford. A participatory media approach was taken by the researchers to provide space for Afghan young men with refugee backgrounds to describe their early settlement experiences in Australia. The researchers found that providing a space for participation was not sufficient to ensure engagement and that participants required some structure in terms of the process provided for participating.

The fifth paper is concerned with the representations of young people in a controversy

over a proposal for an Islamic school in outer Sydney. Ryan Al-Natour is interested in both the portrayal of young Arab and/or Muslim young people in discourses against the proposal, but also in the participation of young people in campaigns for or against the school.

The final paper, by Megan Price and John Dalgleish, reports on a study of the negative effects of cyberbullying on young people. Many victims did not seek support from others even though participants considered this to be an effective response to cyberbullying. It is possible that factors involved in social exclusion, in addition to individual exclusion, influenced these results.

The National Youth Strategy, which was released by the federal government in April, also has a strong focus on participation. One of the priorities of the strategy is 'Empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities', while others encourage young people's participation in specific aspects of their environment including education, employment and online safety. For more information about the strategy, see the Australian Government's 'Youth Initiatives' section on p.64, and for a sector overview of the strategy, see p.3 of this issue.

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