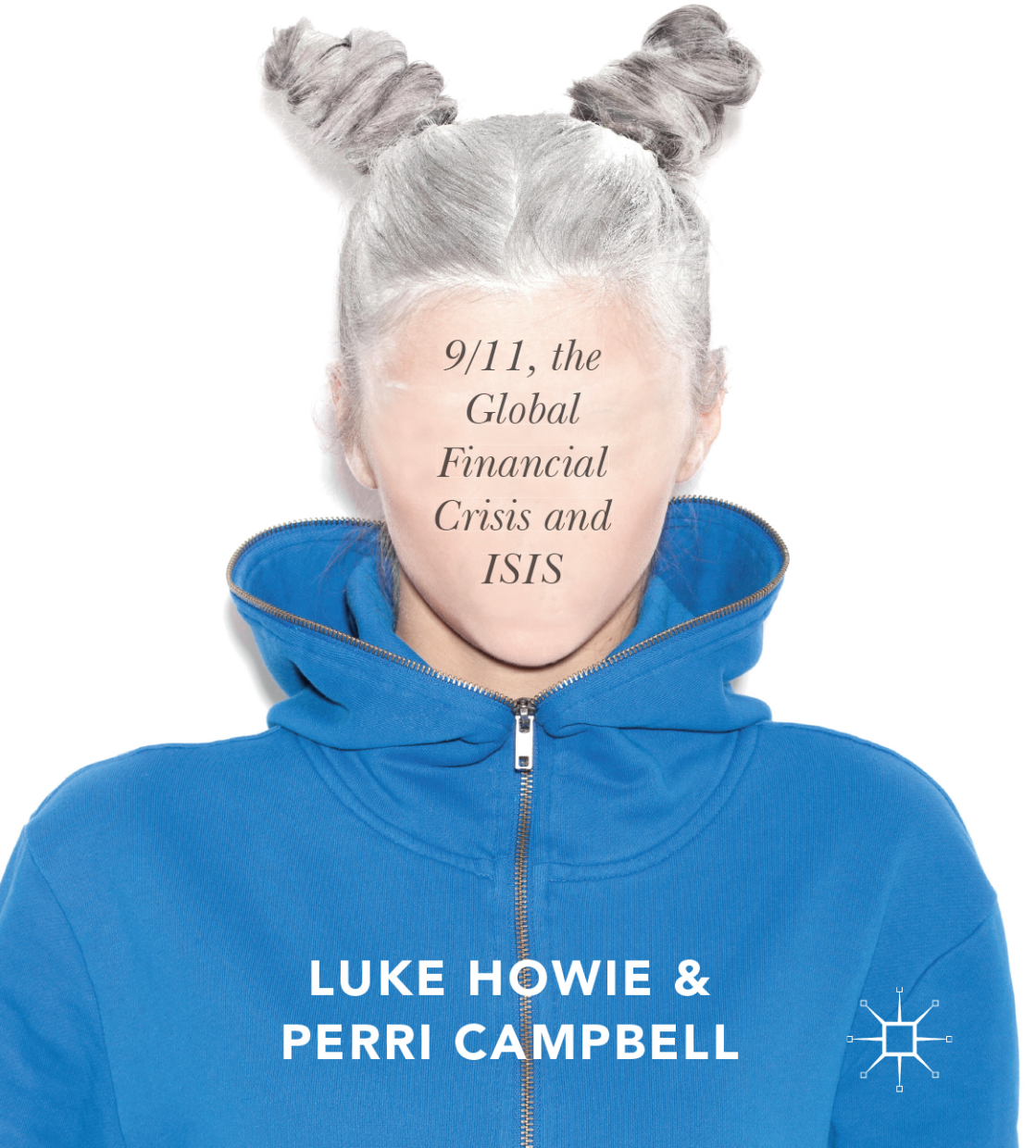
CRISIS AND TERROR
IN THE AGE OF ANXIETY



LUKE HOWIE &
PERRI CAMPBELL

Crisis and Terror in the Age of Anxiety

Luke Howie • Perri Campbell

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9/11, the Global Financial Crisis and ISIS

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Luke Howie
School of Social Sciences
Monash University
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Perri Campbell
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

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This book, and the research within it, are a product of a long journey involving research into the impact of 9/11 on people in diverse parts of the world that included places like Melbourne, Geelong, Sydney, Los Angeles, Auckland, Mosul, Baghdad and Kabul. Soon we were witnessing similar consequences emerging as a result of other threats and risks such as the simultaneously ubiquitous yet hidden Global Financial Crisis (GFC or sub-prime mortgage crisis or the foreclosure crisis) and the supposed threat posed by criminals, people from different religions, bullies, social networking websites, tainted food, to name a small few. What they had in common was an exaggerated, often incredible, human, decision-making based, response. That response can be broadly called *anxiety*. Anxiety itself is then, in turn, made subject to further anxieties which include the effects of stress on the body, on the mind, and on our abilities to maintain relationships, employment, and well-being in an increasingly complex, and doubtful, 21st century. People we learn, when one spends time with them, are anxiety seeking machines. Anxiety, you see is both devastating and protecting – anxiety makes us feel bad, but if we concentrate on our anxiety then we can avoid confronting anxiety's cause, impetus, or its hard, resistant, kernel. This book is our modest attempt at confronting some of these things. We do not necessarily feel better for having done so.

As such, our first acknowledgements are to those people – many of them young, disadvantaged to some degree, often marginalised – who were the respondents in our research. You are forever with us, and we hope we have done justice to *your* words as we underwent processes of turning them into *our* words to write this book. The stories we heard are both haunting and full of hope. They promise a future of rage but also love.

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Imagining a Future of Crisis, Terror and Anxiety

'The world needs tranquillity', was the advice offered by Nathan Kline, the research director of Rockland State Hospital and seminal figure in the history of psychopharmacology. At a Manhattan dinner attended by Kline and fellow seminal figure Frank Berger the course of the world's relationship with anxiety was altered (Stossel 2014: 161–162). Berger was the creator of the psychoactive drug meprobamate – better known as *Miltown*. Miltown was the first mass-marketed psychiatric drug (Herzberg 2009). Its arrival to the pharmaceutical marketplace was initially met with little interest. In the months following its introduction in May 1955, its manufacturer *Carter Products* only sold about $7500 worth per month. In December 1955 Americans bought $500,000 worth of Miltown and soon they were buying 'tens of millions' worth of Miltown a year (Stossel 2014: 162). As a measure of its popularity, its use began to saturate popular culture – as the use of psychoactive drugs saturates our culture today. It was even praised by Aldous Huxley; the grandfather of our fears of a drug-addled, hellish, dystopian future. It seemed to be the cure. This was the birth of antianxiety medication, and for a time there seemed to be a solution to 'today's pressure living' and a perilous 1950s world that provided daily reminders of danger and

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vulnerability (Stossel 2014: 187). It was a time when daily life was a mediated montage of 'The Cold War, the Hydrogen Bomb, the three-martini lunch, and a large female population that had to give up their jobs when the men came back from the war [and] were not necessarily as happy about being housewives as it might appear' (Wittenborn 2009).

Slovian social theorist Slavoj Žižek (2010) believes that we may be *Living in the End Times*. In these times we have faced a series of horrors that, for many, seemed to begin with the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks where 19 hijackers took control of passenger airliners and directed them towards a series of symbolic targets in the US. In New York City economic prosperity and capitalism were the targets. In Washington, DC the world's most powerful military were the targets. The crashed airliner in Pennsylvania was thought by many to be en route to the White House. These were attempted decapitation attacks, a tactic deeply entrenched in counterterrorism tradition and practice. Money. Military. Leadership. Soon after wars were declared and terrorism continued to occur throughout the world in diverse locations including Madrid, London, Mumbai, Indonesia, Norway and Egypt (Howie 2012). Academics and writers played a central role in communicating the risks and uncertainties of these and other events to a population hungry for scary news. Terrors, disasters and crises sell newspapers, after all.

'Researchers', Ungar (2001: 271) argues, 'select particular crises to investigate, and thereby ignore others'. Societies and the world they're in, however, change, as do 'the phenomena associated with outbreaks of public concern or alarm'. Researchers make decisions, as do journalists, politicians and a host of other social actors. Those decisions work to accentuate some threats whilst ignoring others. This is our starting point for the approach we adopt in this book. All threats are not equal and are not represented equally. Some capture our imagination. Some don't.

Our Anxious World

Opportunities for witnessing our anxious world first-hand are abundant. The April 2015 issue of *Scientific American* nicely demonstrates what we mean. The 'Psychology' section feature article tells a story titled 'Conquer

yourself, conquer the world', by well-known psychologist Roy Baumeister (2015: 47). Baumeister (2015) argues for the power of self-control, the regulation of impulses, and resilience. 'Willpower', it seems, can be improved by placing people in threatening situations where they need to call on 'additional resolve' (Baumeister 2015: 49). Carol Dweck (2006) has argued that such traits can be learned in theoretically limitless ways. Baumeister's article offering hope that no situation is beyond effort and mastery is followed by an article titled 'How to survive CYBERWAR', with cyberwar written in a large, capitalised, red graphic. Step one for surviving cyberwar is 'Stop counting on others to protect you' (Elazari 2015: 52). In fact, the situation is worse still. Organisations fit into one of two categories: those that have been hit by a cyberattack, and those that don't know that they've been hit! It may be that there is little, or even nothing, that we can reasonably do when faced with overwhelming, poorly defined or poorly understood risks and dangers in our world.

This situation is certainly not novel. In 1881, New York physician George Miller Beard penned a series of diagnoses and their significance for understanding the contemporary world. He described a uniquely 'American affliction' that he called *neurasthenia* – nervous weakness or nervous exhaustion. It was an illness that seemed to acutely affect 'ambitious, upwardly mobile members of the urban middle and upper classes . . . whose nervous systems were overtaxed by a rapidly modernizing American civilisation' (Stossel 2014: 295). Indeed, it had long been argued that Americanised societies were, in many ways, interwoven with anxious dispositions to the extent that it was suspected by people like de Tocqueville that the societal condition of democratic progress was connected to nervousness, dread and anxiety. As one of Beard's colleagues, A. D. Rockwell (see Stossel 2014: 296), wrote in the *New York Medical Journal* in 1893,

> Here . . . no one is content to rest with the possibility ever before him of stepping higher, and the race of life is all haste and unrest. It is thus readily seen that the primary cause of neurasthenia in this country is civilisation itself, *with all that term implies*, with its railway, telegraph, telephone, and periodical press intensifying in ten thousand ways cerebral activity and worry. (our emphasis)

Civilisation itself! With all that the term implies. What, might we say, does the term imply today? It would seem to imply all of the factors identified by Rockwell on a far grander and more dramatic scale. It would also imply many other things including an increasingly interconnected world facilitated by instant communication in the palm of our hands and the incredible speeds with which we can travel to the other side of the world. There would seem to be few boundaries to our potential to become overwhelmed at any given moment. That is, as it turns out, exactly what happens to many millions of people every day, in a myriad of ways. As Beard (1880: 85) argued, the symptoms of anxiety can be devastating and demoralising, but also 'slippery, fleeting, and vague'. Importantly, Beard sought to dispel a myth that still persists today, that anxiety is somehow a self-inflicted problem, inherently unreal, or simply a problem that results from a lack in resilience or self-control. 'In strictness', Beard (1880: 85) wrote, 'nothing in disease can be imaginary. If I bring on a pain by worrying, by dwelling on myself, that pain is as real as though it were brought on by an *objective influence*' (our emphasis). Here, 'objective' should not be viewed as a synonym for *real*, but rather as a representation that anxiety is a highly subjective and interpretable phenomenon. What is motivating for one person is terrifying for another. What is positive stress for one may be debilitating for another. This is often generalised as the body's hard-wired fight or flight response. In Beard's time, the idea of nervousness as a medical condition became popular. The text *Wear and Tear* by the Philadelphia-based neurologist S. Weir Mitchell sold out in 10 days and was reprinted five times between 1871 and 1881 (in Sicherman 1977: 35).

Since this time denizens of the West have learned to manage their neuroses in varying ways. For a good portion of the twentieth century psychoanalysis played a key role in treating and interpreting personal and societal neuroses. It was thought that by helping patients become aware of a revelation in a traumatic past experience – a *eureka* moment, as it were – via talking in regulated, therapeutic sessions, they could begin to understand and manage their neuroses and get past them.

In the early 1980s, at around the time when the third *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) was released, psychoanalysis took a back seat

as a new era of psychopharmacology was born. The medicalised treatment of many mental ailments was to follow. And it was also around this time that we stopped thinking of anxiety as predominantly an American affliction. Diagnoses since the early 1980s have risen in many parts of the world. In 2009, the UKs Mental Health Foundation found that around 15 per cent of people living there were suffering from an anxiety disorder. Thirty-seven per cent of people reported feeling more afraid than they used to. Other studies put the global levels of anxiety disorders as high as 1 in 6 people who have suffered for at least a year. In Australia, a 2007 study conducted by the Australian Government Department of Health found that around 1 in 7 Australians, over 14%, had suffered from an anxiety disorder in the previous year. The most prevalent types of anxiety were posttraumatic stress and social phobia. The US National Institute of Mental Health (n.d) argues the anxiety disorder rate in America is over 18%. As Stossel (2014: 9) argues,

> almost everyone alive has at some point experienced the torments of anxiety – or of fear or of stress or of worry, which are distinct but related phenomena . . . Those who are unable to experience anxiety are, generally speaking, more deeply pathological – and more dangerous to society – than those who experience it acutely or irrationally; they're sociopaths.

Despite the fact that anxiety or neuroses has been the most common mental illness of recent times, the diligent study of anxiety is a relatively recent pursuit. When Rollo May published *The Meaning of Anxiety* in 1950, he noted that only two other authors have systematically explored the concept; Kierkegaard and Freud (May 1950[1996]; and see Stossel 2014: 10). It was only for the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, after the widespread adoption of antianxiety medications, that anxiety disorders found their way into mainstream diagnostic practice.

In the 1990s, *talk therapy* returned to dominance in what was called cognitive therapy or, more commonly, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Pioneered in the 1960s by Aaron T. Beck, CBT emerged to prominence on the back of the shift in power in the American

Psychological Association (APA) and as a departure from the dominance of psychoanalytic treatments for mental illness. CBT broadened the talk-based approach of psychoanalysis to emphasise 'social learning, stress inoculation training, problem solving training, and self-control therapy, with a primary emphasis on changing cognition as well as behavior' (Beck 2010: 1).

More recently, 'mindfulness' and Buddhist psychological traditions have become more popular. By staying *in the now* people can learn to abandon their obsessions of dwelling in the past (melancholia or depression), and their ruminations or obsessions about the future (neuroses or anxiety). By adopting the Zen philosophy and living life *right now* we can be calmer, concentrate better and live more fulfilling lives. Indeed, it has sparked a massive self-help and often mystical literature. But it is also backed up by some good neuroscience (Tang et al. 2015).

As Dan Harris (2014: 1), the ABC news anchor who had a panic attack live on television during a news broadcast with 5.019 million people watching, explains in his bestselling book, mindfulness has changed his life and revolutionised his relationships with people, work, stress and terrors, disasters and crises of all kinds. As his investigation into the benefits of mindfulness progressed:

> What I found blew my mind. Meditation, once part of the counterculture, had now fully entered the scientific mainstream. It had been subjected to thousands of studies, suggesting an almost laughably long list of health benefits, including salutary effects on . . . major depression, drug addiction, binge eating, smoking cessation, stress among cancer patients, loneliness among senior citizens, ADHD, asthma, psoriasis, irritable bowel syndrome . . . reduced levels of stress hormones, boosted immune systems, made office workers more focussed, and improved test scores. (Harris 2014: 168)

If we accept this, then might mindfulness be the cure to stress and anxiety? Where would that leave us? As Sapolsky (2004) argues, in Western societies we face a dilemma. We feel intense stress in situations where stress is not appropriate. Or, as Sapolsky (2004) frames the problem, since Zebras

face constant stress and danger, 'Why Don't Zebras Get Ulcers?' When zebras feel fear in response to a clear and present danger, they turn on a powerful stress response. When the danger passes, they switch the stress response off. Humans, many living and working in major cities, switch their stress response on whilst lying in bed thinking about the day they face tomorrow or when sitting in traffic. People don't turn their stress response off so easily. Indeed, our stress never fully passes. It is omnipresent – the very structure of our lives sparks our stress response.

We sometimes concoct powerful fantasies and maladaptation to deal with this predicament. As individuals and as members of society we sometimes lust for control. Our futures appear murky and uncertain, but fantasies of control make us feel less anxious and are an attempt to return some sense of certainty to an unpredictable future. This fantasy was effectively captured in the Neil Burger film *Limitless* (2011). *Limitless* is a fantasy of perpetual upward social mobility brought about by popping a pill. Simply by mixing the right ingredients in a laboratory perhaps we can stimulate the right neurochemical reaction to take away our fear, doubt, anxiety and procrastination. Sound familiar? In short, we tend to want to short circuit to the easiest way out. We should, therefore, consider that 'every time new drug therapies come along, they raise the question of where the line between anxiety as psychiatric disorder and anxiety as a normal problem of living should get drawn' (Stossel 2014: 188). Stossel adds that this is cause for caution. Indeed, the rise of depression and anxiety has gone hand-in-hand with the rise in the use of antianxiety and antidepression medications. Stated differently, greater use of medication has done little to reduce the impact and consequences of mental illness in society. Stossel (2014: 10) argues that, in effect, anxiety disorders were introduced after the invention of antianxiety medications. It is perhaps noteworthy in this context that the drugs Prozac and Paxil – primary treatments for many anxiety and depressive disorders – were not after early testing considered effective in treating anxiety. Indeed, in 1989, Paxil was regularly out-performed by placebos.

There is perhaps something insidious in the attempt to fictitiously transform uncertainty into calm certainty, to forget the struggle of the battle hard fought and won and replace it with the elimination of

doubt.[1] *Limitless* is such a fantasy of control and certainty, and it is being replicated and formalised in politics across the world today. We need look little further than the rise of extreme right-wing political parties across Europe, Australia and in the US as evidence of this. Instead of being intolerant to frustration and uncertainty, perhaps we should work to embrace these normal responses to a risky world and understand that it may even be part of a democratic process. In this sense we should learn, we argue, to always be suspicious of the easy way out (see Fromm 2008[1942]).

The *Limitless* fantasy is not a mere abstraction. A real Limitless-like drug has been developed called *Modafinil*. It has been lauded as a miracle amongst high-achieving workers such as those found on Wall Street. Focus is improved. Anxiety is a non-factor. Time takes on a pleasurable dimension. In an interview with one Wall Street trader he said he was

> hearing more chatter about [the drug] among traders and hedge-funders, though they don't tend to boast about it in the same way as the tech guys. 'There's something, I think, about guys who write code for a living that makes them very interested in hacking things – finding shortcuts, stuff like that,' he says. 'Whereas with guys on Wall Street, it's more testosterone-fueled; it's more just power through it.' . . . 'This *is not like caffeine* or *5 Hour Energy*. This is the big leagues.' (emphasis in original, Kolker 2013)

But there are consequences from 'staying ahead in today's competitive economy':

> Skip a dose, and there would be hell to pay. 'I really would feel it. It was sort of like being thrust into dirty, messy reality, as opposed to a clean, neatly organized place. It was like crashing, and I actually found what would happen is the anxiety that got dialled down on the way in, when you were coming off it, all of a sudden you went through the reverse. So I got incredibly anxious. Eventually that concerned me.' (Kolker 2013)

[1] This does not apply to people suffering from severe mental illnesses for whom medication returns to them the ability to get up in the morning. Antianxiety and antidepression medications play a vital role in the lives of people who may otherwise be lost.

He gave up the drug after three weeks and focussed, instead, on mindfulness meditation and sleeping more.

We also shouldn't be surprised to learn that our anxious political predicament is perhaps a natural outcome of the economic crisis. Bernie Sanders appeared on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show* during his 2015/2016 Presidential campaign and argued that Americans were in serious states of anxiety:

> I think you have an enormous amount of fear and uncertainty in this country. And it's not just from [the terrorist attack in] San Bernadino. Or from Paris. I think what you've got is millions of people who are in trouble today. They're confused. They're working longer hours for lower wages. They're seeing productivity going up but their kids are worse off economically than they are . . . who's listening to them? They're in trouble. (Sanders in Maddow 2015)

This is perhaps why it was the 'the children of the crisis of 2007–2009' that lead the charge during global Occupy protests (Gould-Wartofsky 2015: 20). Their shared experiences included 'long-term unemployment or underemployment; low-wage, part-time work (if they could get it); the prospect of a lifetime of debt and downward mobility; and, finally, the abiding sense, in the words of one protester, that "the future ain't what it used to be"' (Gould-Wartofsky 2015: 20).

The Burden of the Desire for Financial Security

Financial and economic uncertainty has long been associated with anxiety, depression and relationship breakups. The economic crisis of 2007–2008 has provided ample opportunity to study various emotional and psychological disorders associated with economic disaster and crisis in social and cultural contexts. In Spain, for example, one major study showed that the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has resulted in significant emotional distress and anxiety (Gili et al. 2013: 103). Comparing patient data from 2006 to 2010 it showed that incidents of major depression disorders increased an

incredible 19%, generalised anxiety disorder increased more than 8%, and alcohol dependence increased almost 5%. These increases were primarily associated with fears about unemployment or an inability to make mortgage payments. So whilst the specific disorders varied, their development was linked to fears associated with the future; a hallmark of anxious personalities.

Our sensitivity to things that make us nervous was dramatically on display when at some point in the middle of 2014 the world was suddenly aware of a seemingly new terrorist threat that we have come to call Daesh, ISIS, ISIL or IS – *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant*; or simply *Islamic State*. In less than a year, ISIS had captured the imaginations of people throughout the world. Their attacks inspire fear in Western cities and inspire disaffected young people in these cities to join their ranks. Some leave their Western homes and arrive in warzones to fight. Others carry out high-profile attacks in their own countries against their fellow citizens. Closer to ISIS's sphere of influence in Iraq and Syria people paid a more significant price. Communities were overrun with ISIS fighters. Women, particularly from ethic minority groups, were forced into sexual servitude. Regional leaders were forced to give up their power. Towns and cities were toppled.

Much as Rockwell and Beard predicted with regard to *civilisation itself* being the cause of anxiety, ISIS has been highly successful in spreading fear via the technologies that structure our everyday lives. Or, as Stern and Berger (2015: 127) have recently argued, ISIS have facilitated the advancement of neojihadism, radicalisation and extremism into the social networking landscape. This, most intelligence and policing services would argue, has made ISIS such a dangerous organisation since it seems to reach out and speak to young people in ways that most terrorist organisations throughout history could not:

> During the 1980s, jihadists produced propaganda films on videotape and printed sophisticated four-color magazines that were reasonable facsimiles of *Time* or *Newsweek*. They didn't distribute them on the Internet. Instead, they went out via mail, or were handed out inside or outside a

> mosque. In dedicated centers around the world, including the United States, those who were interested could go to find out more about the movement. (Stern and Berger 2015: 127)

Where terrorism has flourished, so has its representation in various cultural apparatus like the media. Ted Koppel once said that 'the media, particularly television, and terrorists need one another' (in Weimann and Winn 1994: 51). Weimann and Winn (1994) have described this situation as a 'theater of terror'. By understanding terror, disaster and crisis as having a symbiotic relationship with the mass media, we begin to appreciate how our everyday lives are overwhelmed by the horrors that carry on throughout the world as we go about our days. It seems clear that it is in these moments that we, particularly in the West, become aware of terrorist violence, war, economic crisis and disease and begin to ruminate on the potential for terror, disaster and crisis to personally affect us in the not-too-distant future. It was the invention of the printing press that breathed oxygen into the anarchist movement in the early twentieth century, but in the later decades of that century we should hold, Weimann and Winn (1994: 51) argued, television as the most significant development in the terrorism-media symbiosis. Combined with this was the increasingly *theatrical* delivery of inaccurate but spectacularised news in the media. We have been told that the threat from ISIS is unlikely to subside anytime soon. In June 2015 a leading conservative Australian newspaper reported that the war against ISIS 'could take years' (McPhedran 2015). The article is accompanied by a confronting picture of an Islamic extremist complete with machine gun, balaclava, dressed in all black, and a large, black flag with white, Arabic writing.

As Sheldon Ungar (2001: 271) argued before 9/11 and the GFC (but, naturally, after a host of other calamities involving war, violence and economic failure) that understanding panic and terror is best achieved by studying 'the sites and conventions of social anxiety and fear'. Stanley Cohen (1972: 9) believed that 'Societies appear to be subject . . . to periods of moral panic':

> A condition, episode, person or groups of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in

> a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved . . . (or more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.

This eerie assessment of the nature of contemporary threats, anxieties and terrors involves highlighting the roles of not just people and groups in sustaining the threat perceptions of those who witness the parades of disaster analysis so prevalent in global media. It also highlights the roles of institutions such as the media (extended now to involve the ubiquitousness of social media), as well as the religious and political spokespeople who provide the content (see Simko 2015). It also draws attention to the 'condition' or 'episode' itself – the actual, terrifying thing that seems to be the source of our fear but which also couldn't exist without the institutions that glamorise and sustain it (see Ungar 2001: 272).

For Ungar (2001: 272–273), our 'social anxieties' do not always fit the paradigm of moral panic, but there is often considerable cross over:

> Starting from the mid-1980s on in particular, new social anxieties in advanced industrial societies have built up around nuclear, chemical, environmental, biological and medical issues . . . These [and other] new risks have steadily gained greater prominence and created their own issue-attention cycles.

Whilst the nature, form, meanings and consequences of these risks have been theorised by many, perhaps most notably by Ulrich Beck (1992) and his 'risk society' and Zygmunt Bauman (2005) and his variously 'liquid' forms of social meaning, it is the flow on effects and consequences that become the most difficult to contain as our dreads and anxieties take material forms in society, culture and the economy. The incident that we have dubbed "9/11" has led to a groundswell of consequences, as one example, that have included war; hastily fashioned national security legislation that has enhanced surveillance and social control processes whilst diminishing personal privacy; widespread discrimination targeting people who appear to be Muslim; and, of course, further acts of terror as cycles of violence are perpetuated.

Indeed, it was a Russian invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s which led to the US becoming involved in a proxy war with the arming and training of resistance fighters there. Those fighters became the basis of what came to be known as Al-Qaeda who, in turn, were responsible for 9/11 which resulted in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the former of which has, again in turn, created the conditions for the emergence of ISIS. It should be no surprise then that it was the exceedingly low interest rates following 9/11, combined with a multi-trillion dollar war economy, and renewed thirst for certainty, stability and security amongst homebuyers that led at least partly to the foreclosure crisis in the US and the GFC. The consequences of this have included the social movements and sometimes violent political protests of the Arab Spring and Occupy. Protest, social unrest and systemic racism have, in turn, been the basis for activism amongst members of Black Lives Matter which has, perhaps ironically, paved the way for the non-establishment candidates in the 2016 US Presidential race.

Precariousness, Precarity and Vulnerability

Precariousness and vulnerability are the common state of human existence and the basis of our appreciation of universal human rights. Our understanding of what is 'universal' in the human predicament involves our awareness of the vulnerability of the fleshy, damageable and harmable human body (Turner 2006. See also: Butler 2004). Turner (2006: 26) argues that 'Human beings are ontologically vulnerable and insecure, and their natural environments, doubtful'. To guard against our human condition we surround ourselves with others who are in the same boat in places called cities, or perhaps even societies. In so doing, we alleviate some of our anxieties but provoke others. Cities are home to safety and affluence, but also precariousness and danger. Indeed, it is our most powerful cities that also seem to be among the most vulnerable. The affluence of cities like New York City and London must be read alongside the fact that they have also been the locations for devastating acts of terrorism. These cities are the urban centres of countries that were looked on to provide social, cultural, political and military leadership in the wars

that ensued, and these cities (at least, the marginalised of these cities) felt heavily many of the meanings and consequences of the GFC.[2] Cities are startlingly powerful, and hopelessly weak (see Howie 2012: 25). It would be easy to imagine the worst of the future in these urban settings. Science fiction often attests to this fear.

It is perhaps not until one visits these cities that the full meanings of this can be narrativised into one's life-world. It is one thing to know abstractly what it means for your city to be targeted by disaster, crisis and terror. You can, perhaps, immerse yourself in media and research that tells these stories, or watch the television and films, and read the literature that historicises and narrativises traumatic events (more on this later). Having studied 9/11, terrorism and the wars that were the consequences for more than a decade we felt we had a fairly well developed knowledge of the impact of terrorism on cities. When we visited New York it was clear that there was much that we had missed. The Ground Zero site *feels* a certain way. It is a quiet, solemn place, and not in a high population area of New York City.

But when we can't be there we should, in the twenty-first century, expand our understanding of the significance of television to screen culture more generally – that is, after all, what the hypermediated, digital world is about. One of us has studied the impact of media images of terrorism, particularly those found in popular televisual culture, extensively (Howie 2009a, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). In much the same way that 9/11 and the Afghan and Iraq wars were followed by an avalanche of popular culture representations, many of which were delivered in the form of comedy, the post-GFC world has delivered easily consumable, post-economic crisis film and television. We explore this throughout, and in particular detail in Chapter 6.

One of us has spent their career working on digital media and its role in communicating the disaster, terror and crises that unfold in non-Western countries. In particular, Campbell has explored weblogs

[2] This is, perhaps, an oversimplification. But the flow-on effects of global recession will likely always be felt disproportionately by the most marginalised and poorest wherever they live be they in or on the fringes of the global megapolis, in the third world, or in war-torn Middle East or North Africa.

written by women living in post-invasion Iraq and the experiences of young people involved in the global Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements (Campbell 2012, 2015; Howie 2014). These issues are the subjects of Chapters 5 and 7. The screen plays a particular role in these contexts too, by allowing people in geographical locations near and far to communicate and interact with one another. This may involve one or two way communication, reading a blog or posting a comment. Through the act of reading a weblog we come into contact with the details of individuals' everyday experiences. During the invasion and occupation of Iraq, women described the increasing difficulties of getting to school, university and work, the trauma of daily violence, gunfire and explosions, studying at night, taking Valium to get by, and fleeing the country.

Waiting for that Other Shoe to Drop . . .

Art Spiegelman (2004) was living in lower Manhattan when 9/11 occurred. He had a perspective unlike most on 9/11. Whilst many millions were watching from various vantage points throughout the world – on television in both near and distant cities; on computer screens, although that was rare (see Miller 2007: 79) – Spiegelman was part of the group considered the *true* victims of the attacks in New York. He was a New Yorker on the streets as fire and debris rained down around him. He inhaled the toxic fumes and saw the dead bodies. He didn't see people jump from buildings, but he was haunted by these images too after he saw them on television. Spiegelman tells his story in his graphic novel – a medium he is famous for – titled *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004). His graphic novel focusses on his trauma in 9/11's immediate aftermath – his fears, his sadness, his anxiety. He explores the meaning of an important metaphor for understanding anxiety, and we consider it important for our task in this book. After 9/11 Spiegelman (2004: 1) and many of his fellow New Yorkers, Americans and, we argue, witnesses in cities throughout the world were '*waiting for that other shoe to drop*' (our emphasis).

The page of the graphic novel where this anxious assessment of the post-9/11 world appears is filled with images pictorially demonstrating

what he means by 'waiting for that other shoe to drop'. Across the top of the page is a cartoon strip in three cells. In the first there is a family – a man, a woman, a child – asleep on a couch in front of a television. In the second cell they are staring terrified, their hair standing on end, at their television, leaning forward in horror and seemingly on the verge of panic. In the third cell, they are asleep again, but they still appear panicked, their hair still standing on its end in a representation of their now permanent state of living in fear and anxiety. Towards the middle of the page there is a 12-cell comic strip depicting an older man getting ready for bed, apparently heavily intoxicated. He kicks off his first shoe – it spirals into the air and lands loudly with a 'KLOMP!' on the floor. Realising he has made a loud racket, potentially waking up his neighbours, he removes his second shoe more carefully, and rests it quietly next to the one on the floor. He climbs into bed and falls asleep only to be awoken by his neighbours living below him who scream '*Drop the other @*&! shoe so we can go to sleep*' (our emphasis).

This book is our attempt to explore what people do as they prepare for when the other shoe drops, when the next disaster enters our life-worlds, potentially turning them upside down. In doing so, we follow the ordinary scholarly practice of using academic literature, a particular ontology and methodology, and established data collection methods for conducting the interviews that informed several chapters of this book. But we also extend ourselves well beyond these limiting spaces and explore at various stages self-help and popular literature on terror, disaster, crisis and anxiety, popular magazines and news media, social media and the internet including blogs and post article comments, and popular television and film. We believe that it is only through this broader cultural lens that a more detailed picture of the anxiety-provoking twenty-first century can be formed.

In Chapter 2, we explore a diverse body of literature surrounding issues of disaster, terror and crisis in the twenty-first century. Some of this literature is scholarly in nature and forms the backbone of the theoretical orientation we have applied to the dilemmas that have emerged since the beginning of this millennium. Principally, we are interested in those events that have had the most significant, far reaching, impacts. They almost announce themselves – 9/11 and subsequent

acts of terror in many diverse parts of the world including London, Bali, Madrid, Mumbai, Oslo and Boston; international wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (and, less popularly, many parts of North Africa and the Middle East, and in separatist Russia); the GFC, known as the foreclosure or mortgage crisis in the US and the dire warnings of imminent recession in mid-2015; and, of course, the threat posed by Islamic State, colloquially known by a variety of names, including IS, ISIS, ISIL and Daesh. Associated with the ISIS threat are the anxieties surrounding the radicalisation and activation of home-grown and lone-wolf terrorists, striking with little warning and armed with new ways of thinking about targets and victimisation that show less interest in highly symbolic and high-profile targets, and more interest in opportune 'soft' targets like cafes, art exhibits and sporting events. We also consult in Chapter 2 the emerging popular literature exploring both the dangers and threats we face and how we should think and respond to them. It seems no coincidence to us that spiking levels of anxiety are to be found in a society that is preoccupied with the spectacularly mediated disaster narratives that are becoming a routine part of our everyday lives. Here we consider the prevailing social and cultural theory that informs the conditions of terror, disaster, crisis and anxiety that prevail in contemporary society. It is a time that has been understood through successive disasters from 9/11 to war to economic collapse. We explore a diverse range of thinking from several different disciplines and sub-disciplines including psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, critical sociology, gender studies and feminism, digital humanities, posthumanities, as well as theories about structural and social inequality.

Chapter 3 is the first chapter in which we tell stories about terror, disaster and crisis based on interviews conducted in the US in 2014 and 2015. The interviews were designed to gain a better understanding of the meanings and consequences of the GFC for young people who lived, and continue to live, through it. Our work has long focussed on the impacts of war and terrorism on people from various walks of life, and we sought to explore whether the same or similar impacts were felt when the disaster or terror was an economic crisis rather than a geo-political crisis (with, of course, the threat of physical harm and violence). As is the nature of interviews, we were amazed at the responses we were given to our

questions about how economic crisis had affected their lives and how they were able to imagine their futures. By asking respondents about how the GFC had affected their futures we opened up a fraught and traumatic space which revealed the darkest undersides of socio-economic fear, dread and terror. Asking people – many of them young – to imagine what their futures look like unearthed stories that were painful, uncertain and anxious, yet also inspiring and full of hope. Many of our interviewees had come from disadvantaged backgrounds yet had managed to change the trajectories of their lives only to discover that *after the GFC* their trajectories may prove to be dead ends.

In Chapter 4 we continue telling the stories of the people we interviewed but with a particular theoretical and social focus on youth studies and young people's transitions from secondary schooling to University and beyond. This chapter lays out our theory for how young people find possible ways of living, possible forms of life, amidst economic and social disaster, crisis and anxiety. Through a figure we call the *guerrilla self* we gather up stories about the ways in which young people are improvising a life and future. We focus here on the stories of three young people living in a West Coast college town in the US, each with a tale to tell about how the GFC and systemic economic inequality almost prevented them from having a future. These young people had battled their way towards their imagined futures by turning their disadvantage into advantage and by transforming their marginalisation into opportunity. Their path is difficult, uncertain and unfinished. But it has given them hope when many in their families and peer groups felt hopeless. Whilst uncertainty about ones future and being willing to take strategic risks is not new, in the aftermath of the GFC it is not simply a matter of socio-economic advancement. It is a matter of survival.

In Chapter 5 we tell stories from fieldwork we conducted in 2015 in the US that focussed on young people's political activism in response to the challenges and uncertainties they have faced in a post-GFC world. Theirs is the Occupy generation – people that Manson (2013) identified as a 'new sociological type . . . the graduate with no future'. Their futures are different to those of their parents who were able to work and accumulate 'pay, conditions or savings'. What these young people accumulate is 'resentment' (Manson 2013). Here we take the next step in

analysing young people imagining a future. Our stories are about identity and selfhood, and how perpetual economic and social doubt is transforming what it means to live in Western nations in the twenty-first century. This chapter is about six young people finding possibilities for social activism amidst this doubt. All are actively involved in controversial social justice movements. They do this to reclaim their futures, to not be victims of the crimes and inhumanity of others, to return some sense of empathy to a future undermined by politicians, financial and economic 'experts', and corporate 'leaders'. Their resting state is agitation and anxiety, but also love and rage. Through these emotional states they come to know themselves and begin to map their political trajectories towards another future.

We shift the focus in Chapter 6 from the interviews we conducted for this book to those moments in popular culture, television and literature that shed an often alternative yet important light on the impact of disaster, crisis and terror in the social world. It is a path that one of us has travelled before in relation to 9/11, the post-9/11 world and the threat of terrorism (Howie 2009b, 2009c, 2011a, 2011b, 2014). Here we analyse post-GFC televisual culture. Television comedies, feature films and social networking spaces in particular have taken prominent roles in depicting the meanings and consequences of the GFC in socio-economic and socio-cultural life. The pilot episode of *Girls* tells a familiar tale of young people in precarious employment in a major city. The sitcom *Don't Trust the B**** in Apartment 23* parodies the sudden collapse of the corporate economy, but also the get-up-and-go attitude of young educated classes. The sitcom *Two Broke Girls* is *the* post-GFC parody and cultural artefact. It is a twenty-first-century odd couple – Caroline, the daughter of a billionaire corporate criminal, and Max, the risky and marginalised young woman from a low socio-economic background, come together and share the skills that will help them survive a world crippled by the GFC. In this chapter, we also explore the meanings and consequences of the mega-popular *The Hunger Games* franchise and consider what a youthful revolution might look like. We also explore the social networking website *Tumblr* and the 'We are the 99 percent' group that is housed there. These pop-cultural spaces serve as databases, maps and archives that narrativise in particular ways the tragedy of the GFC.

In Chapter 7 we focus on another theatre; the theatre of the Iraq War. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, DC and a field in Pennsylvania paved the way for international wars to be fought in its name. Thus war was unleashed once again on the diverse Iraqi nation, made up of a complex blend of nationalities, ethnic groups and religious interpretations. Iraqis are not immune to a host of mental illnesses born as a consequence of war, the violence of which is always felt disproportionately by women and the young. In this chapter we document and explore the tales of young Iraqi women blogging from a war zone. Their stories provide a window into life-worlds in which the collapse of institutions that structure everyday life – schools and universities, stores and restaurants, power and water – is experienced with disastrous effect. It is, as one young Iraqi woman put it, *about living a life that isn't a life at all*. The anxiety felt by Iraqis during the war has received surprisingly (or perhaps, not surprisingly) little attention in the academic or popular literature, and the popular media in the West. When after 9/11 news organisations like Al Jazeera tried to shed light on the suffering of civilian populations in times of war, they were accused of being pro-terrorist and anti-American. We have as a society, thankfully, mostly moved past such wartime prejudices and now seems like a reasonable time to consider the lingering suffering and mental health problems that are so prevalent in Iraq today.

In Chapter 8 we consider an issue that is often ignored in thinking on terrorism, security and safety. Whilst we spend considerable money and resources on preventing terrorism and planning for its occurrence and consequences, we fall well short in providing for one of the most important aspects of this security – the undervalued and underpaid security staff that are already standing guard when terrorists strike. They are the *first* first responders and we need them to be heroic when the unthinkable occurs. Security guards saved thousands of people on 9/11 as 42 of them died whilst simply doing their jobs. It is incredible to us that such vital people in securing our well-being should hold such a diminished place in the social imagination.

We conclude in the final chapter by considering what the world, and our futures, might look like if we find ways to reduce our fear and anxiety and the often erratic responses that follow in its wake. We attempt to imagine a future where we are not so overwhelmed.

The Dangers of Living in a Bubble

The final section of Kilcullen's (2015: 85) essay on the dangers and challenges posed by ISIS is titled 'Beyond the Bubble'. As a military strategist to the highest echelons of government he regularly finds himself in warzones and disputed territories. He wrote most of his essay in these locations. He writes the final chapter whilst on vacation in Big Sur, California.

> As I sit here quietly among the redwoods, it seems hard to imagine that anything, anywhere, could threaten the peace and beauty of this bubble. And yet, just a few hours' flying time away, one of the most intense conflicts of the century is playing out, and it's nowhere close to being over.

Interestingly, the 'bubble' in which Kilcullen found himself was a mere two-and-a-half hours drive from some of the most economically marginalised – and economically prosperous – communities in the US. Indeed, much of our research that features in this book was conducted in these areas. The 'bubble', it seems, comes in a variety of forms. In the Bay Area around San Francisco – just up the coast from Big Sur – we witness generational poverty interacting with Silicon Valley. It should be no surprise that it is the poor in these communities that are feeling the GFC more than most (Saxenian et al. 2002; Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies 2015). And as Avalos (2015) reports, poverty in the Bay Area is 'near record levels . . . despite [the] hot economy'. The Bay Area is home to the affluence of Silicon Valley and the campuses of major tech-corporations like *Google* and *Facebook*. It is also home to the high poverty and high handgun death rates of Oakland and Richmond. It is home to the educational and research elite at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. It is also home to rapid gentrification that is displacing the most marginalised in the community. The 'bubble', we might say, is dynamic and overlaps in diverse ways. California may indeed be distant from the worst global violence of war and terrorism (as, for the most part, are Australia, New Zealand, parts of Europe, Canada and a host of other countries). But it is front and centre in the war on poverty and marginalisation, drugs, and socio-economic inequality.

We argue in this book that we need to find ways of thinking through the *bubble* in which we live. By thinking through our bubble, and even being willing to move outside of it, we may find innovative approaches to the threatening and cacophonous future – in much the same way many of the respondents who are featured in this book have. As such, in this book we, at times, focus especially on young people since they are, we argue, the ones with the most to lose should we be unable to live with the disasters, crises and terrors that threaten to derail our everyday lives. Much of the grassroots movements in the Arab Spring and Occupy were driven by young people or youth issues. Young people were plunged into economic uncertainty during the GFC as they balanced schooling with part-time work (if they could get it), all the while planning for a future that was far from guaranteed in terms of employment, buying a house, having children and many of the other social benefits that economic stability brings. This may be the first generation to be worse off than their parents (Daley and Wood 2014; Freeman 2014). They deserve our attention.

2

Anxiety, Violence and the Social World

Anxiety, or perhaps more precisely anxious people, seems to be everywhere. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) believes that around 18% of people in the US are afflicted by full-blown anxiety disorders. Prior to the new millennium, anxiety disorders cost around $42 billion US dollars per year (ADAA 2015; Greenberg et al. 1999). Awareness and acceptance of anxiety is growing as celebrities admit to long battles with anxious illnesses. For instance, Emma Stone and Taylor Swift have discussed feelings of anxiety and having panic attacks. *The Hunger Games* star, Jennifer Lawrence, has described how she has long had 'a kind of social anxiety' (Wickens 2016).

Recently, writers from various fields have weighed in on the meanings and consequences of anxiety in the contemporary – in what we would argue is a post-9/11, post-GFC – world. There has been a stream of revelations of public figures whom have had long battles with personal terrors and anxieties. Scott Stossel – well known American journalist and editor of *The Atlantic* – released his book describing his *Age of Anxiety* (2014) featuring harrowing tales of barely getting by (or not) whilst in the throes of all-consuming terror. His story includes a history of anxiety, principally from psychopharmacological and cognitive behavioural therapeutic (CBT)

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perspectives. Dan Harris (2014) – anchor on ABC in the US – tells his witty personal narratives of panic and anxiety from mindfulness and Buddhist psychological perspectives. His book surveys the popular self-help literature and its impact on the proliferation of 'zen' through the consumer world and the benefits of *living in the now*.

Moreover, contemporary psychoanalytic literature has again captured the popular imagination. This literature, in general, has not contributed to understandings of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice, but rather focusses on psychoanalytic principles for understanding the social world and culture (often popular culture). Online debates and discussions about the hidden meanings in film and television programs have reached what are probably unprecedented levels. Pop-culture and philosophy series by major publishers are flush with psychoanalytic theory and insights. Slavoj Žižek, known by some as the 'Elvis of cultural studies' (Taylor and Gunkel 2007), has written extensively in this field and has inspired the emergence of what is often called the Ljubljana School of psychoanalysis and theory.

Meanwhile, people throughout the world toil in the 'Desert of the Real' (Baudrillard 1994; Howie 2012; Žižek 2002). Western and non-Western cities have been emotionally scarred by the calamity of the 9/11 terror attacks and the subsequent terror threats that appeared in countless cities throughout the world. Many places have been in states of near perpetual war since the second half of the twentieth century, including Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. On the back of this came the GFC – the 'foreclosure crisis' in US terms – which was, at least partly, connected to events that were sparked by 9/11 and the wars that followed (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008). As a result of this the Arab Spring, the Indignados and Occupy movements (to name but a few) saw the worlds' cities once again filled by protesters. Protests saw mass participation by younger generations discontented with socio-economic conditions, normative forms of political participation, high levels of unemployment, corruption and poor living standards, and limited opportunities to build a career, a home and family (Pollock 2011). At the time of writing, the *Black Lives Matter* movement continues to make headlines as it fights against systemic disadvantage and racism whilst facing extraordinary criticism from right-wing commentators and news networks (as discussed in various forms in the chapters that follow).

We believe, given these situations, that our claim that we find ourselves in an age of anxiety is not a controversial one. But we do intend to lay out the narrative of how this has come to be in this chapter. We will not recover ground that has been covered elsewhere and, as such, we will not provide a history of anxiety and its impacts at individual and societal levels. But we will track the significance of the contemporary world's struggles with dread, terror, fear and anxiety in the context of our violent social world. We do not intend for 'violence' to be interpreted narrowly in our narrative. We follow Žižek (2009: 1–3) in understanding violence as comprising of 'objective' and 'subjective' structures. We should learn to not only witness violence when it is filling our screens, but also when it is less perceivable. Invisible violence can be diabolical and often sustains the doubts and uncertainties that we labour under when facing a doubtful world. But doubt can spark hope.

In this chapter we provide substance to these claims by exploring contemporary accounts of violence, the social world and 'anxiety' . . . broadly defined. This chapter is our narrative of the world as existing in a time of terror, of disaster and in an age of anxiety. In order to lay a path from anxiety to the lived experience of the GFC we discuss the ways in which fears and anxieties are mobilised through political rhetoric, terrorism, social networking, and through social conditions impacted by advanced capitalism and global free-market trade. It is, perhaps, a time when our imaginations have run amok, and a time when we feel little control over world events, the institutions we belong to or even our private daily lives.

An Anxious Society

Jacques Lacan (2014: 5–6) in his lectures on 'Anxiety' tells the tale of the man in a cave wearing an animal mask who is confronted by a gigantic praying mantis. The man's fear, his uncertainty, doubt, dread, his loss of control are borne of a dilemma that he cannot solve – *which animal's mask do I wear and how does this giant praying mantis view me?* In adopting the subjective position of the man, how can we answer this question? Does the praying mantis view me as a predator since I may be wearing an animal mask of something that eats a praying mantis? Does it

view me as a meal since I may be wearing a mask of an animal that they would like to eat? It may equally view me as a member of his species, since I may be wearing a praying mantis mask. I could therefore be a sexual partner, a collaborator, a member of his familial or social group. Still I may be a threat, a rival, and this praying mantis may choose to flee from my presence or take up arms to fight me, possibly to the death.

It would be wrong to say that we 'fear' this situation. We don't really, because for all we know we hold the advantage. We may be this praying mantis' most feared animal, one he would never dare fight. This is the nature of anxiety in the social world – we don't know what we don't know, but we imagine that we have some idea.

We could easily ask what the various threats we confront in our everyday lives want from us, and perhaps we do. These could arise as part of the daily minutia of living our lives (*What do our friends want? How do I make my partner happy? Is my boss happy with my performance?*), or from broader, societal or global, or so-called 'glocal' (Bauman 1998a: 37), concerns (*Will terrorists strike in my country or city? If the economy crashes (again) will I lose my job and become destitute? Will climate change eventually end life on this planet? Or will this occur because of some kind of disease pandemic, or through nuclear war?*).

Representatives of global banking organisation *HSBC* argue that we are about to face economic and financial turmoil of 'titanic' proportions (Oyedele 2015). Extending the Titanic metaphor, chief economist for *HSBC,* Stephen King, argues that unlike previous recessions since the 1970s we have far fewer 'lifeboats' as we approach the next one. Many of the fiscal artillery we have become accustomed to deploying, such as interest rate decreases or stimulus spending (as well as media reporting of these things that will continue to sap and boost consumer and business confidence), will not be as available in the next recession since many developed economies already run at 0% (Evans-Pritchard 2015). King is being quite suggestive with his Titanic allegory – it is not just the idea of the sinking ship, the inevitable disaster, that he draws upon, but the idea that some will be saved whilst many in the poorest and most disadvantaged among us will not. The Titanic allegory has considerable traction in social spaces where disaster, crisis and terror are ordinary, everyday, perhaps even

mundane, concerns. It is a situation where our very social nature – as represented in institutions, city spaces and the regulation of human interaction – is mired in the discursive realities of risk, danger and fear. Stated differently, the appearance of 'secure' buildings, the placement of security guards, the safety precautions we adopt every day of our lives, the manner in which we address others are testament to the emotional and psychological nuances of our (over)active and anxious twenty-first-century minds in Western cities.

Zygmunt Bauman (2006: 17) believes that the Titanic story is deeply embedded in the Western imagination. The 'Titanic syndrome', as he describes it, represents the 'horror' of disappearing beneath the 'wafer-thin crust' that is our belief in a safe and secure world. The terror that underlies the romanticism of 'Titanic' myths is not really the loss of human life, the suffering or even the resilience that was so central to Hollywood's version of Titanic history. Rather, what haunts us about the Titanic is the serene context in which the disaster occurred – a cool, calm sea broken first by the sight of an iceberg and the rising dread as we come to understand that what we *see* of the iceberg is only a small portion of the danger it poses and that, by the time we detect it, it may be too late to do anything meaningful to prevent the damage it will cause. All the technological mastery that went into building the ship, the organisation, the skill, the planning, (the packing) all meant nothing in the end. In the face of the Titanic story we feel hopeless, numb and fatalistic. The iceberg did not discriminate – there were not enough lifeboats and it killed the rich and the poor alike (although it is noteworthy that the Titanic story holds that wealthy people were offered priority seats on the journey to safety – it is easier to be resilient in a lifeboat that it is when you are drowning in an unforgiving, frozen sea).

And who can we say is left to drown? The answer should be uncontroversial – the marginalised, the poor, the unskilled and the uneducated, the mentally ill, those who are differently abled, the institutionally disadvantaged and a host of other usual suspects. In recent times, these categories of people have become the subject of interest on popular television, partly because the ranks of 'unfortunates' has swelled considerably since the GFC (De Botton 2009). If we had met somebody in the European middle-ages who was poor and marginalised, we would

perhaps have described them as *unfortunate* – literally, less lucky. The situation we encounter in the twenty-first century in much of the world is startlingly different:

> Nowadays . . . if you meet someone at the bottom of society they may unkindly be described as a 'loser'. There's a real difference between an 'unfortunate' and a 'loser'. And that shows 400 years of evolution in society and our belief in who is responsible for our lives. *It's no longer the Gods, it's us. We're in the driving seat.* That's exhilarating if you're doing well and very crushing if you're not. It leads, in the worst cases . . . to increased rates of suicide. There are more suicides in developed, individualistic countries than in any other part of the world. (our emphasis, De Botton 2009)

Fromm (2008[1942]: 103–104) argued that people do not only see themselves as *peddlers* of consumables in economic systems. They see their very identity as something consumable, something sellable, as a commodifiable asset. As human-economic beings – *homo oeconomonomicus* – we become, in the neoliberal logics of the twenty-first century, responsible for our own situations and predicaments. When things go wrong, we need to be prepared to fight our way out. We need to be, as Kelly (2006) would have it, *entrepreneurial* in our approach to life, work and anxiety (as discussed in Chapter 4). If failure was our responsibility then so must be our path back to prosperity!

It remains that when economic and financial hardships strike, people often succumb to feelings of dread, depression and anxiety. De Botton (2014: 49) considers news media to be central in this equation 'In its stoking of our fears'. As De Becker (2002: 159) once quipped, 'It would be interesting if the standards of Truth in Advertising were applied to television news as they sometimes are to television commercials'. News media 'cruelly exploits our weak hold on a sense of perspective' creating situations where media audiences are not provided with the information or resources to 'compare an apparently traumatic event in the present with the experiences of humanity across the whole of its history . . . in order to work out what level of attention and fear it should fairly demand'. We should remember in those moments when the news media is able to grab our attentions and confuse us that 'hardly anything

is totally novel, few things are truly amazing and very little is absolutely terrible' (De Botton 2014: 49–51). This is perhaps easier said than done as human rights disasters unfold before our very eyes in ways that give disastrous events traumatic immediacy. Or, alternatively, we could follow the advice of De Becker (2002: 157) and turn away from the news entirely and instead

> be connected to your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers; talk with them about events, and thus get your emotions out, get your feelings felt, get clarity and perspective; in short, bring real life into your life, as opposed to being a cog in a for-profit business that nurtures and feeds upon your anxiety.

As most self-help anxiety manuals will tell you, when you are 'worrying' you are protecting yourself from anxiety and sheltering yourself from the full implications of realising your greatest fears and terrors (Leahy 2005: 1–9). Worriers are pro-active, they plan (meticulously and too much) in advance and have the remarkable ability to imagine all kinds of disasters, crises and terrors. But this, as any rational person knows, is ridiculous. CBT methods for overcoming anxiety stress that having a positive outlook is just as legitimate or potentially real as negative outlooks. The media, unfortunately, plays a specialised role in the age of anxiety. As Virilio (2002: 23) has argued, we live within the walls of 'the black museum of journalism'. We argue that there is no need to turn off our computers or televisions. Indeed, we may find more truth in the narratives of popular fiction than we ever could in the supposedly bias-free zones of corporate news-making. Movies like *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *American Psycho* (2000) and television shows like *Girls, Don't Trust the B***** in Apartment 23*, and *2 Broke Girls* are able, often through the medium of traumatic humour, to translate some of the social and cultural complexities of the GFC and its fallout in a popular, globally recognised format for mass-audience consumption (see Chapter 6).

What is remarkable about the report on Stephen King's comments regarding the Titanic dimensions of the GFC and its ongoing consequences is the public interest and concern that can be found in the online post-article comments. We found the Evans-Pritchard (2015) article in the British conservative newspaper *The Telegraph*. The post-article blog

features some 1646 comments. Some are vitriolic and dismissive of either the Left- or Right-wing political establishments. Yet others engage with threatening global issues and consider their impact on our abilities as ordinary people – day-to-day and paycheck-to-paycheck workers, civilians, consumers – to cope and survive a recession caused by the government, their organisations and major corporations. Consider this comment from a user with the screen-name 'andywade':

> Who would have thought that destroying industry and demolishing the welfare state would produce a culture where people save for a rainy day rather than spend money in the economy! They really do believe that turning half the population into serfs and the other half into hoboes should have caused an economic miracle. It's hilarious. They've created a world of thrifty misers, and are now hoist on their own petard (sadly so are the rest of us). Oh well – roll on 'Operation Weimar' – printing money and spending it up the wall, because printing money and handing it to the rich didn't screw things up enough for them! (cheerfuly [sic] awaits the crowd of people ranting about how this is the inevitable result of allowing the plebs to eat AND drink AND sleep in beds . . . the luxury!). (Evans-Pritchard 2015)

Here we see many of the same issues and concerns identified by the Occupy movement – how can politicians and big business abandon people in low socio-economic classes in the name of economy *strengthening*, social reorganising and business profiteering? How can we debate *bailouts* when many in the US cannot afford healthcare, food or heating? Why have our lives been rendered *disposable*? (see We are the 99 percent, n.d.). Occupy thrust these issues into the media spotlight in 2011 through protests on the streets of New York, most notably Wall Street. Key concerns shared by the movement have since been articulated in academic fields, particular through the language of precarity and dispossession. For Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013: 197) collective assembly in the streets is a type of response to the ways in which certain populations have been rendered disposable, 'deprived of a future, of education, of stable and fulfilling

work, of even knowing what one can call a home'. Their presence is a reminder: '"We are still here," meaning: "We have not yet been disposed of. We have not slipped quietly into the shadows of public life: we have not become the glaring absence that structures your public life"' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 196).

The 'spectre', according to Žižek (2014a: 41), that is haunting the successful procession of capital is the 'neoliberal' ideology of *debt*. Debt in neoliberalism should be conceived as extending far beyond merely money markets to 'all areas of social life' where 'health and education', voting decisions and employment decisions all work as 'investment' decisions that contribute to the overall 'capital', and therefore *value*, that each individual possesses. Workers become far more than their labour power, they are 'entrepreneur[s]-of-the-self', and are responsible for the making, and consequences, of an enormous amount of decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their loved ones profoundly (Žižek 2014a: 42, and see; Kelly 2006). It is a way of *doing* selfhood that understands neoliberalism 'not as a coherent ideological or political movement' but rather 'a rationality of government that has been successful in transforming the practices of government in Anglo/European contexts, partly due to its capacity to articulate narratives of "personal autonomy, enterprise and choice"'(Kelly and Harrison 2009: 238). As Lazzarato (in O'Shaughnessy 2012) argues, neoliberalism produces entrepreneurs of the self via the production of people as *precarious*. Ordinary people are responsible for their fates to the extent that it is imagined that they can control their 'employability', 'debts', 'the drop in one's salary' and 'the reduction in social services according to business and competitive norms'. Life becomes, for Žižek (2014a: 42), a game of managing and controlling for risks despite the fact that ordinary citizens are the least well placed to manage the (economic, environmental, social) threats to their well-being that they face (more on this in Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

In this way we may come to believe that we are contributing forces in many of the disasters, crises and terrors that we face through our inability to rationally incorporate an effective response that fits adequately within our sphere of possible choices. As such, those dangers that lie well beyond our control become cacophonous, dreaded and

seemingly hopeless. Consider, for example, this comment from user 'ChuckFinley' in the same post-article blog:

> When interest rates are near zero, that means that nobody wants to borrow money to grow their business or to start a new business. That suggests that something other than playing with the money supply is what is needed. My modest proposal is that the burden of government regulation should be reduced somewhat. *My actual suggestion is that we should set fire to the EPA* [Environmental Protection Agency] *buildings and then shoot the bureaucrats as they come running out the doors* . . . the regulations that cost businesses the most money, time and effort to comply with and which produce the least benefits could be relaxed somewhat, at least until the economy picks up a bit. (our emphasis, in Evans-Pritchard 2015)

Indeed, the relationship between economic wellbeing and environmental protection has received considerable attention. Naomi Klein (2014) recently declared that our desire for a form of capitalism that both preserves our wealth and the environment is an illusion. She believes that these goals cannot coexist and at some point we must seek a solution that substantially sacrifices one or the other. For Klein (2014: 3) we tell ourselves 'comforting stories' about how if we keep searching we will find a scientific or technological 'miracle' that will 'magically . . . suck the carbon out of the skies' and 'turn around the heat of the sun'.

> Once carbon has been emitted into the atmosphere, it sticks around for hundreds of years, some of it even longer, trapping heat. The effects are cumulative, growing more severe with time . . . so much carbon has been allowed to accumulate in the atmosphere over the past two decades that now our only hope of keeping warming below the internationally agreed-upon target of 2 degrees Celsius is for wealthy countries to cut their emissions by somewhere in the neighborhood of 8–10 percent a year. The 'free' market simply cannot accomplish this task. Indeed, the level of emission reduction has happened only in the context of economic collapse or deep depression. (Klein 2014: 21)

Who would be willing to sacrifice their financial wellbeing in the name of saving something as intangible as the environment? When it comes

to economic concerns, financial loss and a general lack in money and resources, the very human response of dread and anxiety seems to travel alongside. Even a casual glance at the academic literature shows that whenever recessions have occurred significant mental health consequences have followed. In sociology in the 1930s, neuroses became a topic of popular concern. The world had witnessed war, economic disaster and was soon to witness the rise of fascism across Europe. Karen Horney (1939: 426–427) in *The American Journal of Sociology* argued that understanding 'neurosis' had 'recently' become more important as it branched away from being exclusively a diagnosis for people with serious psychiatric symptoms. In the late 1930s it was being understood as far more than this and far more than the usual social symptoms of 'phobias, depressions, fatigue, and impotence'. Indeed, neurosis was at its most diabolical when it appeared as 'character trends of a particular nature'. Five years later, at the peak of World War II, Kurt Riezler (1944: 489) wrote in the same journal about 'a fear' that is a 'fear *of* something or *for* something: *of* illness, loss of money, dishonour; *for* his health, family, social status' (emphasis in original). Anxious fears have an indefinite character, often taking the form of a fear of not only these tangible things but also a fear of the fear that we feel. 'It can be described', Riezler (1944: 491) argued, 'as fear of everything for everything or of nothing for nothing', paraphrasing the descriptions of Kierkegaard offered a century earlier. Where a soldier in the battlefields of World War II France might withstand an enormous amount of fear and danger and fight with bravery, it is the returning soldier who so often succumbs to neurosis – 'The most courageous soldier, able to face any direct threat of death, may tremble in an indefinite situation of unknown and unidentifiable dangers' (Riezler 1944: 493).

According to Kletzer and Litan (2001), even the relatively strong western economies of the late 1990s were not immune to widespread worker anxieties over fears of economic downturns, employment uncertainty and wage equality. With the great prosperity of the 1990s as the world recovered from the recessions of 1990–1991 came globalisation and a host of associated forces that included 'foreign direct investment', 'cross border financial flows', various forms of 'economic liberalization',

the lowering and sometimes eliminating of tariff barriers, and technological advancements all of which facilitated increasingly fluid international travel and communication (Lee 1996: 485).

From these forces came the associated social consequences of an increasing gap between the global rich and the global poor, a continuation of the 1980s corporate lust for profit at any cost, and the emergence of computer and internet technologies and the development of what we today know as Web 2.0 and social networking websites. During this time we were hearing about an *end of history* as all of the big ideological disagreements had supposedly been overcome (Fukuyama 2006). Perhaps ironically, we were also learning of a clash of civilisations (Huntington 1993). Huntington's metaphor of a 'clash' seemed prophetic in the aftermath of 9/11 as seemingly incompatible ideologies encountered each other in the form of Islamic terrorists bringing about the destruction of an American economic target (the Twin Towers) and significant damage to a political target (the Pentagon). The plane that crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania was thought to be heading to the White House, and another missing plane on 9/11 had been thought to have been heading to Hollywood. Economics, politics, military, culture – rarely has there been a more carefully considered and planned day of violence in history. Huntington (1993: 22), for his part, agreed that the conflicts we faced were/are primarily cultural:

> the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.

If you casually follow the mass media or perhaps public social networking platforms like Twitter, who could argue?

But, certainly, history had not ended and declarations of a clash of civilisations were empirically problematic. On 9 November 1989 the

Berlin Wall fell, and Fukuyama's dream of an end of history appeared possible: 'liberal democracy had, in principle, won'. It *appeared* this way. According to Žižek (2009: 86–87):

> the search was over; that the advent of a global, liberal world community lurked just around the corner; that the obstacles to this ultra-Hollywood happy ending were merely empirical and contingent (local pockets of resistance where the leaders did not yet grasp that their time was up). In contrast, 9/11 is the main symbol of the end of the . . . happy '90s. This is the era in which new walls emerge everywhere, between Israel and the West Bank, around the European Union, on the US-Mexico border.

Walls that keep dangers out, however, keep dangers in as well, reminding us that clashes are more often found *within* civilisations. Walls see the anxieties of the prosperous realised in material form. We have witnessed this most recently in the election promise of Donald Trump to build a wall between Mexico and the US (which 'Mexico is going to pay for') (Imbert 2015). The idea of a wall captures and perpetuates the anxieties of Trump's followers regarding immigration. Trump feeds these anxieties with statements like: 'When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people' (in Imbert 2015). If we believe Trump, the polluting influences of people from Mexico places Americans in danger and makes their cities places of danger, fear and anxiety.

Yet it could be argued that our cities are places of danger, fear and anxiety regardless of whether any dangerous Others move there or not. The very architecture of our cities mirror our public anxieties about safety and security. Cities are spaces of economic opportunity and affluence, home to business, workers and public commons. They are also home to criminals (both regular and corporate), terrorists and violence. In the post-GFC world, cities have been home to *Occupy*, the *Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter* and other protest organisations, particularly those that form part of the '99 percent' global movements (see 'We are the 99 percent', n.d., and see Chapter 5). For De Muynck (2004: 8) security is the neurosis that

structures our lives in Western cities where 'fear is the driving force behind the (re)organization of public and private space'. Where tall buildings may have once sparked images of superiority, power and prowess, they now represent 'impotence and fear' (Küng 2004: 88). The 9/11 attacks showed us that the Penthouse suites are the first in the firing line. The GFC showed that these buildings house the people who will most betray us when there are ill-gotten gains to be made. What once made cities appear strong, now makes them appear weak. For Bauman (2005: 73), we may even say that 'the sources of danger have moved into the heart of the city. Friends, enemies . . . now mix and rub shoulders on the city streets'. But our city streets are not the only locations where this occurs.

Social Networking Anxieties

The threats we face, whether real or imagined, are rarely restricted to corporeal spaces. They are chimeric and spectral, and filter through from the events taking place in the *real* world, via the media and simulcast in our imaginations. In terms of anxiety, online social networking may prove more costly than beneficial for many. We probably all know people who have sworn off *Facebook* or *Twitter* because it is a minefield for social faux pas, trolling and misunderstandings and living in these spaces requires sacrificing privacy and the disclosure of personal information (De Souza and Dick 2009; Shin 2010). And where technology has advanced anxieties usually follow (see Meuter et al. 2003; Pierce 2009; Rosen et al. 2013). Social networking websites have played a starring role in the disasters, crises and terrors of the twenty-first century. As Howie (2011a, 2012) has elsewhere argued, 9/11's extraordinary impact is attributable to the time and space conditions in which it entered the world – an intensely mass-mediated and filmed society experiencing a boom in social networking technologies. Cameras were already rolling and bloggers were blogging as the Twin Towers burned and then fell to the ground (Howie 2012; see Miller 2007: 79). It was in the months and years after 9/11 that Al-Qaeda's social media strategy became apparent (Ciovacco 2009; Weimann 2004, 2006).

The ISIS threat has captured the public's imagination in Western societies. We have witnessed media images of young people leaving seemingly stable, middle-class homes to go and fight with extremists in Iraq and Syria – some share the ethnic lineage of these nations, but many do not. As Hurley (2015: 13) warns in a conservative Australian newspaper, 'Australia is fighting a cyber war for the hearts and minds of would-be teen terrorists'. Recruited through social media websites, *Twitter* reportedly a first-choice destination for ISIS recruitment, young Westerners tell family and friends that they are attending some routine event – work, school or perhaps fishing – only to board planes to war zones. By some accounts, radicalising young people in the US would follow ostensibly *real* ISIS fighters on Twitter, ask them questions about life in Syria and Iraq and what they should do if they wanted to 'join the fight'. Some were advised to fly to Turkey and arrive in a border town near Syria where they could again log onto Twitter and, through the networks of the fighter that they were speaking to, receive a lift from Turkey to the ISIS war zone (Stern and Berger 2015: 160). Intelligence agencies undoubtedly struggle with the various dimensions of the risk posed by these radicalising young people – *What happens if they become radicalised but stay at home and continue to become increasingly radicalised? What happens when they leave the country to fight in a foreign war, but then want to return home? How do we stop them falling into the webs of ISIS propaganda and recruitment online?* Intelligence and counterterrorism agencies will continue to shift the 'front line of the war against terror . . . to keyboards and computer screens instead of mosques and community centres' (Hurley 2015: 13).

Stern and Berger (2015: 147) write of the 'Electronic Brigades' of terrorism in the twenty-first century. Indeed, ISIS has proven itself highly skilled in the art form of spreading terror and anxiety through online propaganda:

> Arabic-speaking fans who turned to Twitter for the latest scores [at the football/soccer World Cup] discovered that their party had been crashed by ISIS. Mixed in with the highlight pictures and discussions of scores were shocking images of ISIS fighters executing hundreds of captured and unarmed Iraqi soldiers . . . The next day, as ISIS consolidated its hold on Mosul . . . worried Iraqis took to Twitter amid rumours that the militants

> were closing in on the capital city. When they searched in Arabic for 'Baghdad,' they were greeted by ISIS banners containing the threat 'we are coming' and images of a black flag flying over the Iraqi capital. (Stern and Berger 2015: 147–148)

Such a strategy was also deployed for Western audiences. In the wake of media announcements in July 2014 that the US would soon commence air strikes on ISIS targets, the terror group launched a propaganda campaign on Twitter designed to intimidate and terrorise Americans. Deploying the hashtag '#AMessagefromIStoUS', ISIS supporters promised retaliation on American soil (Stern and Berger 2015: 159).

In his seminal analysis of the ISIS threat, counter-terrorism strategist and scholar David Kilcullen (2015: 69) argues that the present-day consequence of a decade of ill-executed, post-9/11 wars in the Middle East has been the threat posed by 'domestic radicalisation' or what he calls 'remote radicalisation'. Indeed, Kilcullen believes that a significant danger is posed by 'terrorists exploiting electronic means to project violence into our societies by mobilising vulnerable individuals'. He points to Nidal Hassan in Fort Hood, Texas who was a US Army psychologist who opened fire on his colleagues (but see Howie 2011a: 172); the Tsarnaev brothers who executed the Boston Marathon bombings; Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale who carried out the 2013 Woolwich cleaver attack on a British soldier; Man Haron Monis who was responsible for the siege in a Sydney *Lindt* café and is particularly noteworthy due to his advanced age (50 years old) which likely resulted in him not being considered by intelligence authorities a likely candidate to carry out his violent desires; and the Kouachi brothers and their massacre at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* as examples of a recent wave of low-casualty, but high-profile, terrorist incidents inspired by social networking calls from ISIS leaders in Iraq and Syria. These extremists worked independently, without direction, and were deeply motivated and inspired by the actions and ideologies of ISIS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Kilcullen (2015: 69) notes some startling similarities between these radicalised Westerners:

> many had a history of petty criminality; several were adult converts to Islam; many were known to police for previous extremism; several attacked Jewish

> or military targets; all had active social media accounts; most acted independently without a larger support network; and (obviously enough) nearly all were military-aged males, mostly of Arab descent, with Muslim names.

What is unusual about this basic profile is that it does not amount to something unexpected. Indeed, the media has since before 9/11 suggested that this is precisely what we should be looking for (or at) in attempting to understand who will commit acts of terrorism. It is precisely this style of profiling that had led to so many idiotic, racial and discriminatory attacks directed at people who were perceived to be Muslim after 9/11. How, then, did they fall through the cracks? Kilcullen (2015: 70) notes that these types of radicals are 'extraordinarily difficult' to detect unless we are willing to 'accept massive intrusion by security agencies into every aspect of our daily lives, online activity and social networks'. In short, in order to be truly secure we would need to sacrifice many of our democratic freedoms, the very institutions that contemporary terrorists have sought to attack. Indeed, most would agree that suspending many of the key features of a democracy in the name of fighting terrorism would be an odd own-goal. For some, then, we should only suspend some of the democratic freedoms of selected groups of people which, in the present fearful and terrorism-centric climate, will invariably lead to the targeting of Muslim citizens, broadly – and visually – defined. It is here that we run the risk of transforming the *niggle* that is the current threat of terrorism into something potentially devastating:

> Some Western governments have orientalised Muslim immigrant populations, treating them as alien, exotic, potentially violent implants which have to be handled with kid gloves via self-appointed intermediaries who are often old, male and socially and religiously conservative. This approach is understandable, but it treats young people, who may already feel marginalised and disenfranchised within the wider society, like second-class citizens in their own communities, and it impedes the integration of those communities into the wider society. If anything, it may encourage radicalisation. (Kilcullen 2015: 71)

This type of discrimination is evident in Trump's campaign promise to lock down borders banning all Muslims from entering the US, 'until our

country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on! We have no choice'. Trump warns: 'You're going to have many more World Trade Centers if you don't solve it – many, many more and probably beyond the World Trade Center' (Fox News 2015b). In this context Muslim immigrants are not only orientalised but depicted as *potential* terrorists. As Paul Wilkinson (1977) long ago argued, democracies are, by their nature, vulnerable to terrors, disasters and crises of all kinds. We probably can completely shut out many of our terrors and fears from our societies if we really want to, but we may find ourselves no longer living in a democracy if we succeed.

The Trump Phenomenon in an Age of Neoliberalism/Neoconservativism

It is fair to say that something remarkable is happening in the US at the time of writing. Americans are embracing non-establishment candidates in their pre-selection processes for their upcoming presidential elections. Donald Trump has mobilised the deep-seated anxieties that many people apparently have towards people who appear to be *not from here* – a metaphor found in almost every democracy which works as the other side of the coin to that ambivalent and uncertain word 'we'. It is, as contemporary sociology has taught, a matter of *US vs. Them* in anxious social relations between diverse religions, social groups, nationalities and skin colours (Poynting and Perry 2007/2008).

Trump's campaign seems designed to induce fear, prejudice and social disharmony as solutions to complex global problems like terrorism, economic crises and the movement of peoples across borders that inevitably follows. Our anxiety, in the Trump way of thinking, is a good thing. The fear we feel should perhaps be trusted and utilised to foster meaningful social change (use our rage to exclude social, racial and cultural groups that we don't like). Our anxiety may prove to not be the problem, but the solution.

The irony here is that this is not unlike how *neoliberalism* works. As documented by numerous writers and thinkers, neoliberalism has been widely identified as the impetus for problematic social and economic

change that has further marginalised minorities, the poor, the young, the old, those who are un- or underemployed, the indigenous, the physical unwell, the mentally ill and a host of other groups who don't fit a narrow definition of responsibilised social citizens in contemporary modes of capitalism. The irony is that neoliberalism is also posited as the solution to these problems. As the saying goes, *let the market sort it out*.

Miller (2007: 33) argues that 'Neoliberal mavens' claim that the key to neoliberal living is to build a society where widespread well-being and wealth is secured through the single-minded pursuit of profit alongside a 'mutual dependency' borne of a logical division of labour. In other words, those with limited neoliberal skills work hard in precarious employment for minimal reward whilst those economic risk-takers who deploy mountainous start-up capital in their pursuit of profits (i.e. the highly educated, ideas folk) reap the rewards. That is, of course, until their companies fail and those workers are left with little. Trade unions used to work as a check and balance in this process, but the so-called non-interventionist approach of neoliberal governments usually requires complex legislation that reduces trade union's power:

> Neoliberalism is opposed to any politics of labor, culture, or welfare, and is essentially agnostic about congressional politics, other than when governmental outlays are at stake. It can enlist philosophical liberals and conservatives, but some, for example, prayer-and-care communitarians, feel queasy about its rampant individualism and faith in the market, fearing that these may overrun church, family, community, and nation. (Miller 2007: 33)

It is here that US neoliberalism takes on dangerous dimensions. It is, theoretically, politically 'agnostic' until it seeks a handout or until it politically challenges Christianity in one of the most Christianised countries in the world. American neoliberalism must accommodate these conservative Christian social values (as Americans imagine them) in order to survive as a viable way to organise economic social relations. There is a further irony here since the communitarian and social ideals of Christianity often create socialist politics in many other countries,

but not often in the US. The end-game is that neoliberalism can often appear neoconservative in its operationalisation and day-to-day impact.

Žižek believes that we can track direct links between neoliberalism and neoconservatism. He illustrates this with the example of Amish communities in the US who allow the young people in their communities to go out and experience the decadence of the world after which they have to choose between a life of an ordinary American or the protected lifestyle of the Amish community. This seems like an ethical act by the leaders of Amish communities, but Žižek (2006: 209) insists that it is not. It is, instead, 'a fake choice if ever there was one'.

> When, after long years of discipline and fantasizing about the transgressive illicit pleasures of the outside 'English' world, the adolescent Amish are all of a sudden and unprepared thrown into it, they cannot but indulge in extreme forms of transgressive behaviour. And since, in such a life, they lack any inherent limitation or regulation, such a permissive situation inexorably back-lashes and generates unbearable anxiety.

It is, therefore, a 'safe bet' that after a few years of decadence, young Amish men and women will return to the regulated life of their communities. Indeed, '90 per cent of the adolescents do exactly that'. Žižek believes that something quite similar is at work in neoconservative circles in the US. After witnessing the decadence of permissiveness – the hedonistic behaviour, the liberal policies to foreigners and people from low socio-economic classes – neoconservatives promote of simple life of small government, financial conservatism and improving one's lot through personal responsibilisation, as well as libertarian ideals, all of which can be integrated within neoliberal political ideology. Small government becomes free market economies. Financial conservatism translates to non-interventionist, market-driven finance (with strategic bail-outs). Improving one's lot and responsibilisation becomes code for putting personal gain and one's family first. The libertarians' right to own guns might be politically similar to the marijuana legalisation lobby (both of which have been incredibly successful in gaining political territory in the US).

Anxiety in Neoliberalism and the Emergence of the Tea Party

But it is the economic *responsibilisation* that is the malignant core at the heart of neoliberalism/neoconservative politics, and is the source of considerable inequality, risk and anxiety. Paradoxically, responsibilisation is then forwarded as our best chance at redemption. As Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 149) discuss,

> neoliberalism is established as the only rational and viable mode of governance. Predicated upon this doctrine, discourses of crisis become a way to governmentally produce and manage (rather than deter) the crisis. 'Crisis' becomes a perennial state of exception that turns into a rule and common sense and thus renders critical thinking and acting redundant, irrational, and ultimately unpatriotic. The boundaries of political space are determined as naturalized accordingly. Thus neoliberalism is not primarily a particular mode of economic management, but rather a political rationality and mode of governmental reasoning that both constructs and manages the realm to be regulated.

In other words systemic economic problems are presented as particular crises – the *fiscal* or *foreclosure* crisis, or a GFC, or perhaps even a liquidity crisis. The punchline being that the failure should not be viewed as systemic, but instead caused by *a few bad apples*. But for Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 150) the inevitability of crisis is built into neoliberalism itself.

The Tea Party emerged on the fringes of these debates. The Tea Party (T.E.A standing for 'Taxed Enough Already') emerged in the Spring of 2009 on the back of antitax, antigovernment mobilisation and protests that emphasised libertarian governance and personal responsibility (Rosenthall and Trost 2012: 10). Many of the Party members can be described as conservative republican, imagining President Barak Obama to be some sort of socialist. Trost (2015) argues that the emotions of the Tea Party are anchored in anxiety following cultural shifts in the US, which have lead Tea Partiers to claim that they felt like foreigners – marginalised, insecure and afraid – in their own country. The Tea Party

claimed that they have been dispossessed, echoing claims made by indigenous communities in the aftermath of colonialism.

This sense of dispossession is not completely at odds with the dispossession experienced by protesters involved in the global Occupy movements, the Arab Spring, M-15 or Indignados. These movements were a response to the ways in which people have been jettisoned from state systems, from 'modes of collective belonging and justice', through 'forced migration, unemployment, homelessness, occupation and conquest' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: xi). Just as the Tea Party took to the streets to reclaim a sense of political participation, self-governance and autonomy thought to be lost to them, Occupiers can be understood as having a stake in self-governance and all that it entails. Though this is perhaps where the similarities between the Tea Party and Occupy begin and end. In many respects their political commitments and make-up could not be more different.

Conclusions: Anxiety in a Neoliberal Age

> Why should we be worried about neoliberalization if we are not able to fully appreciate its deleterious effects? Foremost among these is the distinct capacity of neoliberalizing processes to result in violence. (Simon Springer 2015: 2)

Through our fieldwork (featured in Chapters 3, 4 and 5) we encountered a desire for community connections, meaningful relationships and allies, different forms of relationality, solidarity and belonging. These desires were found in various social movements and were echoed online. On the Spanish economic protest movement website 'May 15' (or M-15), the organisers decreed 'We need an ethical revolution. Instead of placing money above human beings, we shall put it back to our service. We are people, not products. I am not a product of what I buy, why I buy and who I buy from' (Democracia Real Ya 2015). Two of the particular goals of the M-15 movement were 'slowness', which would have the effect of cancelling 'Fast life', 'subordination of life to the acceleration of capital'; and 'Money-less', cancelling the 'economy of scarcity, financial tyranny,

inevitable austerity, zero sum games' (Castells 2012: 128). The performativity of the protests offered an occasion for thinking about 'freedom beyond the bounds of neoliberalism', beyond individualism and ownership (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 179). In the desperate search for alternative modes of life many people put their bodies on the line and faced arrest, abuse and state violence during the protests and encampments.

The anxieties, the protests, the politics, the terrorism and the wars that we have discussed in this chapter engage with and respond to different forms of violence. Whilst we understand the emergence of violence as different in these different contexts, a common thread connects our observations, and that is the role of 'neoliberalising processes'. This is perhaps our view from the West, from Australia where we write this book. But as Springer (2015: 3) astutely observes, neoliberal discourses have been shaped by a history of violence and anxiety. The growth of neoliberalism, he says, can 'be understood as a particular form of anxiety that first began as a response to the atrocities of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union, and a belief that government intervention had jeopardized personal freedoms and was thus responsible for the carnage'. The neoliberal response was an attempt to curtail such violence through a return to individualism, independent thought and autonomy born of the Enlightenment period. 'This historical context is somewhat ironic', as Springer (2015: 3) argues,

> From the perspective of contemporary critical geopolitics . . . insofar as structural adjustment, fiscal austerity, and free trade, the tenets of neoliberalism, are now 'augmented by the direct use of military force' . . . where the US military in particular provides the 'hidden fist' that enables the invisible hand of the global-free market to operate.

The 'hidden fist' of the US military is now, in the era of continuous news media and social networking sites, more visible than ever. On a daily basis we encounter the stories and images of the wars that are inexorably tied to our lives and economies. The Iraq war and the Abu Ghraib scandal were two of the most disastrous examples of US military involvement abroad captured in photographs, videos and weblogs for the world to remember. As we discuss in Chapter 7, the war in Iraq has had

lasting and tragic consequences for the Iraqi people. Iraqi women in particular have paid a high price for the war, which we have witnessed from afar through the weblogs written by Iraqi women. In the context of the Occupy movement, online spaces provide particular possibilities for young people to articulate a sense of self and the challenges they face in shaping a life and a future. For the Black Lives Matter movement social media has supported consciousness raising, black solidarity and awareness of the racism and everyday violence black people struggle against, including police violence.

In this context, Guy Standing has warned that a new precarious class is emerging comprised of vulnerable young people from around the world (Standing 2014: 22–23). Whilst many have questioned the idea of 'the precariat' as a homogenous class, the argument serves to highlight the disturbingly high numbers of young people living precarious lives: working in temporary jobs, living in debt and unable to imagine a desired future through the choices available (Walsh 2015: 59). Growing numbers of young people around the world are aware of the precarious times in which they live. For instance, young people of so-called Generation-Y are attempting to guard against the challenges of limited employment opportunities and protracted life transitions by gaining educational and vocational qualifications (Ting 2015; see also Kelly and Kamp 2015: 20). As youth unemployment continues to rise, so too does participation and attainment in education (Walsh 2015: 21). However, educational qualifications do not necessarily ensure employment or remove young people from conditions of precarity – young people may be the 'last to be hired . . . the first to be dismissed' (Walsh 2015: 28). It is to the stories of young people navigating their futures in precarious times that we now turn.

3

Precarious Futures: Young People and the Global Financial Crisis

We set out in 2014 and 2015 to explore and better understand the consequences of the GFC for young people. It seemed to us that the GFC was having an incredible and difficult-to-track and quantify impact on people who ordinarily may have been well-placed to absorb its most far-reaching damage. We had goals of collecting stories of resilience, survival, living-rough and bravery under fire during what was a period of great financial turmoil that seemed (if you listen to mainstream media reports) to be improving and returning back to normal. For some, it was a matter of 'business as usual' (Burton 2009: 188) – the GFC happened, it hurt, but getting depressed about it won't help. Others were 'bouncing back', down but not out, they lost the battle but not the war (Serhan 2014: 16). Others talked about 'resilience' (Swanstrom 2008: 4; Taylor 2009). Naturally, when these arguments are made, economists, politicians and a whole range of experts and scholars are speaking in systemic terms. Most commentators paid little attention to the human consequences of the GFC, which have been immense.

There are some exceptions to this, of course. There was a time when considerable media attention in the US was devoted to foreclosures and the devastation wrought on families, and various scholars were quick to

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acknowledge that it was the human devastation that should take precedent over concerns for the future of business or capital (see Isidore 2008; Whelan et al. 2010). But it is easy to forget that it is people who have borne the brunt of the corporate inhumanity that we collectively became aware of in 2007 and 2008 (something that anti-globalisation protesters had warned against for years). Consider the Wikipedia entry for the 'Subprime mortgage crisis' as evidence of our short memories:

> The United States (U.S.) subprime mortgage crisis was a nationwide banking emergency that coincided with the U.S. recession of December 2007 – June 2009. It was triggered by a large decline in home prices, leading to mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures and the devaluation of housing-related securities. Declines in residential investment preceded the recession and were followed by reductions in household spending and then business investment. Spending reductions were more significant in areas with a combination of high household debt and larger housing price declines. (Wikipedia, n.d.)

'Banking emergency'; 'mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures'; 'the devaluation of housing-related securities'; 'reductions in household spending'. The situation was worse apparently where 'high household debt' combined with 'larger housing price declines'. These are the codes for the terrible pain that people throughout the world felt. Stated sociologically, people could not afford their homes anymore after being lured into a market they could not afford and were shown no mercy when they faced cash-flow problems. Suddenly, the homes they couldn't afford weren't worth anything – or worth far less than what they paid. Eventually, these people could not afford the expenses of everyday life. So their homes were taken from them and their lives turned upside down. The foreclosures were felt disproportionately by people who benefit little from the way society is organised. Indeed, at no point does this Wikipedia entry deal in any way with the human suffering caused by merchant bankers and finance professionals, and their political allies (and see Howie 2012: 112–132).

This chapter is about remembering the devastation of the GFC in terms of the human cost. The GFC was a catastrophe for people in many

parts of the world and trickle down effects will likely be felt for some time to come. We may be able to count the money, do the math and come to terms with the equations at play in crashing the economy, but will we ever understand the extent of the suffering, the depression and anxiety, the feelings of worthlessness, the plans postponed, the substance abuse, and the suicides? If we fail to understand these things then we also miss an opportunity to understand what it really means to bounce back as people, as a society. Failing to understand the trauma means failing to appreciate the resilience.

This chapter tells the tales of seven people living, studying and working in California in a world that can be indefinitely described as *after the GFC, post*-GFC. Each moved to California for more opportunities for study, relationships and employment. Whilst California has its own problems, it is a glimmering beacon for people from impoverished cities and towns across the US, perhaps even a 'City of Quartz' as one writer described it (Davis 1990). Our respondents live in the Bay Area of Northern California but have come from all over the US, usually in the months and years prior to our interview with them. We will introduce you to each of these people as the chapter progresses.

Their stories are about doubt, uncertainty, anxiety and fear as they transitioned between significant life milestones. Most of the respondents were finishing secondary schooling when the GFC landed and were preparing (or not) for college, employment and life in a doubtful society and a nation that prioritises personal responsibility and personal failure as a social sickness. Some came from privileged backgrounds, others came from poverty. The town, and the region, where this research takes place is a heady blend of marginalisation and wealth. It is a place of technology and innovation, unbridled capitalism and money speculations, as well as gentrification, systemic and racialised disadvantage, and homelessness. It has also been home to a suicide cluster and an echo cluster amongst young people. We tell these stories with a strong sense of these contradictions and the irony it produces. We intend for these stories to unsettle, but also provide hope. The anxiety felt by these (mostly) young people becomes their drive and motivation for living their lives better and not necessarily in the ways their parents hoped.

The Anxiety in the Middle

Prins et al. (2015: 1352) write of spikes in mental health disorders in the middle of the socio-economic spectrum. 'There is evidence', they write, 'that individuals near the middle of the social hierarchy suffer higher rates of depression and anxiety than those at the top and bottom'. The authors add that, according to the evidence, it is somewhat unclear as to why this is the case. One can well imagine, however, the social mechanisms at play for those in the middle in the simplest terms – folks in the middle have much to gain, and much to lose. They get hit with both ends of the neurotic spectrum – worrying about what's behind us promotes melancholia. Worrying about what's ahead makes us anxious. There may be, perhaps, a relative peace to be found in only worrying in one direction. This is despite countless studies showing that there remains a strong connection between socio-economic status and mental and physical well-being. But those in the middle may be more susceptible to illnesses of introspection or 'internalising affective disorders' (Prins et al. 2015: 1352). In short, people in the middle may be more prone to feelings of hopelessness and withdraw from their worlds.

The people we spoke too had been significantly affected by the GFC, but had nonetheless persevered, even innovated and flourished, amidst hardship and turmoil. We conducted the interviews in a college town that is home to an elite university, so most respondents attended the college. Some were from affluent backgrounds and households where parents were high-paid professionals. But many had arrived via alternative pathways. Some had benefitted from a family member's military service that provided for a college scholarship. These scholarships can be passed on to spouses and children. Many others had moved from outside California in the years prior to their degrees commencing either Californian community college or work for 12 months. The effect of this was qualification for California-based tuition fees. Non-Californian residents usually have to pay higher tuition at Californian universities. Students who followed these pathways usually came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and many were from minority communities.

The interviews were semi-structured and around one hour in length. We asked different questions of each story-teller depending on the

various pathways the interview took. We did decide on the same starting point for each interview, however. We asked questions to understand something simple that we felt gathered up complex dilemmas and possible stories that emphasised the meanings and consequences of the GFC for these (mostly) young people.

How did the Financial Crisis Affect your Plans for the Future?

What the GFC has made murky was their futures. How do we imagine a future after the GFC? What does the future look like when those institutions that we all rely on for well-being, prosperity and continuity suddenly appear uncertain, doubtful and ambivalent (Harris et al. 2010: 9; Wyn 2009: iii. See also: Kearney et al. 2015; Standing 2014; Walsh 2015)?

Carmel was a young woman from Southern California. At the time we interviewed her she was in the 18–25 age group and was early in her studies at the elite university in the college town where we conducted the interviews. As the conversation began, we asked Carmel about her plans for her degree and what she would do after her degree. She had a strong sense that she wanted to undertake graduate study in the future and she wanted to work in social justice. Carmel was already working in a challenging position at a youth home for boys that were sex offenders. Before long we had moved into a discussion of how the GFC had affected her life and her family's life. We asked Carmel whether she felt personally affected by the GFC:

> In a way. My parents own their own business and because of the decline in employment and everything that affected their business. I was working there. Obviously that was my parents' income which was my only real source of income, so in a way I was directly impacted by it. I wasn't working because I couldn't find work . . . It was not an essential business in any way. It's considered a hobby store, with RC cars and planes and trains. So it was a leisure, more like a recreational activity. So it was not really supported financially through anything, like a grocery store or anything mandatory. (Carmel, Southern California, interviewed 26 February 2014)

Carmel's family had been comfortable before the GFC. They were neither exceptionally wealthy nor poor. But in the simplest way, their livelihood was threatened by the economic downturn because it was associated with something non-essential, a luxury. Disposable incomes dropped markedly in the first years of the crisis in the US.

Carmel's story was the norm amongst the people we interviewed. When we spoke to Robert, a young man from Ohio who was also 18–25 years old, he told a similar tale of his family's financial stability being pulled out from under them. The GFC 'injected' uncertainty into his life and the life of his family:

> in 2008, my father works for the metals industries . . . The crisis hit. During that my dad was working for one company. He was basically controlling the whole West Coast operations of this metals company. It was the company he worked in, in Ohio, but he opened up business on the West Coast. He had this big deal with the Chinese at that point. Like a big deal. It was going to explode. But then the financial crisis happened and the Chinese . . . they just threw the deal away basically and my father, they basically cut the whole operation on my Dad's side. Basically my Dad's industry, the metals industry, a third of the whole labour force was cut during the financial crisis. (Robert, Ohio, interviewed 24 February 2014)

Robert was completing high school when this occurred and it threw his future into disarray. His plan had been to move in with his father in California once he completed high school. He was so confident in this plan that he did not apply for any colleges in Ohio. The uncertainty of this predicament filled him with dread and was for Robert 'the most stressful period of my life'. We explore Robert's story in detail in Chapter 4.

Yet Robert was one of the lucky ones. His father received unemployment benefits for a while and then he found a job after considerable effort and Robert was able to move to California after all. For many others, the GFC meant that they might face financial ruin at any moment. For Isabella, a young Latina woman from a small town in Northern California who was in the 26–34 age group, the GFC threatened her ability to plan for her future and her son's future:

> I was pregnant with my son. My job was [affected] a little bit because they were cutting hours and stuff . . . The services that I was receiving were cut. Like, when I told you my life turned around I was in rehab, there were people at rehab were getting cut because they didn't have funding. The funding for the services were cut. Welfare was cut. Food stamps were cut. (Isabella, Northern California, interviewed 25 February 2014)

According to Wacquant (2009), cuts of these kinds disproportionately affect minorities. The outcome for being on the wrong side of the economic crisis is stress and anxiety:

> Everything is stressful for me. Because I'm a single Mom, and I'm low income, and I'm pulling from all these different resources. But at any moment, one of those resources could drop out. So everything is stressful for me.

Even the most mundane situations, let alone full financial meltdown, can bring disadvantaged people like Isabella to the brink. She explained that 'literally, we have nothing to save. When we do have a little bit to save, life happens and, you know, you can't save it'. There have been times when Isabella's situation has improved because she picked up extra shifts at work or because she qualified for extra financial aid at college as a single mom from a minority community:

> Then I was doing so good. I was like I am so good right now. I have extra money in my savings account for once. And then my car breaks down and I had to pay $1000 to fix it. Okaaaaaay, that was nice while it lasted! Simple stuff like that. It [economic prosperity] doesn't trickle down like they say it does. I'm good now because I am a student. But if I was just working full time as a single parent with no education which a lot of my friends that I grew up with are, that's what they're doing. They're never going to be able to get ahead. Like never. It's always going to be paycheck to paycheck. And that's why I'm okay right now because I'm in school and I have extra resources, thank God. I'm just happy I went when I went because I was working full time and I wasn't making ends meet just for me before I even had my child.

As it was for Robert, 'stress' was the word that Isabella and most respondents used to describe the impact of the financial crisis on their lives. Indeed, for

Annabelle – an 18–25-year-old young woman from Southern California – 'stress' characterised every phase of her journey from high school to an elite college where she had recently commenced at the time of our interview. Whilst being stressed is a normal response to moving away from home to study at an elite college and feeling undecided about what one's major should be, the GFC has added weight to ordinary stressors such as these:

> It's been pretty stressful itself because of the transitioning from [Southern California] to here. It's been such a huge, huge, huge shift. (Annabelle, Southern California, interviewed 12 March 2014)

Annabelle described her future as 'blurry' – what should be her major given the doubtful economic climate that new undergraduates face? There's probably no jobs! So should I go to grad school? Grad school costs a bomb! *And with the prospects of there being no work when I graduate, might that not be the worst financial mistake of my young life?*

It is at this point that we really feel for young people like Annabelle. She was the picture of young, emerging and successful. She worked hard in high school, got the grades for admission to an elite college, and she was even able to skip part-time work in her first semester as her parents were prepared to support her considerably as she settled into her new life. But it's when she looked to the horizons that anxiety began to set in:

> When I hear other students say they are for sure going to grad school, I'm not sure if they have a lot of scholarship money or if they have a lot of money in the first place. But I just don't see myself going to grad school right away because I'll have that financial burden already [student loans for tuition], all these loans I'll have to pay. (Annabelle, Southern California, interviewed 12 March 2014)

She felt this way because of her parents' experiences of the GFC:

> I didn't actually know it at first because my parents, they don't talk to me about any of their financial situations . . . I was starting high school I believe. So I didn't know what was going on. My lifestyle at home didn't change

> much. I didn't feel it. But I know that my parents were struggling . . . My parents were trying to keep it as 'okay girls, don't worry'.

But Annabelle knew things were very bad in her household, and this weighed heavily on her mind as she started college:

> There was a lot more stress in the family. My parents weren't getting along. They started having some miscommunication issues. A lot of things were arising from the whole economic instability. (Annabelle, Southern California, interviewed 12 March 2014)

For Annabelle, economic instability translated into family and social instability. She may well bear the scars of these financially formative events for most of her life. She is a slightly anxious young woman – doing what she thinks she should to imagine a future that she wants. Her endeavour is her ticket to a less doubtful, less insecure life.

Preparing for Panic!

Stress can stimulate people to be proactive in the face of looming disaster or crisis (Sapolsky 2004: 200). Indeed, for Jamilla, a young woman aged 18–25 who was originally from El Salvador but spent part of her teenage years in South-Central Los Angeles, preparation and planning was the antidote to the stress of a fast-approaching future in the economic uncertainty of post-GFC America. Jamilla told us about her commitment to going the extra mile when she was in college: 'I was crazy about that. You have to'. She was 'working, studying full-time, and doing extra curriculas' to enhance her resume in every way she could imagine (Jamilla, El Salvador/South-Central LA, interviewed 10 March 2014). Jamilla also travelled the world, getting involved in unpaid internships, social justice organisations, and doing some extra study along the way for both life experience and also to enhance that all important list of achievements that might satisfy a prospective employer:

> I did Argentina. I came back here and finished school. And then I panicked. [laughter] And then I decided to go on the tangent and I enrolled in this

> archaeology program in Jordan. And I spent 6 weeks there. Then the next four months was in Israel, Palestine. Then I went to Denmark to take some Masters course. Then I went back to Israel to actually work and get some internship experience . . . Then I came here and panicked about my life some more [laughter].

The pressure to compete for grades, for jobs and a competitive resume that promised to deliver security, comfort and prosperity can be overwhelming for young people. Popular media often makes the predicament worse. A recent story that went viral throughout the world tells the tale of a University of Southern California (USC) student who *has it all*. The 20-year-old runs his own successful investment advice company that serves 32 clients, he is pre-med at a major university and wants to be a brain surgeon, and he has recently been added as a 'walk-on' to the elite USC basketball team (Schnell 2016). Of course, the praise and acclaim heaped on this student is enormous. The expectations and hopes it creates for those who witness it can be anxiety inducing and crippling.

In right-wing Australian media, we often witness reports of young property moguls (who invariably turn out to be members of youth wings of conservative political parties) who have amassed million-dollar property portfolios supposedly showing that 'it is possible for young professionals to get on the housing ladder' (Swain 2015).

> Miss Brennan has not been given any cash by her parents, though she did go to university she never graduated and has now dropped out, and she is even aiming to retire by 30. Miss Brennan said her success proves that it is still possible to buy property in Sydney. Her success and attitude are a direct challenge to others who believe otherwise, particularly in light of recent comments by Federal Liberal Treasurer Joe Hockey to 'get a good job that pays good money' if you want to buy a home.

This success was achieved supposedly by working at fast-food chains and cleaning people's homes. The pressure to perform, succeed and flourish whilst others floundered, and to avoid becoming consumed with anxiety and depression and ultimately fail, places an extraordinary burden on young people attempting to navigate a transitional period from schooling

to the workforce (and the transition to relationships, mortgages and children; in short, *adulthood*). As we continue to read the article, we learn that this miraculous story was made possible by her mother going guarantor on her loans – something only the most privileged enjoy.

As Kelly (2001, 2015) has argued, young people become *responsibilised* via complex forces that compel young people to make tough decisions about their future whilst also accepting that their futures remain doubtful, uncertain and difficult to imagine. This predicament, we argue, has been amplified by more than a decade of media saturation featuring tales of international terrorism, economic and environmental disaster, and the ongoing mental health crisis. The 'self', Kelly (2013) argues, must increasingly be thought of as an *enterprise*. We explore concepts like this in greater detail in Chapter 4. But for the moment we want to draw attention to the phenomenon that young people take on the tremendous burden of a future they have precious little control over. They live a life quite unlike their parents' for whom education and hard work would almost always equate to personal and financial success (see Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Giroux 2014; Campbell 2015; Robinson 2011).

And it is all too easy to forget the potential consequences of pushing the human body and mind too hard, especially for young people. There is an ongoing tragedy playing out in some of the elite schools of Palo Alto in the heart of Northern California's Silicon Valley. It is home to the social media revolution with major corporations including *Google* and *Facebook* hosting workplaces – or 'campuses' – there (Stone 2015). Palo Alto is also home to a suicide cluster and an 'echo' cluster, where there is a repeated suicide cluster in the same geographical locale within a decade (Rosin 2015). These clusters were not emerging in the high-tech employed classes where pressure is high and competitiveness paramount. Instead, these clusters occurred in local, elite high schools as young people welted in the intensely competitive climate where they jostle for positions in elite colleges and future careers as millionaires – or possibly billionaires – in the campuses of Silicon Valley. The favourite method for suicide? Throwing themselves under passing trains. The first cluster emerged in 2009 in the fires of post-GFC America. The second was in 2014 as people continue to suffer the consequences of economic contraction and a future of ongoing economic uncertainty (and see

Luthar and Barkin 2012). Schrecker and Bambra (2015) argue that the competitive, capitalist world is making us sick. Obesity, mental illness, austerity and inequality are all perhaps as much part of thriving as profits, market share and entrepreneurialism and innovation.

'Anxiety', writes De Botton (2004: 95), 'is the handmaiden of contemporary ambition because livelihoods and esteem depend on at least five unpredictable elements, five reasons not to count on either attaining or holding on to a desired position within the hierarchy'. These five reasons spark trouble for the *average* (or the above average) young person who depends on:

1. Talents that come and go and need to be built and maintained.
2. Luck
3. An employer
4. The employer's profitability and
5. The global economy (De Botton 2004: 96–103).

Indeed, '(r)ather than a sign of hysteria, steady anxiety may seem a plausible response to the real threats of the economic environment' (De Botton 2004: 104). Luthar and Barkin (2012: 429) argue that 'affluenza', a 'metaphorical illness' associated with a consumption obsession and an uncontrollable materialism and narcissism, is a common affliction of the affluent classes or 'upper-middle class, white collar families'. Children in these families demonstrated 'elevations' in substance use and abuse, depression and anxiety, and often are in need of behavioural or medical intervention (and presumably all of the pharmaceutical and therapeutic consumables that go with the affluent and their mental health concerns). Elite education also has a long history of clusters in suicides (Jacobs 2015).

But it is here that we should remember that major suicide clusters are also regularly found in locations that have endured a period of prolonged geopolitical conflict and violence or amongst people who have witnessed this violence. Suicide clusters are particularly prevalent among young people under 25 years old (Vitelli 2012). In Northern Ireland, young people struggle through what has been dubbed the life of 'Ceasefire Babies' – people who

were too young to remember the worst of the sectarian conflict there but who nonetheless grew up with the scars of protracted violence on their psyches. 'We were', McKee (2016) explains, 'the Good Friday Agreement generation, spared from the horrors of war. But still, the aftereffects of those horrors seemed to follow us'.

We argue that contemporary post-GFC society might share some of the qualities we see in societies bouncing back from war and violence: uncertainty, doubt, fear, terror and anxiety. Maladaptive strategies for coping. A sense of hopelessness. Wealth and status will not protect us from these disasters.

Resilience, Risk and Young People After the GFC

What might protect young people from these potential disasters? We asked Annabelle how she was avoiding these risks since she felt she was better at listening to the warnings offered by teachers and her parents when she was in high school:

> I don't know. I guess, do really good in school. Do a lot of internships and get experience and things like that. But for that I feel like I need to know what I want to do. [whispers] And I don't know! . . . I'm probably as lost as I have ever been in deciding my future. I've never felt so lost. (Annabelle, Southern California, interviewed 12 March 2014)

Whilst Annabelle's feelings of being lost were perhaps not unusual for a student in their first semester of college, it is clear that her feelings of uncertainty had a strong post-GFC dimension. Her gradual realisation that her parents were in more distress than they ever let on made her look at her future in different ways. She felt a personal responsibility that she saw most of her friends and siblings shun. But, as Pat O'Malley (2011: 5) argues, simply viewing an uncertain future in terms of risk is 'not enough'. We can no longer, perhaps, 'rely on probabilistic preventive regimes' for a sense of security and well-being.

We must, as Beck (1992) warned, approach a future filled with some calculable, but many incalculable, dangers:

> Here, uncertainty simply means those conditions where precise probabilistic forecasting is not possible. Of course, this is a crude binary, suggesting that either we have statistical calculation of the future or virtually no useful capacity at all to calculate . . . It combines the act of imagination to project actions into the future, and the application of an everyday calculus based on experience in order to detect potential hazards and opportunities to which they give rise. (O'Malley 2011: 5–6)

The basis of much of this style of thinking – a style that is indeed part of an anxious temperament – is Jeremy Bentham (1962) and the 'liberal duty of foresight' (O'Malley 2011: 5). The 'disposition to look forward', 'reasonable foreseeability' and 'negligence' as formalised in Western legal traditions together form an account of a world in which future disasters are, at least partly, our fault and our responsibility. *Mea culpa*!

O'Malley's (2010, 2011: 7) post-GFC work on 'resilient subjects' highlights the precarious balancing acts that need to be negotiated in order to flourish in neoliberal times. He wonders how we might imagine our futures when we are perpetually gripped by anxiety. O'Malley's (2011) fear is that 9/11 led to attempts to *bureaucratise our imaginations*. We should be able to foresee, and therefore forestall, the horrors that sit just over our proverbial event horizons. If there are dangers in our futures (and the events of the first decade-and-a-half of the twenty-first century suggest there are) then we need to predict their arrival, measure their possible impact, and ensure preparedness to the deepest decimal place. We must, it seems, always be ready for the worst (more on this in Chapter 5). 'Resilience', in O'Malley's (2011: 10) terms, involves 'enterprising imagination'. We need to, supposedly, learn to imagine a future where risks are not necessarily controlled or prevented. A future where danger, disaster and crisis is inevitable, but can be tolerated, withstood and where one can even flourish and find opportunity in its midst. Indeed, in this mode we should not imagine specific events or disasters, but instead adopt a demeanour where no matter what we have to face in the future, we

know we can handle it. Instead of the language of risk, we perhaps, instead, face challenges or dilemmas. However, it is easy to here identify the hallmarks of 'entrepreneurial, neo-liberal business models such as were developed in the 1970s' (O'Malley 2011: 10). You see, we need a productive, employable population flush with *wellness and resilience*.

For Isabella, the need to be personally responsible for her future and resilient in the face of possible – and *real* – calamities defined her approach to her multiple life roles of student, mother, reformed drug-addict, reformed gang member, minority and a host of possible future roles that she hoped would include *employee* and *social justice activist*:

> Right now, honestly, at this point I'm dealing with other issues with my son and stuff like that. I was starting to think about all that stuff last semester, but this semester I really had to take a step back and just focus on taking care of my son and myself. And it's like as a parent, student parent, these things come up. You just have to re-prioritise and then just go hard and get your head back in the game.

It was the arrival of her child that provided her with the motivation to make change and learn the lessons that have seen her leave behind a life of hedonism and criminality. Her child reminded Isabella that there was only one person that could help her, and that was herself. She started *paying attention*, since self-betterment comes from the *individual level*:

> I was talking about life . . . I think it does have to come from the individual level. I think that people have to, I don't want to cuss, I think they need to get their heads out of their asses and stop caring about what is being told to us in the media and what this person is wearing or this celebrity . . . I just think that people need to start paying attention. They don't pay attention. And if they started paying attention, and stopped just listening to everything that is on the TV in the news because it's all controlled by the same people that want us to get this certain sense of reality that's just not the case for most people. It just has to come on an individual level and it has to be individual but collective at the same time. I think that people need to start standing up and really educating themselves about issues and about what's really going on with the economy or what's really going on with the wage disparities and the income disparities.

Her notions of personal responsibility combined with a desire to foster a critical mind, one that was more socially aware. Personal responsibility, Isabella believed, enabled social responsibility and a deeper awareness of her classed and raced background. For example, Isabella had paid particular attention to the representations of Hispanic men and women on US television:

> It's horrible. And then the Latinos are always 'Cholos', they're always gangsters. It's like I can't. I can't! . . . And that's what we've been seeing our whole lives. I remember growing up I didn't see any, at least they have Dora now. And Diego. Which they speak Spanish . . . Dora the Explorer. And Diego which is cute because they are cartoons and I watch those with my son and there's not much bad stuff in them. Dora's cool. At least there is a little bit of representation in the cartoons now because I remember when I was a child growing up I didn't see any Latinos on TV. When I did they were gangsters, they were drug dealers, they were prostitutes. You know what I mean? It wasn't like there was a healthy image of Latinos represented on TV and still there is only a handful of shows that centre on Latino families.

Her sense of social responsibility started in her home in an attempt to break a cycle that is often played out in her community and many marginalised communities throughout the world. Marginalised people often experience lacks in education and employment opportunities. They are also disproportionately affected by crime, violence, and substance abuse. Young marginalised women are more likely to become pregnant as teenagers. Their children often grow up, in turn, with few education and employment opportunities. It remains that in places like the US (and places like Australia and the UK and most of Europe), poverty and marginalisation passes across generations and are felt disproportionately by minorities. *Resilience* for Isabella entailed an awareness of this cycle. Being educated provided her with the resources to help her son avoid a future born of racial and economic marginalisation.

Given that social disadvantage is often generational, we should not view it as a coincidence that anxiety and mental health problems are often generational too. This is the case in two senses: (1) there is a genetic

component to mental health problems and (2) disasters and anxieties felt by parents are passed socially and culturally to their children.

Genetically, some mental health problems are passed through bloodlines (Hettema et al. 2001; Kendler 1996). The equation is not a straight forward one though. Just because parents have anxiety does not guarantee that they will pass that to their children. But many people with anxiety or depression can find a genetic legacy in their relatives. There is also the question of the relationship between environment and biology – Kendler has explored this in depth. It is noteworthy here that parents also contribute to young people's propensity to develop anxiety through 'modelling behaviour' – seeing adults obsess, stress and be defeated by relatively trivial issues can create a similar set of behaviours in young people who witness it (Stossel 2014: 263). There is also considerable evidence that pregnant women who become highly stressed have stressed-out babies (Sapolsky 2004; Brand et al. 2006).

Second, there is compelling evidence that children (and adults) feel disasters, crises and terrors even when they are not direct victims of catastrophes. As Howie (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2012, 2015) has argued, *witnesses* of terrorism experience significant and far-reaching consequences at the hands of major terrorist attacks that were geographically distant to where they live or work. In the case of 9/11, Howie documented how terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, DC and a field in Pennsylvania left people in far-flung locations swimming in feelings of terror, anxiety and dread (three words that could easily be used synonymously). We have already written in these pages of the young people who grew up *after* the troubles in Northern Ireland – the 'Ceasefire Babies', the 'Good Friday Agreement generation', a disproportionate number of which have committed suicide (McKee 2016). Graphic novelist Art Spiegelman's career is testimony to the personal dimensions of traumas, some lived up close and some lived vicariously. In chapter one of this book, we were guided by Spiegelman's (2004: 1) account of post-9/11 Manhattan and waiting for the 'other shoe to drop'. We deployed it as a metaphor for a life lived under the weight of an anxious temperament. We also argue that we currently live in an *Age of Anxiety*.

Spiegelman's story does not end there. Indeed, his approach to graphically representing 9/11 in a comic book medium came about as

a result of his most famous work, *Maus*, where he retells the tales of his father of surviving Nazi concentration camps (Spiegelman 2003). With a gesture rich in allegory, Spiegelman depicts Nazis as cats and Jewish people as mice (and Polish people as pigs). It is a concept he revisits *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) and doubles as a metaphor for vulnerability, terror and anxiety. You see, he never experienced the Holocaust directly, but his relationship to the events is strong. He did witness 9/11 first-hand, whilst most of the rest of the world (and many in New York City) witnessed it on television (see Howie 2011a).

And consider the following media headlines in February 2016:

> New financial crisis 'certain', says former Bank of England governor Mervyn King. (The Age 2016)
> Will $4.6 trillion leveraged loan market cause the next financial crisis? (Cohan 2015)
> Apocalypse now: Has the next giant financial crash already begun? (Mason 2015)
> 2016: The year of the next global financial crisis? (Vardakoulias 2016)
> How the next financial crisis will happen. (Schwarzman 2015)

This is but the briefest sample. A Google search reveals an almost endless list of articles attesting to these and other financial calamities on the horizon. Young people today live in an age of economic and social uncertainty. This is what it means to be young in the second decade of the twenty-first century. No matter how hard you work, no matter what you do, financial ruin lies just around the corner. *How do we plan for the future, form relationships, hope to work, without losing our minds in these conditions?*

In many respects it is the hypermediation in the 21st century that has made victims out of people that were otherwise (mostly) untouched by disasters such as terrorism, financial collapse or environmental calamity. The tendency is then to rewrite other disasters through the lens of '9/11' or the 'economic downturn' or even 'the way things are' – that seemingly meaningless tautology that actually allows powerful symbolic conversations to occur in a multitude of spaces and between people of different social and cultural groups.

Gabriella, a recent graduate from the elite university in the college town where we interviewed her, aged 18–25 from the Central Coast of California, felt that whilst her family was spared the worst hardships of the GFC, it was impossible to be completely untouched by its fallout. Her brother, like Carmel's family, worked in a luxury industry as a wine specialist at a Californian vineyard:

> He had been working at one winery for two years and they shut down. He got laid off . . . my best friend's family, one of her uncles is a contractor and he was really, really devastatingly impacted by the bubble because he had invested in a bunch of houses with someone. He lost all the money behind that . . . completely financially ruined. (Gabriella, Central Coast California, interviewed on 11 March 2014)

Gabriella's first job when she completed her degree was with a 'Home Ownership Center' at a social justice organisation in the Bay Area of Northern California where she assisted people who had lost, or who were likely to lose, their homes during, and in the aftermath of, the GFC. She worked with mainly 'Generally low-income, Hispanic families'. She lamented a society that allowed for over 600,000 to be homeless, and another 10 million losing their homes (in some estimates) during the foreclosure crisis, whilst entire towns made up of McMansion style homes sat uninhabited. The latter was the case in the college-town of Merced in California's San Joaquin Valley which, as was detailed in a 2011 article in the *New York Times*, was 'one of the country's hardest hit by home foreclosures' (Brown 2011). The solution? Turn the empty McMansions into luxurious student housing for rock-bottom rent:

> While students at other colleges cram into shoebox-size dorm rooms, Ms. Alarab, a management major, and Ms. Foster, who is studying applied math, come home from midterms to chill out under the stars in a curvaceous swimming pool and an adjoining Jacuzzi behind the rapidly depreciating McMansion that they have rented for a song.

In Merced the devastation of home foreclosures and the market downturn provided a unique opportunity for young people to improve their lot in life.

Whilst 'facing a shortage of dorm space', rows and rows of 'luxurious homes' in 'overbuilt planned communities' stood empty (Brown 2011). We argue throughout this book that the GFC has meant ruin for some, but opportunity for others. The financial collapse also holds the possibility for something better to be built in its place. For young people, it is a chance to innovate and be entrepreneurial (see Chapter 4).

Brenton, an 18–25-year-old man from a poor family in New Hampshire in the North-East corner of the US – the other side of the country, as it were – had definite plans for his future and plans to be resilient in the face of sometimes overwhelming uncertainty and doubt. He *worked*. Worked *hard*, and only the best education and performance would do. He talked at length of his journey from community college and getting the highest grades possible so he could transfer to an elite college with credits. At the time of the interview he had his sights set on graduate school, but it had to be a 'top ten' graduate school. Otherwise, *what would be the point?* He wanted to give himself the best chances in the job market and employers, he believed, wanted not simply college degrees anymore, they wanted resumes chock-full of experience, volunteering and graduate educational achievements from elite schools:

> The stat two years ago when I looked it up was that 75% of PhDs in English do not get a job teaching. However, I have an excellent resume and early on I could go pretty much anywhere. I could be a copywriter. An editor. Or since my heart is really in teaching, I'll probably take the pay cut and go for high school teaching . . . by comparison [to other jobs he has worked] high school teaching is a posh job. (Brenton, New Hampshire, interviewed on 7 March 2014)

We asked Brenton at this point whether that was scary. He was so young, but was already talking about the sacrifices that would be necessary – he had to 'take the pay cut' in order to do what he really wanted to. 'I'd like to have a family someday', he responded. Not all futures are conducive to having a family, apparently.

We were shocked by our exchange with Brenton. Whether economically or socially factual, or accurate, or whatever, this was a young, hard-working man who had, through effort, landed at an elite college and seemed to have laid before him – for all objective intents and

purposes – a bright future. But he perceived his future to be reasonably bleak. He believed he was taking responsibility for his bleak future, however, with his reasonable planning. Sensible decisions, smaller ambitions, and the future is suddenly imaginable. As we kept speaking with Brenton, a remarkable back story emerged. The town where Brenton grew up

> actually has an Ivy League college. You've probably heard of it . . . My family didn't fit into the wealthy demographic. We lived out on the edge in the woods. A little house. Just me and my parents . . . I was one of the eight kids in town that actually made it into the low income bracket and get the free lunch deal at school. In most towns it's a reduced price lunch but because there were so few kids on the plan at my high school they just gave us all we could eat every day for free.

In Brenton's story we hear a familiar tale of benefitting from wealth whilst not necessarily possessing it. In Chapter 4 we tell a similar story about Clifton – a young black man from Detroit who grew up around *food deserts*. 'Food desert' is a metaphor for a suburban area in a poor part of, usually, a major city where supermarkets close because they are not profitable yet liquor stores remain. He too found comparative advantage in his disadvantage and resilience from his relative deprivation. As Brenton believed, whilst he didn't have privilege, he still benefited from it. He benefitted 'In a lot of ways, because all of my friends were college bound and I didn't have plans for college but I gained the skills necessary for it. I gained the love of literature' whilst living in a town with an Ivy League school that he would never have access to. He was, as disparagingly described in some sections of popular culture, a 'towny'. Definitively lower classed, unprivileged and destined for non-intellectual futures. But this wasn't the future Brenton wanted.

Indeed, as Brenton continued talking we heared the extraordinary lengths to which his family went to supplement their income and livelihood. When the GFC hit, Brenton's family was already living a 'subsistence lifestyle', piecing together a meagre income to get by consisting of a small annual amount from a family trust account, from fixing clocks and from various employment opportunities they would find. Brenton's parents would

> live off maybe seven grand a year. They did for many years and my Dad would fix clocks and make a couple of grand more. They lived a

> subsistence lifestyle . . . So my Dad would hunt. We'd eat deer instead of beef. Eat ramen noodles and 'Chef Boyardee' ravioli. We lived extremely poor. (Brenton, New Hampshire, interviewed on 7 March 2014)

This upbringing meant Brenton felt he had a strong survival instinct and the ability to flourish wherever he went. Brenton had a desire to leave despite being close to his family. He 'cleared out!' and followed the well-worn American tradition of 'Go west young man!' As Brenton's high school friends went on to elite colleges – including the Ivy League school in his home town – he went to California to 'flip burgers'. After working in food service for a few years he found his way to the elite West Coast college where we interviewed him. His journey is perhaps an ideal-type for practicing resilience. 'I treasure my options', was how Brenton describes the position he had fought for. His future seemed brighter than perhaps it once did because he had *earned options*. In a US and global future without guarantees, without certainties, fighting for the possibility of *choices* is powerful evidence of success. Indeed, he took this a step further and had adopted a disposition of 'I don't like to commit'.

'If risk was the policy and political hallmark of the first decade of the twenty-first century', writes Sandra Walklate and Gabe Mythen (2015: 144), '. . . as the second decade unfolded, that same policy and political agenda is being increasingly informed by the concept of resilience'. The title of their chapter on resilience in their latest book is 'Managing Terrorism'. They intend this title for its double meaning. As Howie (2009b: 45) has also argued, terrorism is a *contranym*. The word encompasses oppositional meanings. On the one hand, terrorism is the actual outbursts of violence. It is a term used to describe the exploding of bombs, the shooting of guns, and through those acts, the instilling of fear in a population (Furedi 2004, 2008). Terrorism, however, also involves the absence of these things – it is the literal word we give to our dread that these things *might* happen (but haven't). Terrorism is the name we give to our feelings of anxiety that bombings, shootings or the instilling of fear could possibly happen. It is our label for the cacophonous void that is too traumatic to fully confront. It is this second meaning that comes into play here.

Risk, it seems goes hand in hand with 'vulnerability and resilience' – it is our response to the dangers, disasters and crises of the twenty-first

century which will result in a witness to our behaviour standing back and judging whether we were, or were not, resilient in those moments and across time and space (Walklate and Mythen 2015: 145). Walklate and Mythen argue that hegemonic state-forces governmentalise our lives through 'the maintenance of the resilient State' instead of fostering a state of resilience that is individually developed in members of the public. Instilling the contradictory logics of neoliberal well-being, it seems, into the public mindset has become the policy key to unlocking a population capable of surviving ongoing catastrophe without collapsing. We must, as it were, drink the neoliberal kool-aid (Walsh 2015). Or so the tale goes.

Conclusion: The GFC and Hope

It is Gabriella's story that helps us conclude this chapter and build a bridge to what is to come in this book. We began discussing how she wished to become a medical doctor and work in marginalised communities. Gabriella had strong social justice values, despite growing up in the affluence of California's Central Coast. I suggested to her that perhaps we can have hope that the current generation of young people in college might be like her and are well placed to learn lessons from the economic disaster that befell the world in 2007 and 2008. Gabriella, however, believed there was a terrible competitiveness amongst the students at her college:

> They all work within groups so the groups share the answers and they don't give them to anyone else. Or they give other people the wrong answers sometimes. It's scary. Which I think is wrong because *there's a future in sharing ideas and working together.* (our emphasis, Gabriella, Central Coast California, interviewed on 11 March 2014)

Could it be that one of the worst financial collapses since the industrial revolution may have made us worse hoarders, greedier and more selfish? Maybe. But it's also produced the opposite of this. As the conversation continued we began to think about the roles that movements like Occupy

and Black Lives Matter have been playing in a society rebuilding after economic disaster. There was a strong Occupy movement in her local area, and every day she would walk by a 'tent embassy' of protesters:

> I don't know if it really had that much of an impact on me until there was protest of students and there was police and it seemed very unnecessary for the police to be so brutal . . . people just making a peaceful demonstration . . . I don't think that the tent city accomplished much other than media and press . . . *but some protest is better than none*. (our emphasis)

For Chomsky (2012: 24) the emergence of the Occupy movement was an 'extremely exciting development' representing a 'spectacular' and 'unprecedented' desire to see the world made in other ways, on other terms, perhaps with less greed, less anxiety and more human connection and empathy. 'If the bonds and associations that are being established in these remarkable events can be sustained', he argues, 'it could turn out to be a really historic, and very significant, moment in . . . history'. Occupy, you see, gives us hope. Hope that poverty is not an inevitable consequence of the affluence of some. Hope that we can work, live, build families and homes without it falling down around us. Hope that the other shoe doesn't need to drop. Indeed, the GFC may lead to other ways of performing our lives, and performing what it means to be part of a society with other people that we know to be just as fleshy and vulnerable as we are (see Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 176; Butler 2004).

In this chapter we have told the stories of seven young people who have followed different pathways towards their own uncertain, but possible, futures. The focus of the interviews was how these people had endured the GFC and even flourished in its aftermath, overcoming financial insecurity to arrive and succeed at an elite college on the US West Coast. Their stories are often remarkable and demonstrate the enormous resilience of these people when things get hard.

We want to transition to Chapter 4 by unsettling the positive stories we were able to tell in Chapter 3. We conclude with news in early 2016 of the terrible poverty that some Silicon Valley workers endure. They are

working their dream careers, but can't earn enough to live in even the most impoverished, but gentrifying, areas of nearby San Francisco and the rest of the Bay Area.

Zine website *Raw Story* reports on a Silicon Valley worker who blogged about her struggles to pay rent and also buy enough food to fend off starvation. The tragic irony is that her employer is foodie social networking site *Yelp!*:

> A fired employee from the Silicon Valley tech firm Yelp! has raised anger over the $1.38 billion company's labor practices after writing a blog that pointed out that the profitable company's employees are struggling to survive.

Bizarrely, the company's solution is to move parts of its operations to Arizona so employees don't have to pay such exorbitant rents (Markus 2016).

In the chapters that follow we pursue these incredible challenges faced by transitioning young people and the entrepreneurial logics they adopt as they face futures that at present seem doubtful. They are futures where even success (or relative success) will not produce personal, financial or social well-being. In Chapter 4 we continue telling the stories of the young people we spoke to in the US and we focus on how they have adopted a renegade, resistant and resilient attitude towards their employment and economic futures. We dub this type of attitude *the guerrilla self*. Guerrilla selfhood gives hope when the world feels hopeless.

4

Guerrilla Selfhood: Imagining Entrepreneurial Futures

Introduction: The Entrepreneurial Imagination

The downstream effects of the GFC have impacted the lives of young people in many ways (Hall et al. 2013: 4). When the GFC *landed* in 2008 (or 2007, depending on which economist you ask) it halted a decade of steady or declining youth unemployment rates in developed, Western economies. Young people who had hoped that their emergence into adulthood could be modelled upon the experiences of their parents were confronted with ambiguous futures and fewer options for employment or a career (Little 2013: 1). Indeed, as Kelly et al. (2015: 2) argue, 'young people have been overrepresented in what might be called precarious forms of casual and part-time employment in low-skill occupations'. This over-representation is coupled with increasing costs of debt-based forms of higher education payment (Kelly 2015) and youth unemployment rates higher than unemployment rates for other age groups in the economies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Kelly et al. 2015: 1). In responding to these challenges young people have been encouraged to adopt particular attitudes and ways of knowing themselves. As Kelly (2015) argues, young people are expected to 'become,

L. Howie, P. Campbell, *Crisis and Terror in the Age of Anxiety*,
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rational, autonomous, choice making, risk aware, prudential, responsible and enterprising'. In response to neoliberal hardships, young people are asked to develop an *entrepreneurial self* (see Kelly 2006).

In this paper we imagine a form of youthful selfhood that we call the *guerrilla self*. It is a form of selfhood that might appear at the interstices of individualisation, 'institutional failings', economic inequality and the responsibilisation that supposedly goes hand-in-hand with resilience (Ungar 2001: 273). Indeed, we argue that it is precisely these moments of institutional failure that provide opportunities to imagine life in other terms, and in relation to other people who are part of a shared struggle. As Žižek (2013: 144) argues, 'the only realistic option is to do what appears impossible within this system . . . this would be for me the great task of thinking today: to redefine and rethink the limits of the possible and the impossible'. This type of thinking can be found in various places and situations:

- In St Louis, Missouri former gourmet chef Brian Hardesty and 'entrepreneur' Joel Crespo started a business called *Guerrilla Street Food* (Guerrilla Street Food 2012). Their mission is to provide high calibre culinary experiences to everybody, 'regardless of demographic or socio-economic background'. They draw on the metaphor of guerrillaism where their food service is 'A small, mobile force competing against a larger, more unwieldy one . . . depending on the support of the local population, as well as taking advantage of terrain more accommodating of small units'.
- *Loomio* is a social enterprise designed to organise decision-making processes online. It 'emerged when activists from the Occupy movement teamed up with the social enterprise network *Enspiral*, realising that they were using different approaches to work towards the same aim', namely, how can large groups of people reach a consensus on any particular issues (Loomio n.d)? One of its 12 'worker-members' describes how he quit his engineering business in 2011 when 'the global Occupy movement touched down in Civic Square in Wellington':

> It was the first time I had met people that shared my anger and concern about the inability of institutions to respond rationally to existential threats like ecosystem collapse, resource depletion, extreme inequality,

> and runaway climate-change. Occupy was my first taste of the transformative power of decentralised collaborative decision-making. The incredible surge of optimism I felt at Occupy has continued unabated throughout Loomio. (Loomio n.d)

By embracing the *moment* when rage about economic inequality reached a crescendo, the founders of *Loomio* found a way to make money whilst organising for social change. Their internet start-up company is now marketable, sellable and income-generating.

- Ron Finley is a *guerrilla gardener* (Finley 2013a). He 'plants vegetable gardens in South Central LA – in abandoned lots, traffic medians, along the curbs. Why? For fun, for defiance, for beauty and to offer some alternative to fast food in a community where "the drive-thrus are killing more people than the drive-bys"'. According to his biography, Finley (2013b) 'grows a nourishing food culture in South Central L. A.'s food desert by planting the seeds and tools for healthy eating'. His vision for a free and open urban 'food forest' began when he planted a vegetable garden on the nature strip out the front of his house. When the local authorities attempted to shut it down, Finley 'gave voice' to a grassroots movement fighting for healthy food to be made available to young people in impoverished LA neighbourhoods. Finley's (2013b) dream is to provide 'nourishment, empowerment, education – and healthy, hopeful futures – one urban garden at a time'.

This approach to food is shared by people in Melbourne, Australia who also partake in guerilla gardening to make fresh fruits available in the city streets. A number of these individuals also participate in the 'Community Kitchen' project which is a free open kitchen for people without a permanent residence.

We view guerrilla selfhood as an emerging attitude and desire to thrive in the 'interstices' of neoliberalism – sometimes for personal financial well-being, sometimes for social advantage, often for both (see Brighenti 2013). It manifests as an attempt not to replace the existing system, but to gain unexpected benefits within it, all the while playing by the 'rules', or an interpretation of them.

Guerrilla selfhood is a term we use to designate types of identity that require participation *through* resistance, institutionalisation *through* the appearance of not being institutionalised and individualism *in the midst of* a failure of individualism. In building this concept we draw on literature where the guerrilla metaphor has been deployed to signify moments where *the weapons of the system are turned upon themselves*. It is, we argue, a style of thinking that exercises imagination and resists attempts to exterminate ambivalence (see Mills 2000[1959]; Bauman 1991). The guerrilla self is ravaged by uncertainty and doubt. But it is hopeful. As such, stories of guerrilla selfhood are themselves ambivalent.

In what follows we provide snapshots of the experiences of young people forging selfhood whilst facing uncertain futures (see Giroux 2014). We again draw on the interviews we conducted with young people in a US, West Coast college town and provide examples of how they are developing innovative and creative practices at the interstices of neoliberalism after the GFC. They are stories rich with uncertainty, ambivalence and doubt. They are also stories of imagination and hope. In the sections that follow we establish a platform for telling these stories by exploring critical youth studies literature on neoliberalism, transitions and entrepreneurial selfhood.

From the Self as Enterprise to Guerrilla Selfhood

> (Neo) Liberalism, understood not as a coherent ideological or political movement, but as a rationality of government has been successful in transforming the practices of government in Anglo/European contexts, partly due to its capacity to articulate narratives of 'personal autonomy, enterprise and choice' (Kelly and Harrison 2009: 238)

In sociology more generally, and youth studies more specifically, there has been considerable research and theory exploring the meanings and consequences of risk, neoliberalism and entrepreneurial forms of selfhood. During that time Peter Kelly (2001, 2006, 2011a, 2011b) and others have made significant contributions to debates about the impact

of risk, neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism on young people and what this means for practicing youth studies. Harvey (2007: 2), for example, argues that neoliberalism is 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade'. The consequences of widespread acceptance of the benefits of liberalised, personal autonomy and choice have been disproportionately felt by young people (Standing 2014; Giroux 2014). Young people who hoped that transitioning from education to work would follow a similar pathway to that of their parents have found a hostile world waiting for them. Indeed, many of the traditional 'taken for granted' markers of adulthood (transitioning from employment to work, moving out of home, finding a partner and having children) have been 'undermined' by rapid economic and social change (Wyn and White 1997: 148). Many have argued that transitions are more fragmented, complex, less linear and lengthier than those experienced by previous generations of young people (Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Kelly 2001, 2003, 2006; Settersten and Ray 2010: 19).

The consequences of this can be seen in policy and media discourses where young people are painted as – by nature – unreliable, uncertain and incompetent. Kelly (2006: 25) argues that the dominant frame for *reading* the lives of young people is 'risk'. In Harris' (2004: 13) formulation, young people might be considered as either being 'at-risk' or as 'can-do' – *dangerous or capable*, many of the markers of which are understood through economic and social lenses. Kelly (2006, 2013) has argued that young people have been positioned as a population that is a problem for a whole array of so-called adult institutions. Young people become 'knowable, and governable' through their increasing involvement in neoliberal practices, habits and institutions. Their failure to find their place in day-to-day neoliberalism becomes evidence of a series of potential failings (Kelly 2011a: 47). Here, the construction of the figure of 'youth' results in the emergence of various 'youth issues':

> an intersection marked by institutionalised, (social and behavioural) scientific representations of crime, education, family, the media, popular culture,

> (un)employment, transitions, the life course, risk and so on . . . how we imagine these intersections produces understandings of youth. These understandings have consequences – material, symbolic, and for a sense of self – in the lives of young people. (Kelly 2011a: 48)

As a consequence a 'form of Selfhood' emerges that 'has come to dominate the horizons of identity in the Western democracies at this time' (Kelly 2006: 17).

> the self as enterprise is not imagined as the raw material, the essence of what it is to be a person. Rather, the self as enterprise has to be 'made up' . . . in families, in schools, in relationships, in labour markets, in training programs – and continuously worked on (*for the term of our natural life*) (emphasis in original, Kelly 2015: 2)

The 'population of Youth at-risk, in its *negativity*', Kelly (2006: 18) argues, 'illuminates the *positivity* that is the entrepreneurial Self' (emphasis in original). The assumption here is that there is definitively 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' ways to make the transition to adulthood (Kelly 2011b: 48). The so-called 'problems' that young people embody are only problems in narrowly *framed* neoliberal conceptions of society and self (see Kelly 2006: 18–23). Those problems become givens that are pathologised and made subject to interventions and solutions. This is not to say that young people do not face real problems, but rather the ways in which possible forms of selfhood are shaped and limited also limits our ways of imagining the possibilities for young people's lives in other terms.

Challenging these frames of risky youth and of prescribed, legitimate and illegitimate forms of selfhood, we argue, is the key to developing what we call the *guerrilla self*. In the following section we position the guerrilla self in such a way that it ambivalently *holds in place, problematises* and *creates room* for practices that exist in/between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms of youthful selfhood shaped by young peoples' transitions into adulthood.

David Kilcullen (2009: 1–2), a counter-insurgency strategist, writes of the '*Accidental Guerrilla*'. He argues that guerrillaism is born from marginalisation, providing hope and a limited power to the powerless.

He suggests that evenly contested wars on battlefields are a thing of the past. Any 'rational adversary' knows not to challenge those in power head-on. To do so guarantees defeat. But a weaker opponent can sometimes force a stale-mate, a dead-heat, or make the fight too costly for the powerful to bother contesting. A weaker opponent can be hidden and clandestine while the powerful are exposed and vulnerable. A weaker opponent has little to lose, the powerful have much to preserve. It is precisely through the overwhelming power that the US holds over *the conventional* modes of waging war, Kilcullen (2009: 3) argues, that the possible weapons of the less powerful emerge. He argues that the 'principle of addition' applies where the politically weak combine 'direct combat with electronic, diplomatic, cyber, terrorist, proxy, economic, and propaganda tools to overload, deceive and exhaust . . . the "system of systems"'. The only rule in guerrilla thinking becomes *ignoring the rules of the powerful*. As Marx (1976: 62) argued, the guerrilla attitude entails a 'war against the effects of the existing system', but not necessarily against the system itself. The 'guerrilla attitude' represents the acknowledgement of particular systemic forces such as the relationship between labour, compensation and business without accepting the lot one is asked to accept within it (Maguire 1976: 319).

A recent advertisement aired on US television for *Colorado Technical University* (CTU) demonstrates the potential appeal of a 'guerrilla attitude' for young people. CTU has embraced the popularity of online degrees. Whilst CTU does have corporeal campuses in a number of locations in Colorado and other states in the US, it markets itself as a pioneer in online education. The jewel in its marketing strategy is a recurring television advertisement depicting thousands of people travelling along an invisible conveyor belt to morbid looking cubicles. Some people choose to step off the conveyor belt to go their *own way*. The following voiceover accompanies the contrasting images of dull-looking automatons travelling on the conveyor and the vibrant, inquisitive looking people stepping off and walking in the opposite direction:

> I could go back to school on the traditional route. Lots of people do. I mean lots! But they aren't me. I want classes I control not lectures I have

> to sit through. I'm not out to land some job, I want a career. I know I don't want [pause] that. I'm not afraid to go my own way. And it looks like I'm not alone. CTU. The new direction of online education. Are you in? (Colorado Technical University YouTube Channel, n.d)[1]

The paradoxical *individualism and sense of belonging* that this campaign combines exemplifies what we call a *guerrilla self*. This advertisement is flush with ambivalence and irony. One scene in particular captures the idea that success in contemporary neoliberal society requires *resistance* – the following of an alternative path, one followed by few people. By being not part of the '*lot*' whilst still 'not alone' means that success can perhaps be found where only a privileged few care to look. By resisting what is expected, we are free, perhaps, to innovate, evolve and find productive – but alternative – modes of existence.

Gill and Pratt (2008: 14) argue that those who practice entrepreneurial forms of labour and culture may be the 'ideal workers of the future'. An ideal fit, perhaps, with the prevailing neoliberal ideologies of Western democratic capitalism, broadly defined. 'Neoliberalism has succeeded', Ross (2008: 36) argues, 'wherever its advocates have preached the existential charge of this kind of work ethic, and of the virtues of being liberated from the fetters of company rules, managerial surveillance and formal regularity'. A failure to embrace one's entrepreneurial potential in such an environment may be interpreted by some – conservative politicians and conservative media that stress *effort, personal responsibility and a quest for affluence and security* – as a failure to be responsible for one's future. The sources of these failings have long occupied the minds of researchers who purport to study youth issues with conceptualisations of 'risk, transition, evidence-based best practice . . . generation (X&Y) and adolescent brain development' (Kelly 2011a: 48). For those young people who enter adulthood through the inevitability of time despite 'failing' to achieve the markers of successful transition (study, work, relationships, consumption behaviours), the tag of 'at-risk' can follow them long into adulthood (see Kelly 2001, 2003; Males 2010; Powell 2007; Whiteley

[1] A recording of this advertisement is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jq6AIFIeFk8

2001). As Miles (2000: 68) argued, the risk society is 'one of increased independence, self-determination and self-realization' (and see Beck 1992; Breen 1997). The forms that this society take for young people, according to Harris (2004: 5), are diverse and include 'unpredictable chances for employment and other avenues for livelihood, [and] the shift from production to consumption as a framework for making meaning and identity'.

The guerrilla self is a figure shaped against a number of stories about how young people should live their lives, plan their futures and develop pathways towards their goals. In the following section, the guerrilla self is given shape through the stories of young people planning their futures in uncertain socio-economic environments.

The Guerrilla Self and Post-GFC Precarity

For many young people throughout the world, the GFC has given way to conditions of precarious socio-economic life. In Standing's (2014) terms, young people face steadily declining full-time job opportunities, a steady increase in the uptake of casual and part time work, increased competition in employment where (over)qualifications lose out to experience all combine with persistent and rising levels of youth unemployment. Increasingly, this predicament is capturing the attentions of governments and youth organisations that have begun to worry about the potential for a lost generation – the first generation to have things worse than their parents (FYA 2014; Giroux 2014; Bauman 2012).

A Western Australian Government report on youth affairs framed youth as *at-risk* when their 'life circumstances' do not provide for 'emotional well-being' and 'limit the normative developmental experiences necessary to achieve *healthy adult functioning*' (our emphasis, in Colthart 1996: 31). Colthart (1996: 31–32) identified the categories of risk that are likely to inhibit healthy transition or development into adult functionality as a failure to complete high school past year 10, unemployment or 'marginal or insecure' employment, engaging in behaviour that leads to institutionalised surveillance, unsafe health practices such as risky sex and substance experimentation, or an insecure family environment. In the identification

of young people at-risk – of dropping out, of disengagement, of unemployment, of institutionalisation – it is the young person who is framed as the one to transform or correct their current pathway (Kelly 2001, 2006; Wishart et al. 2006; Wyn and Woodman 2006). The stories of Clifton, Robert and Isabella that we share in this chapter sit ambivalently within the depiction of 'at-risk'. All are students at a major university, yet all are faced with what may be the perpetual employment uncertainty that is endemic to post-GFC America. None of the respondents featured here hold firm prospects for full-time, secure or lucrative employment when they graduate. They plan to undertake internships, volunteer for social justice programs, and go to graduate school, all the while making enough money to *get by*.

As traditional forms of social organisation and relations become unsteady – relations that 'helped us know our place and identity' – tolerating and managing risk becomes an individual pursuit and a product of individual responsibility (Harris 2004: 4). Young people living in a post-GFC world are encouraged to 'develop individual strategies' and embrace the ideology of 'personal responsibility' for emerging from uncertainty and overcoming social and economic disadvantage. Here, the unforgiveable crime becomes *not trying*. To not try leaves young people open to accusations of laziness or pickiness. Such accusations are pointed out by the administrators of the *Tumblr* website 'We are the 99 percent'. The neoliberal motif of the unworthy, ungrateful young person has become the driving motivator for the stories shared in this social networking space:

> They say it's because you're lazy. They say it's because you make poor choices. They say it's because you're spoiled. If you'd only apply yourself a little more, worked a little harder, planned a little better, things would go well for you. Why do you need more help? Haven't they helped you enough? They say you have no one to blame but yourself. They say it's all your fault.
>
> They are the 1 percent. They are the banks, the mortgage industry, the insurance industry. They are the important ones. They need help and get bailed out and are praised as job creators. We need help and get nothing and are called entitled. We live in a society made for them, not for us. It's their world, not ours. ('We are the 99 percent', n.d.)

We interviewed young people in a college town on the West Coast of the US in February and March in 2014. The city where they attended college has a strong activist history and was more recently a location for Occupy movement activities. We tell three stories – Clifton's, Isabella's and Robert's. All are aged 18–25. Clifton is black and spent his childhood in Detroit before moving to the West Coast. His college attendance was paid for by a scholarship earned and passed on to him through his mother's military service (Military.com 2014). Robert was from Cleveland, Ohio – a deteriorating city in the American Mid-West. The GFC affected Robert and his family and friends significantly. Many of his friends decided that leaving home to attend college in another state was financially unviable. Robert, however, considered the risks and decided that if he was ever to 'escape' then leaving for college was his 'moment' (Robert, Cleveland, 24 February 2014). Isabella attended college 'in-state', having spent most of her childhood on the West Coast. She was from a marginalised, Latino community in an otherwise wealthy, predominantly white, town. She had a troubled past – her brothers joined gangs, she became addicted to drugs and spent time in rehabilitation. She had been homeless. Isabella overcame many of these challenges after an epiphany – '*I need to be the one to change it*' (Isabella, Northern California, 25 February 2014). In what follows we do not tell stories simply about youthful *transitions to adulthood*. Neat transitions are but a memory of previous generations. The challenges these young people face, the choices they make, and the lives they live indicate precarious realities, shaped by chance, necessary risks and processes of self-making/re-making.

Clifton's GFC

The GFC became a moment of shared hardship for many young Americans. For Clifton, Isabella and Robert, the GFC arrived around the time they were finishing high school and applying for college. Clifton, however, considered himself lucky since his poverty and upbringing in Detroit meant that he was, in a way, too marginalised

for his life to be changed significantly by economic turmoil in the rest of the country and the world:

> It affected me, but it was just like we kind of joked about it . . . 'the rest of the world is going through what Detroit has been going through'. It's kind of hard to say, to pinpoint where it affected us . . . because I grew up not having a lot of things that people who grow up in a middle class community have access to. (Clifton, Detroit, interviewed 27 February 2014)

Where many college students grew up dreaming of being rich, Clifton grew up dreaming about joining the middle class. In many ways, Clifton did not enjoy the sorts of luxuries that people were deprived of when the GFC occurred. Across the US 'people started losing their homes' and 'the unemployment rate shot up'. It seemed as though 'everything that we [Americans] gotten used to is being taken away from us'. Clifton's Detroit changed little – 'It was like this is business as usual' (Clifton, Detroit, interviewed 27 February 2014). Yet he was personally impacted by the GFC. A scholarship that would have paid for his college tuition if he had attended college in Michigan was cancelled due to a lack in public funds. The key metaphor for Clifton (as well as for Isabella and Robert) was '*I got out*'. For Clifton, a key component of realising his dream involved leaving Detroit, a city that seemed to deteriorate each year. Yet, there were certain financial incentives that anchored him to his hometown:

> [If I had attended college in Michigan] I could live with family when I was in school so basically I wasn't paying rent. I wasn't paying for tuition. I was just getting money. . . . When they took back the scholarship it was just like I might as well go somewhere else. I'm going to have to struggle here now so might as well *get out* and see something different. Either way I'm going to be struggling. (our emphasis)

What presents as mundane ways of getting by and 'making it work' are practices requiring ingenuity in the face of challenges and resistance against the forces that render individuals and their lives obsolete. The point is not that young people like Clifton can eventually attain higher education qualifications or participate in the labour market, rather, it is the ways in

which young people enter these fields and their modes of participation in them that foregrounds/shapes practices of guerrilla selfhood. This is the kind of struggle that we think Clifton refers to, the kind of struggle that is named by the 'We are the 99 percent' *Tumblr*. And it requires the right mix of entrepreneurialism, ingenuity, resilience and resistance.

Clifton's experiences of struggle lie somewhere between hope and hardship. Armed with the financial assistance made available through his mother's military career, Clifton began the difficult task of transferring his life from the familiarity and disadvantage of Detroit to the elitism and affluence of a prestigious West Coast university. He has faced terrible racial discrimination at the hands of campus police and was bamboozled by the complex bureaucracy for enrolling in college. But still he is thankful he lost his scholarship, as conversations with family members *back home* reinforced:

> I talk to my brothers, my sisters, my family. People's preoccupations are a lot different than mine. The way that people perceive the world there [Detroit] is just day-to-day. When you don't have an education and you haven't had the opportunity to check out of day-to-day life for a few years. I'm here to study and learn about the world, [their] focus is going to be on how I pay my rent? How do I feed my kids? When am I going to get married? . . . One of my younger brothers joined the military. He's getting to see the world too but not in the same way [nervous giggle]. He's about to deploy to Afghanistan. Another one of my brothers, who has never left Detroit, never been out of Michigan, he is just working, struggling, trying to pay the rent, these little manual labour jobs. (Clifton, Detroit, interviewed 27 February 2014)

Clifton took a path that is not often travelled by poor, young people in Detroit. When faced with the uncertainty of losing his scholarship the easy decision would have been to stay close to home, live with relatives and go to college locally. Clifton's challenges became a source of entrepreneurial innovation in the expensive college town where he found himself living a year after the calamity of losing his scholarship. Where white students from affluent communities often pay exorbitant rent to live in 'safe' areas, Clifton felt more than comfortable living in an impoverished, neighbouring community where rent was low and

crime was high. He is physically located between two worlds as an intelligent young man attending a prestigious University and a tough guy able to hold his own in a dangerous neighbourhood. His sense of self is shaped by an awareness of his need to operate in/between these spaces, to create opportunities from which he can devise/imagine a future. This is the lived experience of guerrilla selfhood: the ambivalence of the relationship between struggle, resistance, discrimination and success.

Getting out of Detroit – a place where a future was more difficult to imagine – was a key motivation for Clifton. However, in moving he faces the realisation that particular future narratives – a family, owning a home or financial security – may not be feasible or desirable. But money did not hold significant appeal and he was planning a career in social justice organisations – 'To start a career and be financially secure' is not something that Clifton was particularly interested in. Perhaps it is difficult for him to imagine this future because it requires some certainty to do so. Clifton lives in the in/between spaces and cannot identify how or where these possibilities would unfold.

Robert's GFC

Robert is a young white man from a middle-class family in the US Mid-West. His family was acutely affected by the GFC during which Robert's plans for college were thrown into disarray. He did not apply to colleges in his home state of Ohio, planning instead to live with his father on the West Coast and attend community college.[2] Knowing that this would only require moderate grades in high-school he decided not to be too anxious about his studies. His father worked in the 'metals industries' – an industry that was lucrative but precarious before the GFC. In the aftermath of the economic crisis the international partners to his father's metals firm withdrew their support and his father became unemployed. Unemployment meant that he could no longer support Robert's plans:

[2] In doing so, Robert would have qualified for in-state financial support to the college of his choosing. He was required to live in the state for 12 months prior.

> My father was unemployed from 2008 to 2010. He literally got a job two weeks before I was supposed to move out to [West Coast]. I was going through my senior year . . . I was an underachieving high school student and my plan was just to go to [West Coast], go to community college. So I never applied to any colleges in Ohio . . . he literally got a job in May and I graduated in June . . . It was just very difficult. I didn't know what to do . . . it was the most stressful period of my life. (Robert, Cleveland, 24 February 2014)

Robert discussed the difficulty in sitting exams to complete high school whilst wondering *what's the point?* Having not applied to college in Ohio, he would have likely ended up 'at the community college right around the corner from where I lived'. But once he learned his father had found a job, he moved and commenced community college where he excelled, before transferring to an elite West Coast college.

Like Clifton, Robert invoked metaphors of escape to describe his mobility from a deteriorating Cleveland to an elite West Coast college. Whilst it was not the easy route – he was the only member of his friendship group who attempted it – he saw no future for himself in Ohio and moving was an opportunity to leave the suburbs where he had spent most of his life:

> I'm a person who examines myself and questions myself and questions the things I do a lot. So *I don't settle into doing the easy route*. But I definitely think that . . . [young people who go to an elite college] . . . have an advantage when it comes to any jobs around this area . . . Even in the country too. I feel like because of that it'll get you in, and for an interview. But who you are is going to get you the job. (our emphasis, Robert, Cleveland, 24 February 2014)

His decision to leave Ohio seemed vindicated when he talked to friends and they described the challenges they were facing. Due to financial uncertainty following the onset of the GFC and the need to pay extra money for rent, food and other bills if they left Ohio to attend college, his friends stayed and went to colleges locally; 'Half my friends [that] go to my high school went to one college and half of them went to another college in Ohio'. Robert noted that attending Ohio State or Ohio University was great for those planning to work and live in Ohio, 'But

really all my friends, they're all asking me what are the prospects of, like, get me a job here? How can I make the move out there? A lot of them are!' (Robert, Cleveland, 24 February 2014). Robert explained to them, with a sense of his own accomplishments and abilities in escapism, that even he would struggle to get a job 'here'. His education from an elite university, however, gave him hope for a better job and a better life. Cleveland was not part of Robert's plans for the future.

Robert's decision to prioritise leaving Ohio over securing his short-term future is indicative of the type of entrepreneurial risk guerrilla selves take in order to shape a particular, desired future. Robert seemingly embodies the type of student idealised in the CTU advertisement – he went his own way, and is now beginning to reap the benefits. He still faced an uncertain employment future with no guaranteed job in the major West Coast city where he hoped to work. But he stands a much better chance than his friends *back home* – people who were perhaps too anxious to leave Ohio, who now may face a life restricted to Ohio or a neighbouring state.

Young people's access to particular locations, the social environment, employment, careers and the culture they offer is what is at stake here. This is not a judgement about the qualities of different cities, but how the kinds of risks taken by Robert are not entirely *risky*. In fact they are necessary choices made by a reflexive young man who is critically aware of the type of mobility, individual responsibility and precarity he must embody to attend a particular college and escape his home town. A certain type of self-practice is necessary for Robert's physical movement and success at his West Coast University. They are the practices, the modes of survival and success, that his friends could not predict or perhaps did not want to imagine.

Isabella's GFC

Like Clifton, Isabella takes pride in her ability to escape poverty. Her 'journey' involved drug addiction, falling pregnant as a teenager, gangs, prison and drug rehabilitation (Isabella, Northern California,

25 February 2014). It was 'a moment of clarity' that enabled Isabella to make changes to her life and change her trajectory. In 2014 Isabella was completing her undergraduate degree at an elite US college and planning to begin a PhD:

> I was involved in gangs. I was involved in a lot of things that were very negative. But I had my kid. When I had my son . . . my world changed. And I never looked back. And I grew and I realised why things are the way they are, and that *I need to be the one to change it*. Or at least to try. For me, I started going to school. And once I started going back to school I realised I had a lot of potential and things just took off from there. And I'm here at [West Coast college] . . . And it's crazy. It's very amazing . . . It's my journey . . . I feel like people need to hear it, you know?

Isabella's journey had consequences. Like Clifton and Robert, she has left friends and siblings behind. Whilst she was able to get out, to innovate and move on, her brothers and sisters were 'stuck'. They have, perhaps, not adopted the kind of attitudes needed to create pathways into work and future-life change:

> I feel like they don't have a plan of action. They're not educated, they don't really have any other type of work that they could get into besides maybe like a different union or a different construction, like any kind of labour like that. But not a career. Like as *we* would say it. Having went to school and been educated, like a pathway to, a light at the end of the tunnel. They're just kind of stuck. (our emphasis, Isabella, Northern California, 25 February 2014)

We were struck by Isabella's use of the word 'we' in this excerpt. It reinforces her escape from a marginalised existence as a poor young woman into an affluent and highly educated community. She is no longer part of *that* social scene. Her family, however, remain in that field and are, perhaps, *not like us, not like her*. Others don't share her drive, her awareness that *no one will do it for you, you have to do it for yourself*: 'It has to come from an individual level . . . People need to start paying attention'. For Isabella, people need to rise above their perceptions of their own limitations. Where many might see

Isabella's story as one of disadvantage, she sees it as an advantage in the employment market she will be entering post-college:

> I feel like my experience has set me apart. My experiences and the things I have overcome and the confidence that I have, basically going into any situation. Because nothing can get worse than what I have been through. You just keep trying. You just learn [to keep trying] . . . They need people like me. I feel that . . . I have been fighting my whole life to get what I needed. (Isabella, Northern California, 25 February 2014)

Her life of disadvantage – being born into an ethnic minority, addiction, incarceration – is Isabella's advantage in neoliberal sociality. She had fought for everything she had, and she will need to do this more to find reliable, full-time employment when she finishes college. There are no guarantees and her life will be, for some time at least, precarious. But she believed that she had collected the resources, disposition and skills necessary to excel in a precarious world.

We witness guerrilla thinking in Isabella's story when she views her life of marginalisation and disadvantage as giving her the skills to thrive in unforgiving employment markets. 'They need people like me' – young people who are resilient, who rise above negative events, who do not let obstacles stop them achieving their dreams.

Conclusions: The Entrepreneurial Future . . . *Dreaming Dangerously*

Žižek (2012a) imagines a world where people *dream dangerously*. We argue that we are already seeing the signs of this dreaming in the stories we tell here. We share Žižek's optimism that dangerous dreaming gives way to hope. Whilst the accounts we provide are flecked with uncertainty and fear, there is also a desire for action, change and a strong sense of hope. As college students, these young people will need to continue to hope and rely on their instincts to find alternative paths of advancement, to find the *other ways*. Hope is a pivotal force enabling individuals to imagine a future. 'Hope carves out', Braidotti (2006: 277) believes, 'active

trajectories of becoming and thus can respond to anxieties and uncertainties in a productive manner'. We see hope as a key condition for, and perhaps an outcome of, stories of emerging guerrilla selfhood. Hope that the right choices have been made and the right tactics deployed. As such it may be the foundation for change as it was for the innovators behind *Guerrilla Street Food, Loomio*, and Ron Finley, the Guerrilla Gardener. If there is hope that the future might have more to offer than debt, stress and part-time or temporary employment, there is the ability to imagine life in other terms.

In this chapter we have argued for a type of selfhood that we have described as a *guerrilla self*. Building on Kelly's (2006) work with entrepreneurial selfhood – a self that is responsibilised through neoliberal modes of transition from *childhood* to so-called adulthood – we argue that the young people we interviewed were finding diverse pathways towards the future in the interstices shaped by the aftermath of the GFC. We wanted a different metaphor to *entrepreneurial*. We wanted our metaphor to capture something that embodies survival and *resistance* in hostile environments, but not revolution. Resistance to being locked into an unchosen, undesirable future.

Indeed, *the guerrilla* is a deeply misunderstood character. Contrary, perhaps, to popular belief, a guerrilla does not wish to replace the system. A guerrilla wants to use the weapons of the system against the system. This involves finding other uses for people and things, alternative forms of life, and ways of turning the strengths of the powerful into weaknesses that make the powerful vulnerable. The key ingredient is something that perhaps all young people can possess – *imagination*. Or so the neoliberal logic goes.

Major restaurants have physical locations, large numbers of staff, inventory and relatively fixed conditions for delivery. A food truck is flexible, poised to benefit from changing socio-economic conditions that may manifest in consumer taste, geographical demand and financial imperatives. The restaurant owner is established and powerful, but inflexible. The *Guerrilla Street Food* van is poised and ready to move and respond . . . literally.

Democratised forms of decision making can be difficult at the best of times, as parliamentary elections often demonstrate. The founders of *Loomio*

not only recognised this, but also understood that they could profit from providing a product and service that doesn't provide the solution, but provides the conditions in which others might better find the solution. Their product is spectral and chimeric, but necessary. The idea for *Loomio* emerged from the dangerous dreaming spurred by Occupy.

Ron Finley and others grow food on the sidewalk, that people are free to harvest and use, in poor neighbourhoods. They don't do it for profit. What could be more subversive, more undermining of the socio-economic ideals of neoliberalism and mass incarceration that work to keep the wealthy powerful and the poor marginalised? Supermarkets cannot sell food to people who grow their own, not that there are supermarkets in food deserts anyway. But perhaps they viewed it as an untapped market, hence the strong response from local government attempting to prevent Ron Finley from planting his gardens.

In some respects, examples of young people finding socio-economic advantage in these ways are abundant. Consider, the founders of *Yahoo!* who reportedly spent most of their time in college playing with computers and the internet instead of dedicating themselves to their studies. And consider the emergence of innovative organisations *AirBNB, Uber* and *Getaround*,[3] a recently available service where users get paid to share their cars. Instead of leaving your car parked and unattended whilst attending work or school, you allow others to pay you to use your car in the hours it would otherwise be inactive. The *Getaround* website claims that one's car can, in effect, pay for itself. What we have argued in this chapter may be, in some respects, a theoretical account of a well understood phenomenon (young people being creative and starting a profitable business or leaving their families to pursue college and a better life). But we argue that a key character of guerrilla selfhood is that the stakes have never been higher. The GFC of 2007/2008 changed the game. No longer do young people need to find alternative forms of transition for their comfort or pleasure (at least not by itself). Instead, adapting to neoliberal capitalism in these ways may prove to be a life and death predicament.

[3] Read about the car sharing service at the *Getaround* website: https://www.getaround.com/share?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=CarLead_D_AllBerk

For people who grew up as part of a marginalised minority, Clifton and Isabella's failure to innovate would be potentially life-ending – drugs, violence and danger lurk in the lives they have left behind. For Isabella, this took on a generational turn – her life was no longer her own to throw away. Her catalyst for change was falling pregnant and having a child. For Robert, he did not want to become another suburban statistic. He could have stayed in Ohio and remained 'comfortable'. He didn't want that for himself. As his friends took the conservative approach of attending local colleges, Robert took a chance. In his words, it was a chance that almost cost him his future.

These forms of dangerous dreaming (Žižek 2012a) may provide young people with many potential avenues for building relationships, improving their socio-economic lot and even facilitating their participation in neoliberal democracy. Castells (2013) saw great hope in the Occupy movements as a possibility for *reconstructing democracy* from the bottom up. This has the effect of shaping what Taylor (2007: 119) calls 'cultures of democracy' – civic and politicised practices that exist (for the time-being) outside of formalised institutional categories. Guerrilla thinking, in this way, is a response to a range of related social conditions – from poverty to voicelessness to uncertain futures – that impact young people in ways previous generations have not experienced (Kelly 2013; see also Du Bois-Reymond 1998: 65). Young people – through their actions, innovations and pursuits – call for social, economic and governmental change at a time of increased economic and political instability. Guerrilla selfhood can be a mode of survival and of becoming at the boundaries of so-called *legitimate* and *illegitimate* lifestyles, and an attempt to recognise the precarity inherent to any chosen practice.

5

Responsiveness and Re-imagining the Future with Occupy and Black Lives Matter

> It came from Tahrir square, an irony of history considering that for most Americans, only oil and Israel are of any relevance in the Middle East. Yet images and sounds of peoples determination to bring down dictatorships, against all odds, at whatever cost, rekindled faith in people's power, at least in some activists' quarters (Castells 2012: 158)

As we have discussed in the preceding chapters the downstream effects of the GFC have drastically altered young people's ability to map a clear pathway into the future. Young people are only too aware that '*the future ain't what it used to be*' (Gould-Wartofsky 2015: 20). In late 2011 this realisation combined with growing unrest and the persistent efforts of a number of activist groups, and led to the Occupy protests in Wall Street and Zuccotti Park in New York City (Castells 2012: 158–160). On the streets and online young people shared their concerns about student debt, living in poverty, wage disparity, high unemployment rates, corrupt governments and failing democracies. As Castells (2012: 167) recalls, 'They were an educated group with half of them holding a college degree and many more having finished some college . . . relatively young educated people whose professional expectations are limited in

L. Howie, P. Campbell, *Crisis and Terror in the Age of Anxiety*,
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the current economy'. Many protesters shared a awareness of the ways in which social injustices were felt disproportionately by the poor and by marginalised groups of people.

One year later the #BlackLivesMatter movement brought widespread attention to ways that race again can, and should, be a lens for social justice endeavours. While the Occupy movement had given voice to simmering societal tensions, the Black Lives Matter movement attempted to reveal a society plagued with even greater ills. The farce of post-racial America had been exposed to the world. Images of police shootings of Black people – many young and unarmed – in the US were spread across the internet accompanied by a hashtag which asked Black and non-black people alike *why* Black Lives are made to *not matter*, and what this might means for society more generally (Butler in Yancy and Butler 2015). Occupy was perhaps the tip of the iceberg. Occupy's agitation has led to more significant questions about the ways we understand what makes a life precarious and recognisable (Butler 2009: 9). As the website of the Black Lives Matter movement states, they are 'working for the *validity* of Black life' (our emphasis, Black Lives Matter 2016).

In 2015 we spoke to a number of young people who participated in the Occupy movement and had also become heavily involved in the Black Lives Matter movement. In this chapter we explore the accounts of Harris and Sue, members of the Black Lives Matter movement, and Nira and Kim who identified as 'White Allies' – a supporter group of the Black Lives Matter movement. When we spoke to them three were preparing to leave college and transition into the workforce. Harris was continuing with his postgraduate studies. They each shared concerns about racial inequality and social justice issues and how these issues would limit the possibilities for their own futures, and how they would be able to be 'responsive' to these issues after leaving the politically dynamic environment of the college campus. College life encouraged and enabled them to imagine active trajectories into the future through a strong commitment to a politically conscious, socially responsive *ethics of the self* or ethical mode of becoming (Braidotti 2006: 277, see also; Campbell 2015: 16–18). However, *responsiveness* for many participants was not just about going to a protest on one day, or caring about racial equality or engaging with social justice causes sporadically. The challenge of responsiveness for the young people we

spoke to was to give shape to a political self or identity – through the discourses of the movements and other politically catalysing events and issues – that they could imagine sustaining and practising in the future, in everyday life or through their employment. Or, as Kim put it, 'How can I make my contribution into this capitalist society in a way that is responsive?' For Kim the trends and norms of society will shape her future chances to develop and practise what might be called a *responsive self*. A responsive self desires a future and a life in which one can maintain connections to community and politics through, for instance, a socially responsible career. Stress, anxiety and worry are often the result when such career options are not readily available, and when *selling out* seems like the only viable option.

Harris, Sue, Nira and Kim each had ambitions for a career in a field that would allow them to sustain their personal and political commitments to racial equality, environmental sustainability, equal access to education, and care for young mothers and the elderly. Their accounts revealed uncertainty and uneasiness about their futures, particularly about the type of ethics and politics they will be able to sustain as they attempt to 'make a living' and shape a life beyond college. In this chapter we explore how the political and civic commitments of these young people came at a great personal cost, and in some cases created a sense of anxiety that the person *I am now* is not the person *I will be able to be* in the very near future. We discuss the ways these young people imagine their future, and how future plans are intimately tied to their belief in a responsive self and identity. In particular, we ask how young people map their sense of self onto their possible futures, and how social, environmental and racial concerns become part of future-self narratives.

Fighting for the Future, Fighting for Community

'Growing up' has always been a time of risk and uncertainty – or at least young people's experiences of growing up have been depicted in this way. Such framings of young people as a problematic and risky population have a long history (which we discussed in relation to the guerrilla self in Chapter 4). Furlong and Cartmel (2007: 1) argue that

many of the changes and challenges that young people face render their lives risky, precarious and uncertain. Indeed, 'clear route maps' for transitions into adulthood that 'previously helped smooth processes of social reproduction, have become obscure'. This is increasingly the case in the post-GFC world, as young people face the casualisation of labour and marginalisation from the labour market altogether which effectively alienates them from the 'settings that traditionally identified someone as an adult, as a citizen' (Kelly 2015: 4, see also; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Settersten and Ray 2010: 19). The effects of this marginalisation are significant: 'Some young people are so overwhelmed by their lack of future prospects that they cease to have aspirations' (Kearney et al. 2015) and may suffer 'anxiety, stress and depression' (Hall and O'Shea 2013: 6). Young people of so-called Generation-Y are attempting to guard against the challenges of limited employment opportunities and protracted life transitions by gaining excessive educational and vocational qualifications (Ting 2015; see also Kelly and Kamp 2015: 20). As youth unemployment continues to rise, so too does participation and attainment in education (Walsh 2015: 21). However, educational qualifications do not necessarily remove young people from conditions of precarity or ensure employment in one's preferred field (Walsh 2015: 28).

Young people growing up in countries affected by the financial crisis not only carry the burden of 'changed education and employment circumstances and opportunities; consequences for physical and mental health and well-being; consumption, housing, relationship and parenting aspirations', but also the responsibility for shaping '*a sense of self in relation to the possibilities for participation in the liberal democracies*' (our emphasis, Kelly 2015: 3). As we have discussed in earlier chapters, in order to participate in civic life, in paid work, and to shape some sort of future young people have had to be creative and innovative. As Kelly (2015: 1) puts it, many young people have developed *entrepreneurial* skills and identities and have come to imagine the *self as enterprise*. The self as enterprise tells a story about the ways in which young people are encouraged to know themselves in the neoliberal social economies of the West.

The argument here is that we are encouraged to give shape to ourselves, to develop an identity, in particular, socially acceptable ways. Productivity,

responsibility, risk-taking and entrepreneurialism – *technologies of the self*, as Foucault (2000) may have described them – are valued as individual characteristics and ways of knowing the self. The self is imagined as a continuously unfolding process and an ongoing practice in which we partake through our own everyday choices or *practices of the self* (McLaren 2002: 70).

> We become individual through the interrogation of these diverse technologies of the self, through practices of the self. In a sense, technologies of the self can be seen as constituting a historically specific range of options, suggestions and demands for self formation, whereas practices of the self signify an exercise of choice for the self within necessarily limited social fields. (Campbell 2015: 17)

It is the burden of neoliberal responsibility and selfhood, which Kelly (2015) so eloquently mobilises through the *entrepreneurial self* and *self as enterprise*, that we witness in the practices of the self of the young people we interviewed who were attempting to shape a life, a career and a future. There is, you see, a social incentive in shaping a future through a life of innovation, commodification, competition and individualism. Against this incentive, Nira, Harris, Sue and Kim practise entrepreneurialism by attempting to carve out a life and career that is *responsive* to issues of environmental sustainability, wage disparity and racial equality. They each imagine a career, a future and a self that is intricately tied to the politics of social justice and racial equality movements Occupy, Black Lives Matter and White Allies. For these young people the embodiment of neoliberal modes of responsibilisation mean that becoming who we are is not only tied to our own independent success and future, but to the community and social environment in which our lives unfold. In this sense, the lives of others, the state of the environment, eco-systems, economies and communities each become a personal responsibility which we must find a way of engaging with through everyday life, work and relationships.

Our understanding of the role of community and collectivity in the self-shaping practices and lives of our participants is informed by the work of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013). In their discussion

of the GFC and the ensuing protests, Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 177) identify protesters as people who have dared to imagine their future in other terms, probably because the future they saw for themselves was unimaginable. Those young people, who in these protest movements and consequently through their everyday behaviour, have taken up the 'question of how to become dispossessed of the sovereign self and enter into forms of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession that systematically jettison populations from modes of collective belonging and justice' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: xi).

Occupy created spaces for 'plural performativity' where public gatherings were able to 'enact a performativity of embodied agency' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 178). This is not just a claim for individuals to know themselves and others differently, but a call for other ways of relating to one another.

> In the affective economy of such aggregations, corporeal vulnerability and revolt become each other's indeterminate condition of possibility. The body becomes a turbulent performative occasion, one that both constrains and enables action qua embodied situatedness and extension. (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 178)

The individual, 'the I', is not discarded in this collectivity but is re-shaped. Through demonstration the individual becomes tethered to a particular 'patterned social condition' (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 180). This is a re-shaping of the self through the conditions of cohabitation, resistance and action, and is, in a sense, a contestation of the conditions through which we become who we are within the bounds of neoliberal individualism.

As the downstream effects of the GFC continue to pose challenges to young people's health, relationships and career opportunities, collective hopes and anxieties regarding the possible future are given shape. Nira, Harris, Sue and Kim engage with the challenges and limitations they believe will impact their futures and their communities. This is an engagement with the ways in which their imagined futures – and all this entails – may be 'foreclosed' as a result of unfolding economic and social conditions (Kelly and Kamp 2015: 19).

Occupy the Future

In an environment where many stay in school and formal education well into adulthood, young people develop expectations of employment that is both fulfilling and capable of affecting change (Ting 2015). The young people we have spoken to for this chapter have each participated in social movement activities or actions in which issues of class, wealth and poverty, gender and race are critically engaged with on an elite, West Coast college campus. The campus was a hive of activity when the Occupy movement emerged in 2011. Kim[1] (interviewed 16 April 2015), a postgraduate student in the field of social welfare, described the type of educational and social atmosphere typical to the campus. She said 'So if you watch the movie *Inequality for All* – my classes were pretty much like that documentary but within a semester'. The documentary Kim referred to is about income inequality in the US and is presented by economist and Professor Robert Reich. Reich has been an outspoken supporter of the Occupy movement on the West Coast and in late 2011 gave a public talk about some of the key issues facing the movement. In his speech Reich (2011) discussed the problem of concentrated income and wealth and increasing fees for education:

> The fundamental problem is that we are losing equal opportunity in America, we are losing the moral foundation upon which democracy and this country are built . . . Supreme Court decisions have said essentially, that money is speech and corporations are people . . . by the way I will believe that corporations are people when Georgia and Texas execute them.

His message was clear; what kind of voice and contribution to society can *we* hope to make if *we* do not have the money to be heard? Concerns with the distribution of wealth in the US and the lived

[1] The respondents featured in this chapter were not comfortable sharing information about their hometown since they participated in political activism and the consequences of them being identified through this research were greater.

consequences of inequality resonated with many young people in 2011 who faced the challenges of growing up during the economic crisis, the pressure of student debt and the diminished opportunities for meaningful employment (Gould-Wartofsky 2015: 20; Kelly 2015: 4). The Occupy movement was entangled with the idea that without change the unfolding future held little promise for many young people, and almost no promise for the already financially burdened and marginalised '99 percent'. As Noam Chomsky (2011) wrote, 'The historic reversal in people's confidence about the future is a reflection of tendencies that could become irreversible. The Occupy protests are the first major popular reaction that could change the dynamic'.

Digital spaces were used by the movement to open up dialogue and bring attention to the role individuals could play in challenging key issues of income disparity, the inequitable global economy, and economic and environmental uncertainty (Castells 2012: 187). Images, videos and words circulated through Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms reflected and generated a sense of global unrest. As Micha White (a key organising figure for Occupy Wall Street) argued, the internet supported the emergence of a 'revolutionary mood' where 'there was a kind of fearlessness, losing one's fear, and so social media spread that globally' (White 2015). On their website, occupywallst.org, they state that 'The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%'. Occupy Together further explains that Occupy is an:

> international movement driven by individuals like you. All of us have many different backgrounds and political beliefs but feel that, since we can no longer trust our elected officials to represent anyone other than their wealthiest donors, we need real people to create real change from the bottom up. Organized in over 100 cities in the United States, #occupy aims to fight back against the system that has allowed the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. We no longer want the wealthiest to hold all the power, to write the rules governing an unbalanced and inequitable global economy, and thus *foreclosing on our future.* (our emphasis, Occupy Together 2016)

One of the key controversies of the movement was its initial hesitancy to provide a list of 'demands' which official governing bodies could respond to. Rather, the movement asked participants 'What is your one demand?' This tactic has anarchistic roots which aim to challenge the validity of existing systems of governance. The idea is that the systems in place are inherently unable to satisfy the needs of many people (for more on this see Butler 2011; Graeber 2011). Partly as a result of this strategy, involvement in the Occupy movement became strongly linked to identity politics and lifestyle (Butler and Athanasiou 2013: 195–196). Occupy Participants were encouraged to share their stories in the 'People's Library', an Occupy-related wordpress blog that discusses the role of Occupy as a social change movement. Hosts of the weblog argued that 'The Occupy movement, and the People's Library, are, in part, prefigurative movements. That is, they are attempts to create and embody the kind of society we want to see' (Henk 2011). As the movement grew many participants developed demands which included the clearing of student debt and reversal of housing foreclosures by the major banks (Castells 2013: 185, see also; Ledzian 2011). They posed profound questions about the kinds of subjects we were becoming by critiquing the ways in which people's lives had been commodified and limited, policed and raced in neoliberal capitalist economic societies (Gould-Wartofsky 2015: 12–13).

Before the emergence of the Occupy movement, Marianne Macklebergh discussed a growing awareness of commodification, injustice and the fight for widespread social change in her book *The Will of the Many* (2009). Her work suggests that many different movements around the world have paved the way for Occupy-style protests, each with particular goals and concerns. The idea that there is a common struggle, that 'different struggles were related and that the era of single-issue activism was over', is now, more than ever, a reality (Macklebergh 2009: 3). Occupy was criticised for having millions of concerns but no key demands. Perhaps this reflects not only a shift away from single issue activism and politics, but also the complexity of our engagement with social justice issues emerging in globalised and advanced capitalist societies.

Black Lives (and White Allies) Matter

> Rooted in the experiences of Black people in this country who actively resist our de-humanization, #BlackLivesMatter is a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. (Black Lives Matter 2016)

Many of the young people we spoke to had participated in Occupy activities and now aligned themselves with the Black Lives Matter and White Allies movements. Most believed that Occupy had addressed some concerns about rights and equality, but that the *politics* of race were not given sufficient attention. Harris, a young Black graduate student and Black Lives Matter organiser and member, described the decline of interest in Occupy and the necessity of the Black Lives Matter movement:

> most of the black people who were part of Occupy are now part of Black Lives Matter. Occupy was a very class based movement, because of intersectionality and dealing with peoples identities, people, specifically black folks, are a lot more inclined to go along with identity as opposed to just class. I don't think Occupy died, or died completely, because there's a lot of class based elements that Black Lives Matter is taking that's informed by Occupy, like the valuing of all black lives.

Valuing *all* Black Lives is a way of highlighting the particular challenges marginalised and poor black people face. As Harris explained with reference to two prominent police shootings of young, black men, 'Trayvon Martin, I'm sure he was heard about around the world, he was a middle-class black kid – Michael Brown wasn't. Michael Brown was a working class, poor black kid'. The insinuation was that Michael Brown's story wasn't heard, wasn't witnessed in the same way that Trayvon Martin's story was, because Michael Brown was 'a working class poor black kid'. Black Lives Matter works to bring awareness to the different ways that Black people encounter and fight against racism not only in relation to class, but in relation to gender, sexuality and diversity in black communities.

The diversity of Black communities and the role of women in the history of Black rights struggles was emphasised by the three women founders of Black Lives Matter: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. In their online *Herstory* (Black Lives Matter: Herstory 2016) of the movement they emphasised the role of queer women in the progression of Black people's rights and history, and how queer Black women's work was often diminished or erased. As Alicia Garza writes,

> When you design an event, campaign, et cetera based on the work of queer Black women, don't invite them to participate in shaping it, but ask them to provide materials and ideas for next steps for said event, that is racism in practice. It's also hetero-patriarchal. Straight men, unintentionally or intentionally, have taken the work of queer Black women and erased our contributions. Perhaps if we were the charismatic Black men many are rallying around these days, it would have been a different story, but being Black queer women in this society (and apparently within these movements) tends to equal invisibility and non-relevancy.

As such, equality and justice for other marginalised people are fought for through the lives and rights of these Black women and the Black Lives Matter movement (McNair 2014: 16). As Garza explains:

> It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

In this way, Black Lives Matter organisers have played a leading role in highlighting the ways in which some people, 'even unintentionally', participate in anti-Black racism (Black Lives Matter 2016). Unintentional anti-Black racism can occur through micro-aggressions,

conversation and behaviour, which are facilitated by other structural and institutionalised forms of racism. As such, raising consciousness to broaden awareness of the different ways in which anti-Black racism occurs is an important task. The challenge, Raiford (2014: 12) writes, is for Black Lives Matter to help Americans take the next step and 'change the conversation so that what is understood as our own personal pain and private burden becomes the pain and burden of white people as well, creating a "non-negotiable route to empathy"'.

Conversation, language and the ways in which empathy can be shaped across the boundaries of race was a key concern for many of the Black Lives Matter members we spoke to. We were told that social media played a key role in communicating across discursive, geographical and racial boundaries to raise consciousness. Digital communication technologies have also been used by the movement to organise, mobilise, garner witnesses and build solidarity with great success. As Loggins (2014: 23) argues,

> We are in what I would consider a first in American history. This is the first protest/rebellion/riot/occupation/movement (depending on who you talk to) surrounding issues tethered to the deadly policing of Black bodies in the era of social networking and smart phone technology . . .

By leveraging social media platforms, the words 'I Can't' Breathe' became known in countries around the world as a hashtag, a slogan, and were printed on t-shirts worn by celebrity sports people who supported the Black Lives Matter movement. These words were spoken by Eric Garner, a Black man who was killed by police officers in New York. The physical violence, trauma and tragedy of Garner's arrest was filmed on a mobile phone and uploaded for the world to see. The footage went viral. The name Eric Garner was memorialised and remembered by the movement, alongside the names of many others including Tanisha Anderson and Michael Brown. The ways in which people are able to witness and hear about injustices like the killing of Eric Garner alters the ways in which these events are understood and remembered and can thereby remake the future by 'creating and countering narratives' (Loggins 2014: 24).

Living with Hope: Decolonising Hope

> Ernst Bloch has described Hope as 'dreaming forward'. It is an anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them. It is a powerful motivating force grounded not only in social and political utopias, but also in the imagination, dreams, religion and art. Hope constructs the future in that it opens the spaces onto which to project active desires; it gives us the force to emancipate ourselves from everyday routines and structures that help us dream ahead. Hope carves out active trajectories of becoming and thus can respond to anxieties and uncertainties in a productive manner . . . Why would subjects hope for change? (Braidotti 2006: 277)

The politics of the Occupy and the Black Lives Matter movements are taken up by our participants in a host of ways. In the university town where we carried out our fieldwork, many people supported the Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements. For Harris this meant developing the appropriate 'language' for his life's work and using 'decolonising' thought to make his future imaginable in different ways. Sue, a young black woman, confronts micro-aggressions in her classes by speaking up against often unintentional anti-Black racism.

Kim and Nira are both young, non-black women who describe themselves as 'allies' who stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. White Allies are deployed in different ways in support of Black Lives Matter members during protest actions. For instance, Allies may help keep traffic at bay while the central protest is staged by Black Lives Matter members. As Kim and Nira discussed in our interviews with them, White Allies attempt to avoid the appropriation and co-optation of Black suffering and Black and brown spaces. Co-optation is an ever-present problem when non-black people become involved in Black rights activism. In many cases, it can be more appropriate for non-black people to address racism in their own communities. As Regalado (2014: 33) suggests, 'Anti-Black racism in white communities is best left to our progressive white allies who are better-suited and emotionally-conditioned to perpetrate critical dialogue in those spaces'.

Each of our respondents described their future and the role they imagined playing in their community through a desire to affect change,

to be active and responsive to institutional and interpersonal racism and challenges to community cohesion and environmental sustainability. In the sections that follow we explore how the types of change Harris, Sue, Kim and Nira want to be part of, and the types of future they imagined, has been cast in relation to their personal and political experiences of inequality, racism and prejudice.

Kim

Kim (interviewed 16 April 2015) was born in Brazil and immigrated to the US when she was 18 years old. Upon arriving in the US she worked as a Nanny for 8 years while undertaking community college and after some time was able to transfer into a prestigious college on the West Coast. She had not always been 'justice oriented', but she added jokingly, 'I mean, I'm an immigrant who lived with very rich families [as a Nanny] and so I knew that there was inequality and there was definitely difference of opportunities'. Living on the West Coast she developed a strong sense of political purpose which she intended to channel into a career in the field of Gerontology – 'like health services, aged care, mental health, and innovative practices, all of it. Lobbying. All of it'. Her political commitments were shaped by an inspiring and 'radical' educational environment, and by her experiences doing community work which included fostering connections with people in 'communities of colour' (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015).

Throughout our interview she discussed her involvement with the Occupy movement. Occupy informed her understanding of, and commitment to, change, but so too did the challenges she witnessed through her work. For instance, as part of her social work course, Kim described taking a community organising class, and 'working for a community organisation who help low-income parents to fight for affordable quality child care'. She became politically active in this setting:

> I was very used to marching with the parents and going to [a nearby city] and lobbying and you know training the parents to speak in front of legislators . . . I mean, childcare in [this] area is really expensive and when

> you know it's the formative years of a child, it really is early education. People that have money can afford great childcare and their child already starts from a different place. And then you have, you know, poor people that are using child subsidies and having to choose not the best quality childcare . . . And then this whole thing broke loose [Occupy] and yeah so was kind of like a combination of things for me – why I got involved. I wasn't involved in any like organising capacity I was kind of like just supporting. (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015)

Amidst the everyday struggles for education and childcare that Kim witnessed, Occupy offered hope that things can and must change. However, the movement was only in its infancy according to Kim:

> You know I was really passionate about Occupy because I was learning a lot about community organising. I also understood that it wasn't quite a movement yet. In the history of movements Occupy was a baby, kind of. And you know it was the beginning of a movement but it wasn't necessarily a movement like the Civil Rights Movement or the Feminist Movement. It was just one step. I don't think that it was the movement or the revolution that we – that we are still going to see. I felt that it really sparked a lot of good conversation about awareness. People start talking about the 99%, even if they didn't agree with it. (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015)

The immensity of the problems represented by Occupy and the reality of what would be needed to affect change (a revolution, *a necklace of rope*, see Chapter 6) was, for Kim, filtered through her experiences in these communities and her plans for the future. She imagined herself affecting change as she participated in marches, lobbying, and 'training the parents to speak in front of legislators' in order to claim their rights. She also hoped to find employment in a field that would allow her to keep helping people when she graduated. Kim was concerned that she would find a routine job and abandon her desire to help others in the process (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015).

Kim was aware of the ways in which her work with 'communities of colour' was controversial (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015). At this point in our interview she shifted registers into the language of a self-reflexive and racially aware White Ally to describe her work:

> there's also a lot of tension about being a white person going into a community of colour, you know, and changing things and wanting to change things. So, how can I be an ally to communities of colour and low income folks?

She held this self-awareness in tension with her desire to speak-up about inequality. This was a duty or a responsibility, she told us, that was shaped by her community work, by the structural and institutionalised poverty she witnessed, and by the social work classes she attended at college:

> once they teach you about something like [that], they make you kind of feel, like, responsible for it. Right? In one way or another. So now that you have this knowledge and what are you going to do with it? And the least you can do is speak on it, right? (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015)

On one hand, she was encouraged to speak out in a protest environment in which 'everyone there believes in the same things you do' (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015). This created a sense of community and signalled a type of relationality and connection between people that she believed was not felt in the same way in other spaces. But on the other hand, she questioned how she could be involved in communities of colour, how she could be an effective ally. The language of *allyship* opened up a space for dialogue within the communities where Kim worked, which in turn encouraged her to be responsive to community-defined needs and culture. In many respects her concerns for the future, for her future and the futures of the people she worked with, were intertwined and gave shape to her goals and aspirations:

> How can I make my contribution into this capitalist society in a way that is responsive? That is responsible, you know. So it starts very much in the individual level. And also I see myself continuing to work, you know, within the community and whether I'm in the community or I'm supporting what the community is doing (Kim, interviewed 16 April 2015).

Nira

Nira (interviewed 3 April 2015) was a young, queer, non-black woman from Oklahoma. As a White Ally she pondered many of the same questions as Kim regarding appropriate modes of supporting the struggle for Black rights. However, her experiences in shaping a sense of self in relation to the decolonising politics of Black Lives Matter were quite different. She described her own sense of self developing alongside a growing awareness of racial politics and 'decolonisation' theory, encouraged by the Black Lives Matter members on campus.

Like many young people, Nira sought out social groups and interactions in the campus community at her university. Nira worked on-campus in exchange for a reduction in her rent at the student accommodation where she lived. In 2014, she told us, there was a rally in the building where she worked and the police subsequently shut the building down. In response Nira became involved in Occupy protests which opposed increasing student fees at the college. This experience, in addition to her interactions with professors and summer school, '*catalysed*' Nira:

> People here are very open . . . in general. And I didn't have to put myself in a box – it was like whatever you are that's cool. Looking back there are probably three main factors that *catalysed* me, one was . . . [a summer school program] because it's such an open loving space that I was able to explore parts of myself that I hadn't before, and really find an importance in connection with other people and connection across different identities. In a way – I've never thought of myself as a spiritual person before – but *feels* happened and I was like what are these 'feelings' I care about people now! That really changed me. Around the same time, my sophomore year, I started to study a field of agroecology – an alternative agriculture paradigm. Modern agriculture has monocultures, highly mechanised, lots of fossil based inputs, environmentally destructive, really commercial and privatised. But agroecology considers the socioeconomic and also environmental impacts of agriculture. The professor who teaches that is a notorious

> prickly pear. He gets up and says 'I have political opinions and I'm not going to hide them. Other professors might tell you they don't have a bias but I'm just going to come out and tell you that we should eradicate capitalism and it's all bad stuff'. And I was like ok, yeah. I was very inspired by how willing he was to go against the grain both socially and academically. (our emphasis)

For Nira, Occupy events were soon overshadowed by the news that Michael Brown had been shot and killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. She recalled her experience of these events:

> It was either Monday or Tuesday the decision not to indict Darren Willson, who was the officer that murdered Mike Brown. Immediately after that there was a lot of social uproar . . . On that night I went with a group of people . . . to be involved in a rally. At that time I didn't really know – who is instigating the rallies? Who is leading them?

After participating in the rally Nira grappled with the meaning of her involvement. What did it mean for a young white woman from Oklahoma to march in a Black Lives Matter rally? Soon she would be leaving the college through which she became involved with the politics of Black Lives Matter. Is this a fragment of herself she would leave behind? Are these the politics she would leave behind? What would the Black Lives Matter movement mean to her as she attempted to shape a life outside the campus? Nira's personal agonism unfolded as she attempted to come to terms with the meanings of her experiences on-campus as a *non-black* woman and a woman graduating soon hoping to carve out a future. She explained:

> I'm a graduating senior and my children may be impacted by the tuition increases, and I care about my fellow students, but at the same time I was wondering what stake do I hold in this [Black Lives Matter] movement . . . With protests that were happening . . . I think those first few day I think people were just angry. I can't empathise with that, having never been racially discriminated against, but I can fathom how if people are constantly dealing with interpersonal micro-aggressions, people

> struggle just to exist without being shot or experiencing serious violence. So when people were in the streets, they were angry and lashing out. I was wondering what I should do there. I ended up being on this line of people who are linked up in front of the police. You know people got pushed back and they fired a bunch of tear gas, so everybody kind of dispersed.

Nira was involved in other Black Lives Matter protests and described being tear gassed, seeing people, mostly students, 'get beat' and shot with rubber bullets.

> After that I held so much anger, and I think that sort of thing is a little traumatic, and I was looking for a way to redirect that. After that time I really invested in my personal relationships with students who were in the [Black Student Group] . . . Which for me was also a decolonising process, a decolonising of my own mind. In Oklahoma the last friend I had who was black was in kindergarten. So having deep interpersonal relationships with people who are black was a new thing for me . . . we organised people to form a White Allyship or a support group for the [Black Student Group] during their demonstration. The demonstration was very intentional, the media was very intentional, the placement of people, in the space, the chants, everything about it was well thought out . . . Most of the white folks with the Allies group was doing traffic control so you're not at the frontlines, you're not holding up signs but that felt right.

Through these moments Nira shaped a sense of self that was socially responsive and racially reflexive in her involvement in building relationships and community. The ways in which she knew herself were tied to particular types of relationships with others, particular modes of relationality (similar to the sense of community that Kim described). She described this connection as one of 'love and rage':

> whenever you see things being done . . . the phrase that comes to mind is *with love and rage*. But it's like a deep love that comes out of a sense of rage and vice versa. You're angry because you care about people. (our emphasis)

This experience of 'community' connection shaped her sense of self and the ways in which she imagined her future:

> I would say that for me, spiritually, my own life and its purpose is really closely associated with the lives of others. I know that as a young white person graduating . . . with a Bachelor of Science I could very easily make a lot of money working at a start-up . . . I think many people will choose to do that – I can't pass judgement on their decisions. But disengaging from my own society would be sort of hollowing. And how that looks will change depending on my own skill set, but no matter what career or job I'm working in I'll still be involved with organising in my own neighbourhood or workspace.

These hopes and expectations come with consequences. To disengage from her community would be 'hollowing' for Nira. The threat of living a disengaged life was imagined against the intensity of Nira's involvement with the White Allies. She attempted to come to terms with the complex challenges these movements identify, and the unfolding future in which she would have to leave the politically active campus environment, by developing a 'longer term vision':

> I think I've also come up with a longer term vision, rather than getting bogged down in one moment, because the greatest pitfall a person can experience is getting stuck in any one moment. I don't expect to see social equality or even the semblance of that in my life time and I believe that things will probably only get more difficult, considering increasing trends of income inequality and also the stresses on natural resources . . . Metaphorically this is a marathon, it's not a sprint, and I guess they're going to pass it on to their children.

Sue

Sue (interviewed 1 April 2015) is a young black woman studying social welfare and was a member of the Black Lives Matter movement. She was raised in a family of strong, politically active women and was eager to respond to and influence her educational environment. She shared stories with us about speaking back against racism in class, holding a

'teach-in' and using online spaces to mobilise and share knowledge with fellow Black Lives Matter members and peers. Her story of Black Lives Matter activism was told against broader social concerns about environmental degradation in her area, the influences of globalisation, and apprehension about the life she would be able to live in the future. Sue told us that she had always been politically active:

> My grandmother, she's always been around here and thrown Black History Month events and was involved in her own city council so I had very politically active women in my life and had them growing up. Even in high school I did mock trial and model UN, I had this class every morning at 8am where we would debate current social issues and that was just stuff that I loved to do . . . When I went to college it was right up my alley to continue with that and be learning about various social issues, how I can get involved and help out. So my first week on campus I joined a number of groups, and I think it's always just been part of my perspective and values. (Sue, interviewed 1 April 2015)

Through her social work classes and involvement with Black student groups Sue struggled to bring the rights of black people into view. In her classes she contested racist language and micro-aggressions by speaking up and using social media to gather the support of allies. She and other Black Lives Matter members also held a 'teach-in' in which they took over a class, effectively transforming the professor into a student. The aim of the teach-in was to engage with the language of racial inequality, the problem of micro-aggressions (including those of the professor), and to discuss why the national Black Lives Matter movement was not included in the syllabus. The teach-in resulted in the emergence of a strategic plan to engage curriculum and professors and support Faculty members 'in getting over some of that anxiety about discussing race for those Faculty who haven't ever really had those types of discussions' (Sue, interviewed 1 April 2015). Through her actions in class Sue was 'pushing the movement forward' and raising consciousness within the Faculty.

Through the frame of racial inequality Sue described a widening wage gap in the area in which she lived, and wondered what effect this would have on her community. She was only too aware that wage discrepancies

are experienced in particular ways by black people in the US. She believed 'There's a long history of white supremacy and oppression that really contributes to these social issues that we see currently . . . As social workers we tend to serve communities of predominantly people of colour and predominantly black communities'. She described a sense of connection and also a sense of responsibility to her community, not only as a social worker in training, but as a young black woman coming from a politically engaged family.

Sue considered the current problems of income disparity against what she described as the unfolding future of 'our society and community'. She believed that it was

> so pervasive . . . In what ways are we destroying our communities because of the huge wage discrepancies? It's a clear indication that our values are in the wrong place . . . and in the news this morning they're saying that 10% of the pollution in [the town] is pollution that's migrated from various countries in Asia. I recognise how connected we are. My ability to have drinking water and running water come out of my faucet, not everyone has access to that. So these social issues feel more pressing. What does it mean and what impact does it have on all of us? What does it mean for the vitality and longevity of our society and community? (Sue, interviewed 1 April 2015)

She was aware of the gravity, complexity and interconnectedness of the environmental and economic disasters that were taking place in her lifetime, and knew that through these conditions she was connected to the lives of other people living in geographically near and far locations. As she argued; 'I think being a young person I'm really invested in the longevity of our societies and communities, and there is this global sense that I feel that the wage gap isn't just felt in the United States, it was felt globally. I think our parents felt it too, we're all so, so connected'.

Given her awareness of the breadth and scope of these social, racial and environmental issues, Sue worried about where she would work and the kind of life she would be able to live. 'I definitely worry', she told us:

> I graduate on May 16th. I'm definitely concerned about how to afford everything here . . . especially housing. It's so expensive here. Even if you

> have any inkling or desire to start a family I think you have to be really aware of trying to set yourself up now to even try to compete – and it's not guaranteed that you'll be able to compete. I definitely worry, I'm actually taking a personal financial management class offered to [college] students, because I'm wondering what it is going to look like at the end of the day. Am I going to be able to provide for my family's needs and my needs? (Sue, interviewed 1 April 2015)

Sue's concerns for the future take shape against issues of wage discrepancies in her community, anti-Black racism (which she often experienced in the form of micro-aggressions) and problems of environmental sustainability. As a social worker and as a Black Lives Matter member, she hoped to play an active role pushing back against the conditions which threaten her future and the predominantly Black communities she worked with. Sue worried that this would not be enough. Her sense of self, her hopes for a family and a career, were intricately bound to her work as a member of the Black Lives Matter movement that was agitating for equality.

Harris

One of the aims of the Black Lives Matter movement is progressing understandings of *decolonising* thought and the role it plays in preserving societal and structural inequalities. Sue enacted decolonising thought as she challenged those teachers who were often unaware of the racist language they used. Fellow Black Lives Matter member and organiser Harris was also very conscious of the role language and action played when pressing back against discriminatory modes of thought. Harris was a postgraduate student who participated in the Occupy movement and played an organising role in Black Lives Matter. He had worked in social justice roles with young people in predominantly Black communities over the previous 5 years while undertaking his college degree. When we met Harris he was undertaking a graduate degree in social and cultural studies and was interested in community mobilisation around political issues, community-based teaching and pedagogy.

Harris' concerns were for the future of the communities he worked with and for the future of the young people he supported. He asked us 'how can we decolonise hope?' How can the future be imagined in ways that shift the frame of traditional and exploitative modes of thinking? This was a particularly complex question about the types of futures young Black people imagined for themselves, and the role Harris played in crafting or exemplifying these possible futures as a range of options and choices that unfolded in the present.

Harris' work with a social justice and education provider (SJEP) was where he began his story. When he (interviewed 23 March 2015) was in his senior year of undergraduate studies he was working with the education provider almost full time, 'doing research for change . . . I was getting back to the community where I needed to be':

> They said you can still do the college stuff but we need your attention there – we need you to help the students get to certain places and do certain things. My work with [the provider] was all about light mobilising, youth of colour, specifically black and Latino males on how to do research for change. Doing the youth participatory action research work and taking their projects, using those projects and they began to do advocacy on behalf of those projects. We got a lot done there. In my first 6 months we got 90 million for [a local project in a low SES community] . . . The problem was that the students became too vocal, when they started doing things for themselves and advocating for themselves, they weren't docile anymore . . . When the state took over they kicked out every non-profit that was working in [the community]. But the non-profits aren't costing them any money! But they take away from time spent focusing on the tests . . . and that's what was particularly horrible and insidious. (Harris, interviewed 23 March 2015)

The SJEP Harris was working with had been so successful that the students had become politically active and had mobilised to protest against the dismissal of their principal. This was a pivotal experience for Harris which gave him the 'language for his life's work'. The challenges faced by predominantly Black communities were made legible by the young people in the program, by the response of the State (in closing down the programs) and by the changes Harris had witnessed.

He described the experiences of one young man in the program whose older brother was killed by gang violence. This young man decided not to retaliate against the gang who killed his brother because this would only perpetuate the cycle of violence. This was a life changing choice. He told Harris that this choice was shaped by the memory of his older brother, and by his participation in Harris' education program. At this point Harris said

> we knew that this work meant more than just a job, it meant more than just an outcome, it meant somebody's life. And that's when I realised my work should be raising the consciousness of this particular group of people. One of the things that I brought, that very hetero-sexual approach, about teaching the boys how to be anti-oppressive. So, what does it mean to have a group of young men in a room talking about rape culture, or patriarchy? As much as we have to talk about the other stuff, we have to realise that they too can be perpetuators of oppression. It was very, very, very much so a space where we did a lot of healing and where I got to heal. And it was different from Occupy, and from other stuff I had done before because it had very real impact. And not just impact that changed policy – people's lives were trans-formed, in the same way my life was transformed. And it meant more to me. And that's pretty much what got me to where I am today . . . It gave me the language for my life's work.

Harris continued his postgraduate studies and organised rallies on campus for the Black Lives Matter movement. He continued to ask the hard questions about what it means to 'teach freedom . . . How do you teach people how to resist oppression? What does it look like to teach that in communities where they are oppressed?' In many respects, the role of the state in closing down the programs he was involved in had encouraged him to reflect on what his role in changing young people's lives could be, what language was needed to build relation-ships with people who are oppressed and what it might mean to sustain these relationships. Harris story provided incredible insights into how alternative futures become something that young people are able to imagine and enact together.

Conclusions . . . Where Anxiety Meets Hope

> The media has disparagingly called some of the mobilization around Ferguson as riots [sic]. While I do not share this analysis entirely, it makes sense that a people who feel like they can't breathe might turn to riots, a strategy some scholars have aptly argued is the last weapon of the truly dispossessed. (Paschel 2014: 31)

Our respondents claimed their futures by imagining them in relation to new embodied political ideals which require physical and emotional commitment. Kim, Nira, Sue and Harris are determined to cast their shadow over the future in ways that challenge anti-Black racism, environmental catastrophe and institutionalised versions of knowledge, power and class. They hoped for, and fought for, a truly different future, one that sits uneasily against neoliberal narratives of individualism and competition. In the futures that these young people imagined and gave shape to, their entire communities are what is at stake.

In many ways, Harris, Sue, Nira and Kim held 'hope' and career goals in tension with the knowledge that the pathway into the future was uncertain and something that they would need to forge themselves. Some entrepreneurial spirit was required. The possible dilemmas this created for Kim and Nira, in terms of how they think about their identity, was significant. Nira could not predict the intricate manoeuvres these transitions might require, just as she could not anticipate the ways in which she would come to know herself in the process. Her experiences on campus with Occupy, Black lives Matter and the White Allies created a generative space in which she was not forced to 'put herself in a box'. Nira's 'longer term vision' embodied and extended her sense of an unfolding self and also enabled her to come to terms with the fact that the injustices she has protested against may not be addressed in her life time.

Change is enacted by Sue as she pressed back in powerful ways against the micro-aggressions she faced as a young black woman. Both Sue and Harris were eager to make intellectual interventions as they struggled to make pressing social issues visible in different ways and for different groups of people. For Sue, this sometimes required educating the educators – which in itself raised problems about the

daily labour she must engage in as a young Black woman. After all, she should be able to enjoy her education in a culturally safe environment. For Harris the question of 'decolonising hope' signalled an effort to re-imagine his future, and to open up a space in which young Black people could do the same. He was also aware that as a male activist he offered a particular embodied language, and that language itself was part of the struggle.

The language of the three Black women who co-founded the movement reframed broader racial concerns *through* the lives of women and marginalised groups. It brings into focus a complex intersection of history, gender, power and race. Black Lives Matter members like Harris and Sue, and supporters Kim and Nira, reflexively engaged with the guiding principles of the movement. This involved personal identity struggles that mirror *the* struggle for Black lives to matter.

These stories indicate that it is not just 'the future' at stake. As we argued in relation to Kelly's (2015) entrepreneurial self, the future is tied to an ethic of personal responsibility to one's community, to the environment and to social justice. We have seen these commitments articulated through the language of Occupy, Black Lives Matter and the White Allies. Their stories reveal more than just a neoliberal condition of the self in which the worries of the world become individualised and responsibilised. Kim, Nira, Sue and Harris critically engage with the structures and social institutions which heap responsibility upon the young, upon the '99 percent', or simply upon the communities they work in. Theirs is not a battle for all lives to matter. In many ways it is a battle which seeks to alter the terms of recognition for what counts as a life and what counts as freedom. They share a number of fears and anxieties, risks and dangers, and in the process they imagine something more than a precarious future shaped by racial, financial, and environmental crises and conflicts. It is a revolution of sorts, and it is one of their making.

6

The Global Financial Crisis in Pop-Culture

Beck (1992) represents risk as something that is not, and cannot, be tied to any particular geographical location or group of people. Risk, in Beck's conception, is omnipresent – *everywhere all at once*. It is no wonder that our fears of risks, disasters and dangers – and our fear of our fear of risks, disasters and dangers – creates a state of anxiety (or dread) as people try to anticipate that which they know deep down cannot be anticipated. We can, according to Beck (1992), approach our uncertain futures in three possible, and non-mutually exclusive, ways – denial, apathy or embrace its transformative potential. Contemporary popular culture is flush with stories about the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), or that are related to or themed with GFC concepts, issues and problems. As was the case with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, much of this popular culture can be found in televisual comedy, with the traditional 'sit-com' once again proving itself to be an important platform from which cultural trauma can be played out, narrativised and incorporated in the social and cognitive story of living in a precarious world (see Howie 2011a). Humour provides a space for us to deal with difficult issues without confronting them too directly, too head-on. These television shows are many and varied and we will explore several in closer detail in this chapter.

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Social networking websites where stories are collated and shared amongst a community have also played a significant representational role in a post-GFC world. 'I am a 21 year old student', writes an anonymous poster to the 'We Are the 99 Percent' *Tumblr*[1] website:

> I have over $20,000 in student loans and more to go. The *best* job I can get pays me *$7.50* hour. I've been concerned that I may have a serious medical condition but am terrified of going to the doctor without health insurance. How horrible is it that I would re-evaluate my life's worth out of fear that I may not be able to afford it? I am the *99%*! (emphasis in original, anonymous poster, 'We Are the 99 Percent' 2013).

Indeed, many of the serious consequences of the GFC are represented on this *Tumblr*. The various stories of younger and older people depict crippling debt, unaffordable medical care in the US, and how going to college has not delivered the comparative advantage in the labour market that was promised. We explore this social networking site, and the narratives that emerge from it, more in the pages that follow.

This chapter will cover some ground as we analyse some of the prominent representations of the GFC in contemporary popular culture. We have identified several television programs and one prominent social networking site. This does not represent an exhaustive list; such a thing would take up all of the pages of this book. But it is a strong cross-section of forces being played out across the world as the GFC is responded to, as Beck (1992) might suggest, with *denial, apathy or by embracing it*. In some respects, the pop-cultural examples and our analysis of them, does all of these things in different ways and with different conceptual techniques.

[1] A popular photo- and message-sending website organised around theme pages created by groups of users. Available at http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/. Users of this *Tumblr* have taken to posting images of themselves holding up handwritten notes detailing their precarious economic situations.

Trendy Poverty in Williamsburg

The social and economic fallout experienced by young people as a consequence of the GFC has become a central theme in some post-GFC television programs especially in the *situation comedy* genre. Raymond Williams (1974: 151), in his analysis of media technologies, argued that televisual mediums 'are the contemporary tools of the long revolution towards an educated and participatory democracy'. As Fouts and Burggraf (1999: 474) argued, 'exposure' to televisual 'stereotypes' and 'models' powerfully reproduces and reinforces behavioural cues for social participation. Many of these social psychological studies are guided by Bandura's work on 'modelling' and 'vicarious reinforcement', and often make children and young people the subjects of the discussion, especially in the field of body image (see Fouts and Vaughn 2002; Fouts and Berggraf 1999: 474). Milner (1993: 44), writing from the cultural materialist perspective, has argued that by analysing dramatic mediums such as film, television, plays and literature we can uncover 'a new awareness of the social conventionality of form'.

Chief among post-GFC sitcoms has been the Whitney Cummings and Michael Patrick King television show, *Two Broke Girls* (2011-) – a show set entirely in the post-GFC world dealing with entrepreneurialism, poverty and young people's riskiness in the very trendy surrounds of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, just a short journey from the global pop-culture capital of Manhattan (and the stage of the worst non-state terrorism in history and – along with San Francisco – a common setting for disaster film and television). *Two Broke Girls* tells the ongoing tales of disadvantaged and marginalised Max (played by Kat Dennings) and the privileged, educated Caroline (played by Beth Behrs). Caroline is the collateral damage of a bank seizure of her family's assets and her father's arrest, prosecution and incarceration. She is (implausibly, perhaps) rendered broke and homeless. In the pilot episode of the series, Caroline meets Max when she seeks employment at the Williamsburg diner where Max has worked for several years. Max is a young waitress who was born into relative disadvantage and resides in a dilapidated building. Caroline is a formerly wealthy socialite whose father, Martin Channing, played a central role in the GFC and oversaw a criminal

Ponzi scheme, stealing many millions of dollars in the process. Caroline becomes a refugee from Manhattan and is forced to rely on the 'at-risk' but street-savvy Max in order to survive (see Harris 2004; Kelly 2001). *Two Broke Girls* was described by Rosenberg (2011), writing for one of the many pop-culture-themed online 'zines, as 'the closest thing we have to a 99 percent movement comedy'.

The stories that the program tells of Max and Caroline's life as broke girls in a post-GFC New York would be tragic, as many of the stories on post-GFC *Tumblr*s are, if it were not for the comedic contexts in which they are placed. Consider these few comedic comments made by Max, sometimes in dialogue with Caroline, at various stages during season one:

> I've been waiting my whole life. I've waited on tables. I've waited on bars.
>
> I've waited on home pregnancy tests (season 1, episode 1).
>
> This can't be about my drinking. I don't have the money to be a real alcoholic (season 1, episode 6).
>
> [searching her purse] Let's see. Phone, chapstick. A pill! Could be birth control, could be ecstasy. Waiting for a day off to find out. Why wait? [takes pill] If I start touching your hair in an hour, don't let me have sex with anyone (season 1, episode 21).
>
> *Caroline*: Sometimes you do something you're not comfortable with. It's how you grow.
>
> *Max*: No, it's how you get a ride home from a kegger in the woods (season 1, episode 22).

Max is consistently portrayed (to the sounds of the laugh track characteristic of most situation comedies) as a young woman born into disadvantage, an abuser of alcohol and marijuana, a willing participant in risky sex and other dangerous activities, and a person for whom no realistic future exists. Caroline, on the other hand, is portrayed as an educated, capable, shopping-obsessed rich girl. Consider the following exerts from Caroline, sometimes in dialogue with Max:

That's not me – the next morning, doing the walk of shame. I always see those girls with their messed-up sex hair, carrying their heels, clutching their coats to hide last night's outfit (season 1, episode 18).

Last year, I was taking meetings on Wall Street. This year, I'm eating meat from the street by a wall (season 1, episode 21).

Caroline: This is my favourite social event in all of New York. I've gone every year since I was 18. It's a fashion ball at the Museum of Art.

Max: Yeah, I know what it is. I catered it last year.

Caroline: Max, how weird. We were probably right in the very same room.

Max: Then there's a good chance I spit in your drink. Not really, unless you were acting all prissy and demanding.

Caroline and Max together: There's a good chance I/you spit in my/your drink (season 1, episode 23).

I went to Wharton, I'm not a ditz (season 2, episode 4).

Audiences learn that Caroline Channing is the daughter of financial magnate Martin Channing, who is viewed by Meyers (2011), writing for the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (JTA), as 'Bernie Madoff [if he] was a WASP'. In an 'obvious nod to the crimes of Madoff', Martin Channing is responsible for cheating New Yorkers out of millions of dollars. His imprisonment and the seizing of his assets leave his spoilt, Wharton Business School-educated daughter Caroline penniless and homeless. Her can-do attitude and business acumen leaves her in relatively good stead and she soon acquires a job at a local Williamsburg diner, and street-smart Max invites her to live with her in a tiny and dirty apartment. Despite their obvious differences, they overcome class and social divides and become close friends. It is not long before Caroline sees opportunity for entrepreneurial advancement in Max's unique and unlikely skill as a cupcake creator. They become business partners and start what becomes (initially) an unsuccessful cupcake business. What transpires (the show's *hook*) is the co-existence of contradictory life narratives that sees extreme wealth and relative poverty become unlikely social and business partners, each victims – in their own way – of economic catastrophe. The program's dialogues subsequently oscillate

between the riches-to-rags story told by Caroline, and the lifelong depression, abandonment and neglect that is mundane in Max's life.

Anita Harris' (2004: 14) descriptions of 'can-do' and 'at-risk' girls positions the cultural expectations of young women as falling within categories of either *competence* or *riskiness*. The 'can-do' temperament is 'identifiable by their commitment to exceptional careers and career planning, their belief in their capacity to invent themselves and succeed, and their display of a consumer lifestyle'. Can-do girls also delay child bearing until 'later'. At-risk girls, on the contrary, 'lack a sense of power or opportunity' and engage in 'inappropriate consumption behaviors', particularly in relation to drugs and alcohol. At-risk girls are also more likely to 'become pregnant at a young age' (Harris 2004: 14).

In *Two Broke Girls*, Max and Caroline gravitate towards can-do/at-risk characteristics in complex ways and it is not long before Caroline is taking more risks and Max is responsibly planning for her future. It may be that the show's producers are attempting to say something important, telling certain '*truths*', about young people and living in a post-GFC world (emphasis in original, Kelly 2011b: 431). Perhaps the GFC has levelled the economic playing fields, if only a little. Could it be that the can-do and at-risk young people have more in common than ever? The creators of *Two Broke Girls* seem to be suggesting that no matter how great your capacity to 'can-do', there may still be few economic or social opportunities to do very much at all. Perhaps the can-do mentality simply means that young people have further to fall than their 'at-risk' counterparts who do not pursue opportunities with the same expectations for success. In post-GFC times and spaces, at-risk young people may prove to be the realists, better placed to respond to the challenges posed by economic and social disadvantage.

A key irony of *Two Broke Girls* is that the can-do Caroline has ideas but no practical know-how to action her imagination. It is the hopelessly pessimistic Max that has the material methods for moving towards entrepreneurial self-sufficiency. Indeed, Kelly and Harrison (2009: 111) argue that the 'reflexive, Do-It-Yourself (DIY), individualized self' holds enormous transformative potential. This type of selfhood holds the promise of *transitioning* 'young people into the entrepreneurial workers so valued by twenty-first-century capitalism' (Kelly and Harrison 2009: 110). As Giddens (1991) has argued, identity formation

becomes a work-always-in-progress; a never complete program of self-development, invention and re-invention in response to *flows* of changing social conditions and ways of living. This, Žižek (2012a) argues, requires *dreaming* – thinking and re-thinking independent methods for existing in ambivalent and increasingly uncertain social and economically possible life-worlds. The privileged Caroline finds this kind of dreamwork easy until she loses her privilege. Max finds dreamwork impossible until she meets Caroline. The coming together of absurd wealth and absurd poverty becomes an allegory for what is needed for living in a post-GFC Western city – street smarts with a college education; survival instincts with a propensity for entrepreneurial ideas; and a rejection of the system whilst commandeering the weapons of the system to turn them against those who first produced and wielded them. Max and Caroline are an exemplary case of the emergence of *guerrilla selfhood in neoliberal contexts* (as we discussed in Chapter 4).

Tumblrs and 'Broke Girls' – Representations of Young People in Economic Disadvantage

> Suddenly, degrees aren't worth anything. Isn't that true? When I was a student, if you had a degree, you had a job. If you didn't have a job it's because you didn't want one . . . But now kids with degrees are often heading home to carry on playing video games, because you need an MA where the previous job required a BA, and now you need a PhD for the other. (Sir Ken Robinson, *TED* talk in 2006)

> How can you claim to speak for 99% of people?
>
> We don't claim to speak for anyone, we merely present stories. (Moderator of 'We Are the 99 Percent *Tumblr* page, responding to an anonymous poster, 14 October 2013)

The *Tumblr* social networking platform hosts the popular group 'We Are the 99 Percent'. Since the emergence of the GFC, this *Tumblr* site allowed users to post images of themselves holding up pieces of paper, sometimes obscuring their faces, that tells their story. Since many of the stories are

handwritten, underneath these photos the *Tumblr*-site moderators transcribed their stories into typed text. Since 2009, thousands of these images have been posted to the 'We Are the 99 Percent' *Tumblr*. Many tell stories not only about disadvantage and hardship as a consequence of economic disaster, but also about taking action where no reasonable action seemed possible.

Technology has provided young people with many potential avenues for participation in politics and practices of democracy. The '99 Percent' *Tumblr* site welcomes public submissions of stories of what it means to be the so-called 99 percent. Many, but not all, are written by young people. Their problems share many similarities and most are told in an American context – the unaffordability of health care, underemployment and insufficient income, the costs of child care and education for their children. Of the people who have posted on the site since the beginning of 2012, of those that posted their age (around half), the youngest was 14, the oldest 72. The average reported age of posters is 29.3 (however, the median is 25, and the age with the highest reported frequency is 19) ('We Are the 99 Percent' 2012a, 2013). Many care for young children. The following message greets visitors to the site:

> We are the 99 percent. We are getting kicked out of our homes. We are forced to choose between groceries and rent. We are denied quality medical care. We are suffering from environmental pollution. We are working long hours for little pay and no rights, if we're working at all. We are getting nothing while the other 1 percent is getting everything. We are the 99 percent. (We Are the 99 Percent 2013)

As Colthart (1996: 31–32) has argued, young people are deemed risky when they fail to achieve certain transitional markers that include completing secondary education, finding work, staying out of legal trouble, or showing maturity in relation to substances and sexual intimacy. Living in an insecure family environment may contribute to these failures. As stories from the *Tumblr* site demonstrate, it is the creation of such marginality and insecurity that has been the legacy of the 2007–2008 economic collapse:

> I CAN'T FIND MY FUTURE
> I looked in college.
> I found debt.
> I looked to my parents.
> I found debt and heartbreak.
> I looked at my friends.
> I found grief and sorrow.
> I looked at the land.
> I found MY COMMONS DESTROYED, MY LAKES AND RIVERS AND SOIL AND TREES AND BEES AND WORMS DESTROYED.
> I looked at my fellow humans.
> I find disease, debt, sorrow, dissonance, hate, greed, misery, AND NO ONE CARES ANYMORE.
> Well. I CARE. an awful lot.
> IM TAKING MY FUTURE BACK.
> (IT'S MINE)
> I AM THE 99% (capitalisations in original, 'We Are the 99 Percent' 2012b).

Many of the stories are full of pain, uncertainty and fear, but also a desire for action and hope. It is in these moments, when the situation is dire, but not hopeless, that a guerrilla self can thrive. As traditional social forms of social organisation and relations become unsteady, relations that 'helped us know our place and identity', tolerating and managing risk becomes an individual pursuit and a product of individual responsibility (Harris 2004: 4). Young people living in a post-economic crisis world must supposedly 'develop individual strategies' and embrace the ideology of 'personal responsibility' for emerging from uncertainty and overcoming social and economic disadvantage.

As the following post from 30 September 2012 demonstrates, dedication to traditional modes of neoliberal participation may prove to be the wrong kinds of effort:

> I am a female mechanical engineering student. I'm so good at Calculus, Physics, and 3-D designs. Dean's List student, even for classes as Calc 3 and Dynamics. I have no co-signer for loans, so I am only eligible for enough to

> cover books and tuition. It's taken my 5 years to complete 6 semesters because I run up my credit cards to pay for gas and food, and I can't go back until I pay the balance down some. My cards are currently completely maxed, and I fear that I am beginning to lose Calculus knowledge that I learned in 2005. My car is ready to break down at 130,000 miles, and my debt payments are $700 just for interest every month. I have been paying on and off between semesters and I still have $5000 to go before I even begin to pay the principal balance. I'm 25, live at home, and I bartend 50 hours a week. I want to design machines and energy systems that have a positive impact on our society, but I'm getting you HAMMERED and cleaning up after your party instead. I especially enjoy when people talk to me like an idiot because you got the wrong cheese on your burger. I know – I'm serving you dinner because I must be a stupid girl. ('We Are the 99 Percent' 2012c)

A recurring joke in *Two Broke Girls* revolves around the mismatch between Caroline's expensive and prestigious education and her current economic situation. It seems that in post-GFC popular culture, going to a prestigious school does not guarantee sustaining employment. *I went to Wharton* becomes a motif for being highly skilled, motivated and theoretically employable whilst being paradoxically broke, under-employed and unable to afford basic necessities. This was a central story that emerged from our research on the US West Coast in 2014 and 2015 (see Chapters 3–5). Elite education is now only one step in a long journey towards (but perhaps never actually achieving) financial independence, health and well-being.

Where neoliberal ideology seeks to position an individual's *lack* with personal responsibility and a willingness to pursue opportunities, the figure of Caroline reminds viewers that so-called over-educated young people have flooded the employment market and find themselves in precarious employment situations. We have, with Caroline, a highly educated yet poor waitress, temp-worker and cleaner. Soon after meeting Max, and realising Max bakes the cupcakes that are sold in the diner where they both work, the two friends become business partners, opening a cupcake store in trendy Willliamsburg, using Max's baking skills and Caroline's business acumen. Like most businesses, theirs fails. We have been unable to find another popular television show where the outcome of the protagonists chasing a

dream is failure. But this is television for post-GFC audiences. The irony is doubled by Max's skills in cupcake making and surviving below the poverty line becoming their source of hope in post-GFC New York. They are skills that Wharton-educated Caroline does not possess.

Despite the failure of their business, what we learn is that post-GFC success requires an imagination – dreamwork (see Haraway 2004: 323; Žižek 2012a: 1). For Haraway (2004: 323), doing 'dreamwork' is an important way forward in the practice of a sociological imagination (see Gane 2012: 138). Dreamwork 'involves the construction of imaginary futures to show how things might be otherwise in the present: a kind of genealogy in reverse'. In doing so we look to some 'arbitrary' future in order to form pictures of what 'emerging' presents are feeding such imagined times to come (Gane 2012: 138). In the context of young people protesting governmental oppression or economic inequality, this dreamwork reverses further, this time into the 'institutional failings' that have led to this global unrest (Ungar 2001: 273). But it is precisely these moments of institutional failure that provides opportunities for those who can see them:

> I HAVE:
> Been in the military and
> Lived in 3 countries and
> Been to 8 countries and
> Lived in 6 states and
> Sat in college classrooms and
> Worked as a union electrician and
> Worked in offices high above Manhattan and
> Sat on movie and television sets and
> Been on the silver screen and
> Been on multiple stages and
> Earned well into a 6 figure salary and
> Been broke and
> Homeless on the street and
> Been an activist and
> Writer in NYC and
> Live in Manhattan opulence and
> Lived in the South Bronx and'
> Am a father of two and. . . . ('We Are the 99 Percent' 2012a)

This poster has tasted many different levels of social status and economic security, and he believed that there are many institutional dilemmas that perpetuate poverty and wealth and that these need to be challenged in the name of equality. He warns, however, of perceptual blindness that means that many see the world in personalised, limited ways, making people 'close minded and judgemental'. Importantly, he believed that it was 'up to me' to do something about this situation:

> there is much beauty in the world and much beauty in every human being, there is much beauty in you right now. It is *up to me* to find that beauty while not pretending the world is perfect. It is *up to me* to find that beauty and still see how the world is unjust and cruel. It is *up to me* to find that beauty while still trying to make the world better than it is right now. It is *up to me* to see the beauty in you while seeing that you are insulated and afraid to really break out of your self limiting view of things . . . It is *up to me* to reach out, to speak up, to be bold, to be alive. (our emphasis)

It is this motif of '*up to me*' that is the catalyst of emerging selfhood. As this story demonstrates, the neoliberal demand for individual responsibilisation can be re-appropriated for non-neoliberal purposes. If I choose to never settle in one place, then that is *up to me*. If I choose to accumulate wealth, throw it all away, work hard and then do no work at all, then that is *up to me* as well. This boom and bust logic is a key narrative in *Two Broke Girls*. Caroline's confidence and drive has its limits, and she routinely despairs at her lack of progress and success. It is at these moments than risky Max reminds Caroline that it doesn't matter. They work hard in their entrepreneurial endeavours, but when they fail, Max can always fall back on risky sex, marijuana and alcohol. Caroline's opiate is financial success. In a post-GFC world, financial success may prove elusive, but risky behaviour is always an option.

Occupying and the Coming Revolution: The Hunger Games and Youthful Imagining

> Occupy your heart. Another world is possible, make ready your dreams. (banner at an Occupy rally. In Chomsky 2012: 20–21)

The Occupy movements, according to Noam Chomsky (2012: 54), were the 'first major public response . . . to about 30 years of a really quite bitter class war that has led to social, economic and political arrangements in which the system of democracy has been shredded'. For Wendy Brown (2015), these 'arrangements' are what we have come to call *neoliberalism*. Neoliberalism is the catch-phrase, the ideological label, we give to conditions of economic, social and cultural marginalisation, disadvantage and uncertainty born of a fetishistic version of so-called free-market capitalism. It is a condition where the money-making logic has no stopping point and the capability to destroy anything in its path – the environment, democracy, people.

'The institutions and principles aimed at securing democracy', argues Brown (2015: 17), 'are challenged by neoliberalism's "economization" of political life and of other heretofore noneconomic spheres and activities'. Neoliberalism, in this view, is an extension of rational, utility maximising economics into the everydayness of social and cultural belonging. It can even be said that neoliberalism produces its own type of 'common-sense' which encourages us to understand ourselves, our lives, and each other as consumers and market competitors, dragging us further and further away from 'collectivist attitudes that underpinned the welfare state era' (Hall and O'Shea 2013: 11). This type of common sense encourages fierce individualisation, competitiveness, entrepreneurialism and servitude to the so-called *realities* of the market.

Pop-culture in a time of neoliberalism, especially since the 2007–2008 GFC, has played a significant role in representing and questioning these *arrangements*, this neoliberal *common sense* (Hall and O'Shea 2013). These moments in pop-culture feature young characters and are made, mostly, for young audiences.[2] Max and Caroline wonder what entrepreneurial skills might be necessary in a post-GFC New York City in order to work, eat, receive medical care, deal with mental health issues and pay rent, whilst still enjoying their lives as 'broke' young women in an exciting city. The television show *Girls* (2012-) asks questions about

[2] Although there have been some surprising viewership outcomes. See Daily Mail Australia 2012.

resilience and survival amidst economic uncertainty. The first episode sets the scene of the series with a young, unpaid intern named Hannah telling her boss that she couldn't keep working for free and needed an income. She is promptly told that she will not be working there any longer. In the pages that follow we want to examine *The Hunger Games* novels and films and the story of a teenager named Katniss Everdeen as an artefact of a neoliberal, post-GFC world. *The Hunger Games* asks its audiences to consider what the world would look like if we imagined it in other terms. What if we replaced the status quo with a world of our own making? What *sacrifices* would this require?

We argue here that *The Hunger Games* novels and films should be read as *moments that imagine the future in other terms* and are, therefore, possible catalysts for change. This reading requires diligent viewing and a little imagination. We have organised this around two sections. In the first, we describe key allegories from *The Hunger Games* that we believe have the capacity to inform and influence how young people imagine their futures. Two, in particular, stand out – the song 'The Hanging Tree' that becomes the ballad of the revolution in *The Hunger Games*, and the existence of the 'Mockingjay' birds which become the emblems for nationwide resistance. In the second section, we analyse these allegories in relation to contemporary social theory and youth studies that has explored the roles of young people in times of socio-economic uncertainty and upheaval, especially as they relate to themes of neoliberalism and the GFC. In this section we also provide examples of the impact of *The Hunger Games* in post-GFC societies. We want to read *The Hunger Games* as *political action* able to help young people think through the dilemmas posed by neoliberalism, to re-invent themselves in the process, and resist, when they can, those socio-economic conditions that we are raised to believe are inevitable. In this way, we do not wish to shy away from the possibility that rethinking neoliberalism may require a *revolution* – if only a revolution of imagination.

By alerting young people to the possible consequences of injustice, negligence amongst politicians and the slippery goals of those with political power, allegorical tales such as *The Hunger Games* have a radical potential, one that may see young people eventually remake their world in more equitable socio-economic terms.

Katniss Everdeen and the Right Kind of Eyes

Are you, are you, coming to the tree? – Katniss Everdeen.

We should, in any analysis of popular culture, develop what Hunter S. Thompson (2005: 68) called the 'right kind of eyes'. With the *right kinds of eyes* we notice that which has previously escaped our awareness. With these eyes we can see opportunities where there seemed to be dead ends, we find uses for *waste*, and we can turn those aspects of neoliberalism that threaten to crush us into possibilities for social justice, health and well-being and even economic prosperity (see Howie 2015: 507).

The Hunger Games is set in the not-too-distant future in a nation called *Panem*. It is a nation built out of the ashes of present-day North America. It tells a well-worn dystopic tale. The history of Panem is a story about division, war and its fallout, and the ushering in of a functioning totalitarianism where the affluent flourish at the expense of the huddled, 'silent' majority (Baudrillard 1983). For more than 70 years peace is maintained in the realm with vicious peacekeeping troops and the annual 'Hunger Games' where each segregated 'district' must offer two children – one girl and one boy – to participate in a fight-to-the-death gladiatorial event which is beamed into households across Panem as a spectacularised sporting event (Collins 2008: 21). *The Hunger Games* tells the story of Katniss Everdeen and her life in 'District 12' – an impoverished region of *Panem*. In this hyper-mediated, hyper-surveilled dystopia, the whole nation witnesses Katniss time and again show courage beyond her age and social status and it inspires insurrection in the most desperately marginalised sections of the population.

We want to draw attention to two stories, in particular, from *The Hunger Games* series.

The Hanging Tree

The first is a song called 'The Hanging Tree'. It tells the story of an alleged criminal, captured and sentenced to hanging, who cries out to his missing lover and co-accused. Katniss' father sung it to her as a child. Sitting at a lake she sings it for the media team charged with following her around to

capture moments that could be used as propaganda to inspire the resistance movements. The song echoes throughout the surrounding cliffs and is eerily mimicked by the *mockingjay* birds. It becomes the 'spark' that leads to violent rebellion during the uprising. In the third film, *Mockingjay Part 1*, revolutionaries are depicted singing this song as they launch an attack against a water catchment that serves the population in the affluent 'Capitol'. This attack costs many of the revolutionaries their lives. One particular verse of this song stands out as the call to revolution and becomes an allegory for the ambivalence inherent in any attempt to create significant socio-economic change. This is how the lyrics appear in the novel:

> Are you, are you, coming to the tree?
> Wear a necklace of rope, side by side with me.
> Strange things did happen here, no stranger would it be,
> If we met at midnight at the hanging tree. (Collins 2010: 139)

Katniss – as the narrator of the novels – speaks at length about the ambivalence inherent in the song, the uneasy feelings it sparked within her and her mother's intense reaction when her father sung it. Prim, Katniss' younger sister, as a toddler would make 'necklaces out of scraps of old rope like it said in the song, not knowing the real meaning of the words' (Collins 2010: 139–140). Katniss recalls her mother getting angry, 'snatching' away the rope necklaces and yelling at her father. After all, executions were a regular occurrence in 'District 12'. But it is Katniss' musings on the song's shifting meaning as she transitioned from childhood to adulthood that illuminates some of the revolutionary character of the *The Hunger Games* series:

> At the beginning, it sounds like a guy is trying to get his girlfriend to secretly meet up with him at midnight. But it's an odd place for a tryst, a hanging tree . . . but it's not until the third verse that 'The Hanging Tree' begins to get unnerving. You realize the singer of the song is the dead murderer. He's still in the hanging tree. And even though he told his lover to flee, he keeps asking if she's coming to meet him . . . at first you think he's talking about when he told her to flee presumably to safety. But then you wonder if he meant for her to run to him. To death . . . it's clear what he's waiting for. His lover, with her rope necklace, hanging dead next to him in the tree. (Collins 2010: 140–141)

Plutarc Heavensbee – a double agent and architect of both the 'Hunger Games' and the revolution – sees enormous potential in this song as a propaganda weapon, but with one small change. One should change the 'necklace of rope' to a 'necklace of hope'. The change is dramatic. In one, the uprising requires that civil unrest ends in almost certain death for the revolutionary, but perhaps we should pay such a price for meaningful change. In the other, all that is required is *hope*. Perhaps all one needs to rebel is to simply *want* change with no need to sacrifice anything. The reality is that a 'necklace of rope' may still be what is required, but we believe that all we need is hope despite knowing that hope will never be enough – thoughts do not secure change, but action might. In a further twist, the official song that hit the global charts and features on the motion picture soundtrack to *Mockingjay* is the version with 'hope'. In short, we, as consumers of *The Hunger Games* franchise, consume the propaganda version of the song.

Katniss wonders whether it may be better to die than live under The Capitol's rule. Indeed, in *The Hunger Games* films, suicidal resistance is a central theme. The song becomes a tool of the rebellion – come and join Katniss in certain death and face the possibility of freedom. In the water reservoir the rebels can be seen charging with rudimentary weapons at peacekeepers with machine guns. Their sheer numbers see them win the day. Indeed, a key feature of their attack is the use of rebels to shield a large bomb and those carrying it. Suicidal violence is inscribed into the revolutionary message again when Katniss ends a furious and uplifting speech with the phrase 'If we burn you burn with us' (Collins 2010: 119). In the film *Catching Fire*, suicidal violence is again embraced in a rebel terrorist attack. Before they detonate their bomb, after sustaining heavy losses, a rebel leader screams '*If we burn you burn with us*'.

The Mockingjay

The second story we want to focus on is the birth of what came to be called the 'Mockingjay'. *Mockingjay* is the title of the third book, the third and fourth films (which is the *Mockingjay* book in two parts), and a type of bird that can be found in many parts of Panem. It was the symbolism around

which the icon of Katniss Everdeen was built and which served as a recognisable symbol of the uprisings that spread throughout the nation. Throughout the series, the imagery of the Mockingjay appeared again and again as an antagonism to those in power and as a symbol of non-compliance, the withdrawal of consent and resistance. Symbols of the Mockingjay are subsequently banned throughout Panem.

In the films, the symbol of the Mockingjay is rendered abstract. Little is explained of their existence and much is made of their trait of imitating sounds – Katniss' three toned whistle used to communicate with allies during the Hunger Games is imitated by the birds and spread throughout the forest. But in the books, the birds have a history. It is a history bound to oppressive governmental policies, unfair working conditions, marginalisation, surveillance, violence, genetic engineering, and nature's accommodating and adapting tendencies. Mockingjays began their species as 'Jabberjays' – creatures that are also featured in the novels and films.

'Jabberjays' are creatures that were genetically engineered by the government – 'mutts', as they are known in *The Hunger Games* universe – to spy on rebels during the first uprising 74 years before the events in the books take place. Jabberjays, you see, repeat whatever they hear. As such, jabberjays would fly in to listen to secret meetings and report back to the government and military. The irony of these creatures is that their failure leads ultimately to the destruction of the authoritarian rulers who created them (although this destruction takes three-quarters of a century to transpire). Their failure is threefold: 1). The rebels quickly realise that these birds are not natives of Panem and are quickly identified as government mutts, their purpose deduced. The rebels feed these birds false information. Upon realising this, the government eliminates the program and releases the jabberjays into the wild. 2). The released jabberjays mate with the native Mockingbirds and create a new species dubbed 'mockingjays' that, instead of repeating words, repeat sound and tunes in melodic tones; 'Music draws mockingjays like blossoms do bees' (Collins 2010: 137). These tones become a resource for the impoverished District 11 and a tool for the nature-savvy whilst in the Hunger Games arena. A whistled tune signals the end of the work day in District 11 which the mockingjays

repeat and spread around the orchards where the workers toil long days for minimal reward. In the arena of the Hunger Games, Katniss and her District 11 ally Rue use the mockingjays to communicate and signal the next stage of their plan. 3). The existence of mockingjays literally mocks the supposedly powerful Panem rulers and becomes an emblem of the government's weakness and vulnerability. A powerful weapon of the government is transformed into a weapon of the resistance. As a material force, as inspiration and as revolutionary symbol, the technologies of the oppressive government turned out to be their moment of vulnerability. It is the symbol of 'The Mockingjay' that inspires the events leading up to the building of an army, the storming of the Capitol and the removal of the totalitarian government bunkered there.

The tragic irony – from the perspective of the denizens of the Capitol – is that their special weapons, science and tricks are what made them vulnerable. Their attempts to defeat the rebels made them stronger, delivering them the tool and symbol that would help the rebels realise victory.

These stories are rich in allegory, but they should not be read in abstraction. At its heart, *The Hunger Games* is a story of *revolution*. It is about rising up, shedding the shackles of un-freedom, much of which is emotional and psychological. As the story continues to unfold we begin to learn that the dystopia that Collins is describing shares many socio-economic similarities to the world in which we live. One might even argue that we find ourselves, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, in a situation that is *proto*-Hunger Games. The economic inequality, the social and biological engineering, the cultural domination, it is all there. All we need now, perhaps, is some sort of military catastrophe or misplaced aggression. Or, so the story goes.

Precariousness: Imagined and Unimaginable Futures

Recent youth studies scholarship has been heavily influenced by Guy Standing's (2014) work on *the precariat*. It comes on the back of two decades of youth studies scholarship that has explored the meanings of

risk particularly in the contexts of participation in the labour market and how young people manage 'transitions' from childhood to adolescence to so-called adulthood (see Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Kelly 2006; Wyn and White 1997).

In the aftermath of the 2007–2008 GFC, understanding how young people find their way into various versions of adulthood has taken on dangerous dimensions. There was a 'deadly time bomb' that loomed over the world, and it was one that was said to be 'more destructive and dangerous' than anything an international terrorist could muster (*The Hindu* in Sukarieh and Tannock 2008: 301):

> Ticking time bombs, social dynamite, boiling-over frustrations, pent-up anger, violent conflicts, political insurrection and instability, disease and death. These are some of the representations of youth that are now being widely circulated, as youth returns to centre stage in poverty and development discourse in global centres of power and across the developing world. (*The Hindu* in Sukarieh and Tannock 2008: 301)

There is a second portrayal of young people at work in these dangerous times, and that is young people as 'agents of change', as 'citizens and leaders', and as a nation's 'most important assets'. We view young people in their positivity when they 'stand inside this system as willing and enthusiastic participants'. But when young people stand 'outside this system' and question and doubt 'its basic precepts and promises' (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008: 302), they become subject to discourses of being 'at-risk' (Kelly 2006; Harris 2004), or not fully developed in their brains and bodies (Bessant 2008). Here we find intervention strategies designed to correct the supposedly bad choices they have made, such as in the case of counter-radicalisation programs that have been *en vogue* since the rise of the Islamic State (Schmitt 2015).

Indeed, these framings of young people as a problematic and dangerous population have a long history. According to Bessant (2008: 348), the nineteenth and twentieth century provided claims from 'phrenologists, those promoting sex brain research, criminologists . . . eugenicists, and more recent geneticists' that biology and anatomy sufficiently explains gender and racial inequality, insanity and criminality. This logic blended

easily with arguments about the 'different' and therefore problematic 'adolescent brain' (Bessant 2008: 348–349). Harris (2004: 13) argues that young people are framed as either capable or deficient, consumers and producers or societal drains and liabilities. Kelly (2006) argued that 'young people' – as a discursive category – have been institutionally produced as a dangerous and at-risk population that should be made subject to a range of narratives and social engineering interventions that sit amongst neoliberal imperatives of transitioning from education to the labour force, from idleness to productivity and from family and school based dependency to individualism. But these narratives were based on assumptions about the reliability and continuity of the institutions that structure everyday neoliberal realities – that hard work and education will result in stable employment, that avoiding risky habits surrounding sex and drugs will ensure mature adult relationships, and that a positive attitude would ward off collapsing mental health and well-being.

In the aftermath of the GFC, Walsh (2015: 57) argues that young people face 'an increasingly fluid workforce that is . . . insecure and precarious'. We might say that for young people there is increasingly a 'grey area between employment and unemployment' (Furlong 2007: 102). The GFC has resulted in what may be a whole generation of young people who experience a precarious existence that their parents did not suffer. 'The Precariat' is Guy Standing's (2014) name for a generation and a class that is characterised by under- and unemployment, perpetual and structural disadvantage, perpetual uncertainty and, inevitably, marginalisation:

> Youth are entering labour markets in some disarray, many experiencing status frustration, feeling economically insecure and unable to see how to build a career. Their predicament in many countries is compounded by unemployment. The financial meltdown hit young people hard. Millions lost jobs, millions more could not enter the labour market, and those who did found they had lower wages than their predecessors. (Standing 2014: 132)

While Standing's argument runs the risk of essentialising the experiences of a diverse and complex population, it is surely true that the 2007–2008 GFC has exacerbated already existing conditions of disadvantage and

youth marginalisation. This coupled with the phenomenon of older people re-entering the labour market, working longer, and doing so in lower-skilled jobs that may have otherwise been occupied by under-skilled young people (Standing 2014: 135–137). 'Dismal prospects' is how Standing (2014: 133–134) describes these multitude of challenges facing young people as they enter the 'precarity trap':

> For many, exposure to a commodifying education system leads to a period of status frustration. While for some, a short period of playing in the precariat may be an interlude between education and entering the rich salatariat or even the elite, for the majority, the future promises a stream of temporary jobs with no prospect of developing an occupational career. For an increasing number, it is about being trained in 'employability', to be made *presentable and flexible* in any number of ways, none corresponding to what they really want. (our emphasis)

Presentable and flexible, or, stated differently, *neoliberal*. This 'status frustration', however, could be viewed as a positive development since a dissatisfaction with the status quo may prove to be the seed of meaningful change. Status frustration may come to represent the base from which the future can be imagined in other terms (see Campbell 2015). This might be the seeds of the Mockingjay – a predicament created by the powerful that may lead to uprising and change amongst those that do not benefit under neoliberalism. This, one might say, was the essence of the activities pursued by the Occupy movements and the Black Lives Matter movement, and in protests against austerity and globalisation around the world.

For Wendy Brown (2015: 30), 'Intensified inequality, crass commodification and commerce' and 'ever-growing corporate influence in government' are among the consequences of neoliberalism and among the chief grievances of post-GFC protest and change movements. What these movements understand better than most people, for Brown (2015: 218), is that 'Citizenship in its thinnest mode is mere membership'. What many young activists also seem to understand is that *patriotism* is not the only form that activism might take (although, for a whole range of reasons, right-wing movements are particularly prominent in Western countries at the time of writing). But what form can and should their *action* take?

> Today, as economic metrics have saturated the state and the national purpose, the neoliberal citizen *need not stoically risk death on the battlefield*, only bear up uncomplainingly in the face of unemployment, underemployment, or employment unto death. The properly interpellated neoliberal citizen makes no claims for protection against capitalism's suddenly burst bubbles, job-shedding recessions, credit crunches, and housing market collapses, its appetites for outsourcing or the discovery or pleasure and profit in betting against itself or betting on catastrophe. (our emphasis, Brown 2015: 218)

Defined in this way, the task in developing a disposition suited to neoliberal times involves becoming 'dispossessed' of one's neoliberal citizenship (see Butler and Athanasiou 2013: ix–xi). Part of simply *being* a neoliberal citizen, in this view, is doing nothing, accepting the world as it is, living happily (or not) amongst the status quo. It may be that doing *something*, resisting in any meaningful or perhaps non-meaningful way, is the building blocks for resisting the injustices of neoliberalism. It may be the basis of imagining a future in other terms. This might be the moment that young people decide if their necklace is one of rope, or one of hope.

How Generation K Imagines the Future

The Hunger Games has been among the most read and most watched novels and films in the youth culture literary and film genre. Collins' books have sold more than 65 million copies in the US alone and the films have earned more than two billion dollars in ticket sales. It has, in undoubtedly diverse and complex ways, inspired young people in a post-GFC world to think and act in other terms. Evidence of this can be found in many places. Hughes (2015) argues that the 'generation who came to Katniss as young teens and have grown up ploughing through the books and queuing for the movies respond to her story in a particularly personal way'. The generation of young people born between 1995 and 2002, according to Noreena Hertz (2015), could be referred to as 'Generation K' – a generation of young people raised with social networking technologies and some of the worst disasters since the Second World War. 9/11, the GFC, Wikileaks and Snowden and looming environmental catastrophe have characterised

the first 16 years of the twenty-first century, with few signs that a belief in imminent disaster is fading:

> Al Qaeda and ISIS have been piped into their smartphones and they have witnessed their parents lose their jobs. They are a group for whom there are disturbing echoes of the dystopian landscape that Katniss encounters in *The Hunger Games*'s District 12. Unequal, violent, hard. (Hertz 2015)

The consequence of this is a generation living with a siege mentality that labour under a belief that anxiety, uncertainty and doubt are inevitable consequences of imagining a future. The character of Katniss Everdeen shows us that maybe there is reason for hope if we are willing to do what it takes. We may, perhaps, have to wear a necklace of rope (or hope) before change is secured, but fire, rage and desire has the potential to overthrow an unjust and immoral system.

This is the essence of what Khader (2014) has described as the effects of 'Mockingjay delusions'. He writes that the series has been 'hailed for spreading a new hopeful message of revolution to millennials around the world' where economic inequality must inevitably fail in a world where people refuse to accept unwarranted state violence and systemic discrimination (Khader 2014; and see Wacquant 2009). Using a Žižekian-styled psychoanalysis, Khader counters this revolutionary reading by describing the context in which he watched one of the films (*Catching Fire*) in an Israeli cinema. First, he described a routine scenario in Israeli occupied territories that he had recently witnessed – Palestinian children, 4 or 5 years old, throwing stones at symbols of the Israeli state and subsequently being detained by Israeli soldiers. Attending a screening of a *Hunger Games* film was, therefore, expected to be an experience rich with ambivalence and solemnity. Indeed, as he took his seat in the theatre, there was a row in front of him containing Israeli soldiers. At one point in the film the Israeli cinema audience claps loudly – when Peeta and Katniss kiss passionately in the Hunger Games arena. This is read by Khader (2014) as an example of Hollywood *surplus enjoyment* that provides the audience with a way to disengage from the traumatic true message of a film. In Israel, perhaps, a Hunger Games-style revolution is too confronting to consider, so let's be in rapture at the love story. Mockingjay delusions indeed!

Recent protests and civil disruptions in Hong Kong in 2014, however, provide some merit to the idea of a revolution born of Generation K. There were protests there partially inspired by *The Hunger Games* books and movies. The 'pro-democracy protesters' even adopted the 'three-fingered salute' championed by Katniss. In the Hunger Games' universe, this salute is about defiance and represents a 'screw you' attitude towards people with impossible power (Sim 2014a). The salute was used by protesters in Thailand as well, prompting the Thai government to declare that if people continued to make the salute whilst part of a large group then military police 'will have to make an arrest' (Sim 2014b). In late 2014, the Thai police and military made good on this threat arresting several student protesters, and a cinema chain pulled *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* movie from their offerings (Mydans 2014). Here Katniss' salute evolved into a symbol of real uprising.

Katniss Everdeen, we argue, helped provide a narrative for these protesters to imagine their futures in other terms. The three finger salute is not simply a pop-cultural tribute or a playful representation of civic rights. As the government in Thailand likely knew, revolution was on Katniss' mind and she asked her followers to not only wear a necklace of hope, but also one of rope. Violence, the Thai police and government likely feared, may soon follow the salute. This, for Žižek (2012b), is the effect of a superhero. It is the 'outcasts, freaks' who take action when injustice reigns and where 'superheros have to enter precisely when normal society cannot do it'. But change does not happen overnight. The seeds of change are often laid well before change is realised. As Žižek (2014a: 20) argues:

> People do not rebel when 'things are really bad' but when their expectations are disappointed. The French Revolution occurred after the king and the nobles had for decades been gradually losing their grip on power; the 1956 anti-Communist revolt in Hungary exploded after Nagy Imre had already been prime minister for two years, after (relatively) free debates among intellectuals; people rebelled in Egypt in 2011 because there had been some economic progress under Mubarak, which had given rise to a whole class of educated young people who participated in the universal digital culture . . . That's the problem with development

> and progress: they are always uneven, they give birth to new instabilities and antagonisms, they generate new expectations that cannot be met.

This, one could argue, is the key message of *The Hunger Games* novels and films and the message that has contributed to the (sometimes energetic, sometimes lacklustre) mobilisation of 'Generation K'. The first step towards change is knowing, and believing, that change is needed. It is daring to hope for a future other than the one we inherited.

Donald Sutherland, the actor who played the tyrannical President Snow in *The Hunger Games* movie franchise, told an interviewer that he hoped the movies would spark a global revolution amongst the millennial-aged young people who were growing up believing that inequality is not inevitable and that a price will need to be paid to change the world (Khader 2014). 'It's getting drastic in this country', Sutherland (in Carroll 2013) believes. Warfare, welfare cuts, corporate tax breaks, systemic racism – '*Millennials need awaking from slumber*' (our emphasis, Carroll 2013).

As Khader (2014) notes:

> He even reminisced in one interview about the 'revolutionary' energy he felt as a young man in Toronto in 1954, as he left a theater outraged by the representation of social inequality and injustice in the double-feature Federico Fellini's *La Strada* and Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory.* He was so moved that he felt compelled to throw stones or gravel at the presumably empty street in protest of all the injustice and oppression in the world.

Sutherland's tale, however, is mired in the *ideology* he seeks to replace. Carroll's (2013) interview with Sutherland takes place 'high up in a Four Seasons hotel overlooking Beverly Hills, sunlight glinting off mansions and boutiques below, an unlikely cradle of revolution'. We can remember in these moments that *The Hunger Games* is a Hollywood feature film that made millionaires out of those who created and crafted the story for audiences.

Where does this leave the youthful change agents of tomorrow? In ambivalence, anxiety and uncertainty, sure. But, we argue, also with hope. We should remember that Donald Sutherland plays President

Snow – the cold, calculating President residing in the idiotic wealth of The Capitol. The irony of President Snow – and it is an irony shared by Bond villains, evil leaders and malevolent figures in television and cinematic popular culture – is that he does not believe his own lies. He stage-manages the economy, the government and the violence wrought on the 12 districts. He leads cynically, believing with certainty that he only remains in power if people do nothing in much the same way neoliberalism can only survive if people do nothing. This telling conversation that Katniss recalls in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* attests to this:

> *Snow:* My advisors were concerned you would be difficult, but you're not planning on being difficult at all, are you?
> *Katniss:* No.
> *Snow:* That's what I told them. I said any girl who goes to such lengths to preserve her life isn't going to be interested in throwing it away with both hands. (Collins 2009: 116)

Snow's message here combines with the message of the man who played him in the movie – *the crime is doing nothing*. It is in this moment that neoliberalism merges with the movements that resist it. We should remember that the dangers of neoliberalism are largely abstractions for some (academics, journalists, Hollywood film makers, authors of teen literature), and everyday life for others. We want to end this section with reference to a prominent voice and leader in the Black Lives Matter movement; Cat Brooks (2015). Brooks delivered this speech to a San Francisco Police Commission into a police shooting.

> [Y]ou trot yourself out and tell us we're not intelligent enough to understand that we saw a black man gunned down, execution style . . . and somehow you think that talking to us like we are children who have not been examining, watching and studying you and your system for hundreds of years as we figure out how to tear it down, push back, and eventually win as you continue to talk to us like children. What you are doing is inciting the rage of the people. And I want to be clear with you all that a new day has come . . . There is a movement sweeping this country. And we are not going to stop until you stop killing us . . . we will continue to shut it down, interrupt business as usual.

Her activism in response to what is systematic discrimination in the institutions of US society (see Wacquant 2009) and, in particular, Police violence against a young black man, sees her take the role of a change-agent, even a potential revolutionary. Her willingness to provoke, to mock, those in power and challenge them to imagine the future in other terms has made her a figure of hope and also danger. The ongoing occurrence of Police shootings of black people in the US may be the Jabberjay – a violence that is repurposed to serve those that seek to replace the system and imagine the future in other terms. As victims' names are echoed in on- and offline spaces the movement successfully demonstrates that *all Black Lives Matter*.

Do . . . Something

The point is that action, activism and resistance take many forms. And doing *something* in a neoliberal system that hopes we do *nothing* is potentially the most rebellious act of all. Danger and risk in their *negativity* can be re-imagined as opportunities for actions in their *positivity* (see Kelly 2006: 18). It is a space where neoliberal power can be re-harnessed to benefit those without power. We witness this in protesters in Thailand who deploy a revolutionary symbol they found in a billion-dollar Hollywood franchise. This was their *Mockingjay*. The Jabberjay was created by heinous power, but the Mockingjay serves the rebellion.

The importance of doing something is highlighted when we consider the consequences of doing nothing. We want to conclude by again highlighting the tragic plight of some of the highest achieving young people in the US. Silicon Valley, in the bohemian 'Bay Area' of Northern California, is the corporeal and geographical home of the social media revolution. *Google, Yahoo!, Adobe, eBay* and *Intel* all have 'campuses' in this region – a term used to designate that these companies could easily be viewed as places of knowledge as much as they might be viewed as multi-billion dollar corporations. Silicon Valley is also home to a 'suicide cluster' in their elite high schools. As described by one Silicon Valley high school student, young people have been, simply put, pushing their children over the edge through a 'competitive insanity' that 'breeds competition, hatred,

and discourages teamwork and genuine learning . . . We are sick . . . Why is that not getting through to this community?' (Walworth in Rosin 2015). The favourite method for suicide among young people in this region was to throw themselves in front of the *Caltrain*. One student compared the train's 'warning whistle' to the 'cannon that goes off in *The Hunger Games* every time a kid dies' (in Rosin 2015).

Perhaps the money making, the stress and anxieties it induces, and the neoliberal systems that hold it all together conspire to make us desperately depressed, making our world seem competitive, hellish and hopeless. Perhaps we live in a world where the only choice many can see is death, but at least a death of their choosing. Perhaps it is, as Schrecker and Bambra (2015) have argued, that neoliberalism makes us sick. When framed in these ways, neoliberalism is almost certainly not something we hope for young people who face a future of uncertainty (Bauman 1998b, 2013), precariousness (Standing 2014; Turner 2006; Butler 2004) and anxiety (Stossel 2014). But what could be done about this? How do young people survive such hostile conditions? The organisers of Occupy asked questions like these, as did the activists of the Arab Spring. So too did protesters in Thailand and China in 2014 and the Black Lives Matter movement in the US in 2015.

The existence of these social movements suggests that something is being done in neoliberal times, within/against neoliberal common sense, and it has captured the imaginations of people around the world. Movements like Occupy and Black Lives Matter are pioneering a new common sense to challenge neoliberal rationality and moralities.

Indignation. Hope. Rage. Occupation. All are actions, activities, alternatives, forms of life. Maybe Katniss is right . . . '*Fire is catching!*' (Collins 2010: 119).

Conclusions: Social Justice as a Currency

We interpret Judith Butler's (2009) question 'When Is Life Grievable?' as *when is life representable, and therefore, understandable*? When are people capable of offering testimony, and capable of having their stories re-told? In what frames is resistance possible, and what are the new frames that have emerged as a consequence of this resistance?

The Californian social justice group, *Community Food & Justice Coalition*, campaigns for humane food production practices and for the emphasis to shift from profitability to feeding people who are hungry. In an article published on the Coalition's website by Y. Armando Nieto (2014), he recalls the many political failures and successes of his youth. He laments the greed that has become an everyday 'virtue' of Western cultural life, and how this occurred on his watch. But those failures were accompanied by real change – fierce opposition to war, the popularity of Earth day, action on poverty. As Nieto (2014) points out as an example of a base for action, 'Any sixth grade student can tell you about alternative energy sources'. As the possibly mythical quote attributed to Margaret Mead attests, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has'. Recently, Naomi Klein (2014) has argued that profit may be incompatible with human survival.

There may be an increasing need for people to go their own ways, to believe that it is '*up to me*', to be willing to take the weapons of the system and re-appropriate them for other, better, purposes. We should not only think about a better world for ourselves, but also for people throughout the world who may be touched by violence, danger, risk and economic failure. Indeed, in the West we understand well how foreign violence and changes affects our day-to-day lives. Strangely, however, the suffering of others can often seem distant and murky. It is to the suffering of distant Others that we now turn.

7

Iraqi Women's Stories of Anxiety and Unrest from the Blogosphere

The plight of people in the West living in the aftermath of disaster, terror and crisis brought about by catastrophes like the GFC and international terrorism is significant and worthy of attention. But the suffering of those in the West should rightly pale when compared to those who found themselves in post-9/11 war zones. Limited media reporting about the suffering that occurs in war – especially when that war involves the US and their allied forces – means that we don't witness the suffering of *Others* in the same ways we are able to witness the sufferings of people in our country, in our region, in countries like ours. *People like us* (Aly 2007). Indeed, searching for scholarly work about the suffering people faced in Iraq and Afghanistan after the US invasion is made difficult by the abundance of literature exploring the suffering of returning US troops (see Tanielian and Jaycox 2008). Cultural blinkers have made the suffering of people outside of Western nations harder to understand (see Dittmer 2005; Spigel 2004).

The problem with this is that we miss important events, important details, as well as the suffering of people who find themselves at the extreme ends of Western economics and aggression (Butler 2009). In this chapter we focus on the anxiety experienced by people living in Iraq in times of war

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and sectarian conflict, amidst international invasions that paved the way for the rise of the Islamic State. In particular, our focus is on young Iraqi women who told their stories online through weblogs as bombs and terror reigned down around them. Despite the risk to their own safety, many women – citizens, journalists, academics – have spoken out online, some blogged, some have participated in interviews with journalists and others have joined women's rights organisations in Iraq for support. The blogosphere has become recognised as a significant public space for women to speak out and tell their stories about living in a war zone. Between 2003 and 2014 bloggers *HNK, Riverbend, Faiza, Neurotica* and *Aunt Najma* provided everyday accounts of life in Iraq and called on the international community to recognise the severity of the problems they faced. In other spaces we have argued that these weblogs are digital practices of the self or *digital selves*, through which identity is practiced online in ways that are not always possible in offline spaces (see Campbell 2015; Howie 2014).

In this chapter we discuss the writing that occurred in these spaces, and the types of selfhood made possible through them, as a therapeutic practice in a time of war and conflict. We argue that writing a blog communicates to audiences near and far the reality of life in a war zone, and at the same time offers a space for the young women featured in this chapter to vent, to construct narratives around events, and to imagine their futures. In weblogs hope is written alongside depression and fear, as daily, weekly and monthly posts pile up in the sidebar. A blog is the digital materialisation of thoughts, memories, emotions and ideas. It is a place for processing information and events in conversation with a local and international audience, and a place where young people can speak out. By documenting day-to-day life in Iraq, the bloggers' stories provide rare and detailed accounts of the emotional and physical trauma of war, conflict, regional struggles for power, and the ways that these become embodied through anxiety and depression.

We write this chapter from a particular digitised position ourselves, watching and witnessing from the safety a computer screen allows. In addition, we are aware of the complexities of writing about the lives and rights of young women in the Middle East. For instance, much has been written about the legacy of Western Feminism (agency, autonomy and power) and how it is understood and taken up by *Other* women (Treacher and Shukrallah 2005: 152).

Discourses of victimization and vulnerability have played a significant role in the ways in which Arab women's lives have been represented in the media and intellectual spaces (Shahryar 2013). We would argue that weblogs, and the voices of bloggers, have a role to play in contesting these discourses and articulating the possibilities and limitations of women's lives in Iraq in other ways. Through the blogs, we witness fears and doubts, narrated against significant personal achievements, relationships, memories and images. We watch as young sisters HNK and Aunt Najma finish school, complete university and start their own families. HNK transformed her blog into a book, while Aunt Najma contributed regular columns to *New York Times* (IraqiGirl 2009). The archives of the sisters' blogs detail the risks taken to achieve these goals in a time of war. Stories about Valium use during times of violence, fear and anxiety provide a glimpse into a dark reality where hope for the future fades into years of waiting for the chance to live a normal kind of life.

Young Women and the Cost of War

> I lost the words to write about my story, to write about the lilly of my desert, to write about the beauty of my parents eyes and the warmth that their sounds gived to my heart.
>
> I lost the words to write about the pain of my country. (HNK, Iraqi Girl Blog, Saturday, 9 August 2014)

'I really can't express my feeling now but something inside me died with days and as I guess nothing could ever give me more hurt and pain than I already have', writes HNK in 2014 after leaving her home town of Mosul. 'How scared I was within it and how lost I am without' (HNK, Iraqi Girl Blog, Saturday, 9 August 2014). HNK is a young Moslawi woman who blogged about growing up in Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation. Between 2003 and 2014 HNK wrote a weblog called 'Diary of Iraqi Girl'. This was a space in which she narrated the highs and lows of living in a country during a time of war, conflict and violence. Her blog became a place

to communicate with readers from around the world what her day-to-day life in Iraq was like. It became a place to connect with family members, to reflect on the politics of the school yard, a place to worry for the future, to sometimes lose hope.

Like HNK, many women across Iraq have felt the costs of war deeply, from the constant threat of violence and death, to being alienated from the workplace and public spaces. The war involved violent military campaigns throughout which women faced the threat of sexual assault, 'honour killings', forced pleasure marriage, verbal abuse and assault (Sengupta 2009). Women reported being harassed or attacked, sometimes as a warning to other women (see Al-Ali and Pratt 2006; Al-Ali 2003). The routine arrest and detention of women was also a tactic used to force male family members to surrender to security forces and confess to the crimes of which they were accused (Zangana 2013). In some cases women were imprisoned at Abu Ghraib, the detention facility made infamous by US torture scandals (Youssef 2006; see also Harding 2004; Zangana 2013; Klein 2007: 15). In 2011 and 2012 Iraqi women and men protested in the streets against torture and rape, high execution rates, and the secrecy surrounding these crimes (Zangana 2013; see also Sengupta 2009).

Faiza is a mother of three boys. She was running her own business before the invasion of Iraq. Soon after the tanks rolled in Faiza was forced to flee to neighbouring Jordan. She published her blog as a book, began a Master's degree and currently runs a humanitarian program for Syrian victims of violence (Al Araji et al. 2008). After leaving Iraq she wrote about jumping at the sound of fireworks. She heared only explosions – the sound of war. She struggled against feelings of fear, constant tension and anxiety.

Riverbend worked in the Information Technology sector in Baghdad before being retrenched. Her employer thought it was too dangerous for her – as a woman – to be in the workplace. She also published her famous blog 'Baghdad Burning' as a book working with the Feminist Press (Riverbend 2005, 2006). In 2007 Riverbend fled Baghdad with her family, and posted the following to her blog:

> There was simply nothing to say as we left Iraq. I wanted to sob, but I didn't want to seem like a baby. I didn't want the driver to think I was

> ungrateful for the chance to leave what had become a hellish place over the last four and a half years. (Riverbend, 'Leaving Home', Thursday, 6 September 2007)

Neurotica fulfilled her dream of living and working in Iraq. Neurotica is an Iraqi born UK woman living in Abu Dhabi when she began her blog. Through a number of twists and turns Neurotica ends up working in Iraq on two different occasions, all the while negotiating her identity as a 'foreigner' and an 'alien' in her own country.

It is to these women's experiences, the chaos of the war and the struggles that have ensured that we now turn. The spelling, grammatical and expression errors in their accounts are testimony to the urgency with which they were shared, their lack of mastery of some aspects of English, and are, indeed, part of the story. As such, we have opted to not correct them when they occur.

Women in Iraq: Invasion, Days of Rage and the Emergence of ISIS

> Justice does not prevail in this day and age . . . We shouldn't forget what this was all about – making America safer . . . And are you safer America? (Riverbend, 'Ten Years On . . . ', Tuesday, 9 April 2013)

Many people, including the bloggers, argue that women's lives in Iraq are now quite different following the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq (Saikal 2013; Susskind 2014). Recent figures suggest that only 14% of women are part of the workforce in Baghdad (Ditmars 2015). The decline in women's participation in the workforce and other social spaces has not occurred in a vacuum. It is a result of 30 years of war and occupation combined with the recent emergence of ISIS (Ditmars 2015).

If we look back to women's experiences in the workforce during the secular rule of Saddam Hussein, we find that women were confronted with mixed messages for participation, but managed to negotiate different expectations and foster a strong presence in the public sphere. Going back as far as the war with Iran (between 1980 and 1988), we see that

women were called upon to take up positions in the public sphere left by fathers, brothers and husbands who had been recruited into the army (Rhode 2006: 197). However, between 1986 and 1990 women were also encouraged to 'concentrate on their "natural" role as the "producer" of the nation' in order to replenish population numbers (Al-Jawaheri 2008: 21). When economic sanctions were imposed upon Iraq (1990–2003), women rights and roles were limited, both at the 'level of state policies and services and the level of social attitudes, values and relations' (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009: 53). Despite these complex political and social shifts, and infringements upon women's lives through the period of sanctions, many argue that prior to the invasion of Iraq women maintained a strong presence in public spaces, and were among the most educated in the region (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009: 52). Clearly a detailed account of Iraq's complex history and the rights and roles of women during the rule of Saddam Hussein is beyond the scope of this chapter (for more see Campbell 2015: 84–119). In this section we focus on the ways women in Iraq have dealt with the challenges of the US-led invasion and occupation, and how their emotional and physical well-being has been affected.

Narrated through personal experience, Iraqi women's blog accounts provide a snapshot of the challenges women in Iraq faced after the invasion. During the height of conflict in Iraq (during the US-led occupation), from 2006 to 2008, women faced a range of pressures to be absent from certain spaces, and to act and dress in particular ways in public spaces. Riverbend, a young woman living in Baghdad, was used to working every day in the city; however she soon began to avoid going out in public without a head scarf and learned to avoid certain areas:

> Sadr's militia control parts of Iraq now. Just a couple of days ago, his militia, with the help of Badr, were keeping women from visiting the market in the southern city of Karbala. Women weren't allowed in the marketplace and shop owners were complaining that their businesses were suffering. Welcome to the new Iraq. ('Viva Muqtada . . . ', Wednesday, 31 May 2006)
>
> For me, June marked the first month I don't dare leave the house without a hijab, or headscarf. I don't wear a hijab usually, but it's no longer possible to drive around Baghdad without one. It's just not a good idea. (Take note that when I say 'drive' I actually mean 'sit in the back seat

> of the car' – I haven't driven for the longest time.) Going around bare-headed in a car or in the street also puts the family members with you in danger. ('Summer of Goodbyes . . . ', Saturday, 5 August 2006)

Many of the bloggers, like HNK and Riverbend, began to reminisce about their lives under the rule of Saddam. In a post titled 'dear America', HNK tells her readers:

> I didn't go to school from Tuesday. Because the situation is so bad, Thank you America for your help, You made my life more difficult than it was, more worse than it was and more scared. I will be a liar if I tell you I can't sleep last night because I was so sad, the truth is I can't sleep because the Americans was bombards our neighborhood ('dear America', Saturday, 13 November 2004)

Faiza, a young mother who lived in Baghdad, questioned US interests in and support for women's rights in Iraq. She attended a conference for women's rights in Iraq and felt patronised by the speeches delivered by foreign women. For Faiza, this conference which was supposedly concerned with women's rights, was a bunch of 'silly stories'. Stories about federalism, about struggling Iraqi women, about dictatorship in Iraq and the free democracies of the West. For Faiza, US interest and actions on behalf of Iraqi women are just another way of manipulating the culture and people in Iraq:

> I see now how many entry points there were, through which America entered to occupy Iraq . . . There is an axis to market their thoughts through the Iraqi parties . . . and that means the government, and the national assembly . . . there is the axis of non-governmental assemblies (civil society organizations). There is the Women axis. . . . (Sunday, 10 April 2005)

Many of the foreign groups advocating for women's rights in Iraq during the invasion left soon after their funding had finished and elections were over, revealing their primary motivations. It seems that Faiza (and Riverbend) were right to be critical of political and legislative developments

in Iraq. For instance, Riverbend noted that 'the 25% quota documented in the final version of Iraq's new constitution is not assured but is an "aspiration". In turned out that 'the key word in this phrasing is *aspire*' which meant that it was not required or 'mandatory to have 25% women on the council – it is an aspiration, like many of the noble aspirations set down on paper by our esteemed Puppet government' (emphasis in original, Campbell 2015: 90).

During the 2014 parliamentary elections in Iraq, among the bills that were voted on were proposed laws that would effectively legalise child marriage and marital rape (the 'Ja'fari Law') (see: Malone and Pizzi 2014; Zangana 2013; Thomas 2014). These bills were passed recently through amendments to the Personal Status Law (PSL) by the Council of Ministers, legalising polygamy and marriage to girls as young as 9 (Mamouri 2014). Previously PSL prevented forced marriage and the marriage of minors (under 15), and women were able to revoke the marriage contract if the husband could not fulfil his obligations as defined in the marriage contract (translation of the 1959 PSL Law no. 188 by the American Bar Association).

The story of the invasion and occupation of Iraq has been marked by chaos, violence, corruption, battles for resources and civil war (Saikal 2013). Surges in violence continue as political processes and elections fail to yield results. Rather than stabilise the region, the restructuring of political processes in Iraq has created space for groups to compete for political power, to build temporary political or ethno-religious alliances and progress particular agendas (Isakhan 2013).

US troops officially withdrew from Iraq in late 2011. The same year protest broke out in Iraq. The 'Day of Rage' protests were staged on the 25th of February 2011 coinciding with the period that has since been widely referred to as the 'Arab Spring' (Al-Rawi 2014: 916). Protesters attempted to hold the Maliki government to account and voiced their dissatisfaction in response to poor living conditions, foreign involvement in national resources, widespread violence and continued conflict (Al-Rawi 2014: 916). 'Hundreds of Iraqis from all sects gathered around Tahrir Square and chanted: "No, no to corruption," "The government's officials are thieves," and "Baghdad, Baghdad, spark a revolution"' (Sly 2011). Mohammad Yannar reports that the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) was present at protests and called for change, the right to

work and equality (OWFI 2011). In response, then Prime Minister Nouri Maliki forbid the media to cover the event in order to diminish its effect and turned a blind eye to the issues raised (Al-Rawi 2014: 917).

Three years after these uprisings in Iraq, many argue that it has not been a revolutionary period of increased freedom and rights, especially for women. Alijla (2015) argues that the Arab Spring has betrayed women's rights in Iraq where 'Following the eruption of sectarian conflict between the Shiaa and Sunni groups, and the outgrowth of militias, women are paying the highest price as the threats of rape, murder, imprisonment and torture become day-to-day fears'. These uprisings have been hijacked by ISIS, dashing younger and older generation's hopes for social and political change. The goal of ISIS is 'to create a new Islamic caliphate across the Arab world by smashing the borders imposed on the Middle East nearly a century ago by the British and French' (Isakhan 2015: 223). Existing relationships between Al-Qaeda and ISIS go some way towards explaining the current political and social chaos in Iraq that has adversely affected women's lives. Isakhan (2015: 226) notes that ISIS 'are the direct descendants of AQI' (Al-Qaeda in Iraq), and have been able to 'capitalise on popular Sunni Arab dissatisfaction with the Maliki government to take over large swathes of the country and threaten to destabilise the region'. The role of religious, ideological and tribal affiliation in these conflicts are shaped by long and complex histories, and geographical, political and cultural developments (see Campbell 2015: 94–98; Isakhan 2015: 223–224). This complex history exceeds the scope of this chapter; however, it is enough to say at this point that the US-led invasion, removal of Saddam Hussein from power and de-Baathification policies in Iraq created the conditions for social upheaval and sectarian conflict. In particular:

> de-Baathification forced many Sunni Arab members of the military, police and other elements of the security apparatus out of work. As Iraqi politics became increasingly sectarian, several violent groups including al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) seized on the popular resentment of the marginalised Sunni Arabs in their recruitment campaigns. (Isakhan 2015: 226)

Stern and Berger (in Kakutani 2015) suggest that that the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq served to reinforce 'jihadi claims about

America's hegemonic designs on the Middle East, providing a recruiting bonanza at a time when the terrorists needed it most'.

The emergence of ISIS has resulted in what is widely understood as a human rights disaster, particularly in the West and North of the country. The resulting 'sectarian violence and a struggling economy have hit women hardest' (Khaleeli 2012). Stories of violence and abuse of women are frequently reported through mass distribution media on a daily basis. We encounter headlines such as 'All-female Islamic State Police Squad Tortured New Mother . . . After she was Caught Breastfeeding in Public' (Gayle 2014), and 'Yazidi Women Give Horrific Stomach-Turning Details About Their Time as Islamic State Sex Slaves' (Schwartz 2015). We read accounts about the existence of instructions for IS members on the 'treatment of sexual slaves, which includes raping and beating women . . . Even children are not immune, with instructions encouraging sexual assault on girls who have not yet reached puberty' (Bishop in McDonald 2015). Slavery and sexual violence against women are reported with disturbing frequency. A number of reports have recently emerged in which survivors of ISIS abductions describe escaping captivity only to face a life of 'severe depression, crippling anxiety, panic attacks, headaches, and nausea' (Nehad in Uffalussy 2016). ISIS tactics and treatment of women are so brutal that Al-Qaeda has denounced them as un-Islamic. The Human Rights Commission and other members of the international community have deemed ISIS's acts of sexual violence against minors and women, rape, beheadings, kidnapping, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites and artefacts as terrorism. The 2015 Human Rights Watch report stated that ISIS 'Commanders and civilian leaders may be prosecuted for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility' (Human Rights Watch 2015).

Women's organisations in Iraq are pushing back against extremist groups and challenge the ideology and actions of ISIS in Iraq. The Iraqi Women Journalists Forum (IWJF) have worked in cooperation with the Iraqi Civic Society Solidarity Initiation[1] (ICSSI) as part of their partnership to promote the Shahrazad Campaign, which addresses the conditions of women and girls in the ISIS occupied city of Mosul. The ICSSI

[1] http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/category/shahrazad

(2015) states that, 'We launched the Shahrazad Campaign to end violence against women, underage marriage, and sexual harassment. The Campaign includes awareness and advocacy programs'.

From invasion to occupation to the spread of ISIS across the Middle East, women continue to live in a stressful and anxiety-inducing social environment, where health and well-being concerns are often overshadowed by daily survival. This reality is captured in the wartime blogs of women living in Iraq.

Digital Selves and Blog Therapy: 'Take a Valium or Start a Blog'

> When the load gets too heavy, people turn to something to comfort them. Abroad, under normal circumstances, if you have a burden – you don't have to bear it alone. You can talk to a friend or relative or psychiatrist or SOMEONE. Here, everyone has their own set of problems – a death in the family, a detainee, a robbery, a kidnapping, an explosion, etc. So you have two choices – take a valium, or start a blog. (Riverbend, 'Valium . . . ', Wednesday, 13 October 2004)

Amidst the lack of sleep, the bombs falling and never quite knowing if your house is about to crumble around you, Riverbend writes: 'you have two choices – take a valium, or start a blog' (Riverbend, 'Valium . . . ', Wednesday, 13 October 2004). Riverbend is suggesting that blogging is a way of dealing with the anxiety caused by war and conflict – a form of treatment. Much has been written about the therapeutic benefits of writing and blogging. Expressive writing itself is used as therapy for posttraumatic stress.

> The efficacy of narrative writing as a treatment for PTSD has been investigated using several protocols. The most well-studied of these include interapy (also referred to as structured writing therapy), written disclosure (also referred to as expressive writing), and narrative exposure therapy (NET). (Sloan et al. 2015)

Dossa and Hatem (2012) argue that narrative exposure therapy (NET) contributes to the reduction of PTSD and depression severity in focus studies. This type of therapy involves exposure to traumatic events as they are narrated or written down by the participant.

> Instead of defining a single event as a target in therapy, the patient constructs a narration of his whole life from birth up to the present situation while focusing on the detailed report of the traumatic experiences. This treatment has shown low dropout rates in different studies. Many think that the main motivator of NET is the anticipation of receiving a written biography upon completion, that can help participants pass on their story to their children, while simultaneously educating them. (Dossa and Hatem 2012: 2)

We are not claiming that each of the bloggers have post-traumatic stress or associated disorders, though they often describe the symptoms associated with PTSD. What we suggest is that treatments for trauma and stress that draw on narrative techniques share similarities with the practice of blogging. For instance, the technique of narrating one's life is mirrored by bloggers who describe their everyday experiences over a given period of time. Bloggers describe events from their childhood that gain meaning and significance in the present day. This approach is not as ordered as NET therapy, which is more biographical, but still allows individuals to reflexively engage with their childhood and to create a record of their life that they might one day share with their own children.

Emmerik et al. (2013: 82) argue that internet adaptations of writing therapy are thought to be especially useful for individuals affected by PTSD who live in remote areas or prefer to remain anonymous. A study carried out by Wagner et al (2012: 646) tested internet-based interventions (from 2009 to 2011) for Iraqi people suffering PTSD. The majority of those involved were females who reportedly benefited from treatment which involved structured writing assignments guided by an online patient–therapist relationship. What the study showed was that new technologies are able to support a 'positive and stable psychiatric working alliance solely through the Internet' (Wagner et al. 2012: 650).

In another study of women bloggers in neighbouring Iran, Zareie and Selamat (2014: 16) argue that women see blogging as a 'personal window to experience pleasure and self-therapy', in the context of the 'restrictions that they experienced in the "outside" world'. Many of the women interviewed in Iran saw blogging as a digital form of diary writing. Likewise, a survey conducted in the US indicated that nearly 50% of bloggers 'used their blogging as a form of self-therapy', and as a way of dealing with stress, tension, anxiety and frustration (Zareie and Selamat 2014: 20). In each of these studies the internet provided a mode or medium for interaction, writing and blogging. Individuals are able to voice their opinions and to have their voice recognised by a potentially global audience.

Picking up on Zareie and Selamat's (2014: 16) point that the same restrictions to women's lives do not always apply online, we suggest that through weblogs individuals can write a self, so to speak, in ways that may not be possible offline. There is a certain type of freedom in this practice. Michel Foucault's work on the role of *writing* for self-care is particularly relevant for understanding how the self is written online. Although Foucault (1984: 253) took as his example a specific form of diary writing (*hupomnēmata*) particular to the ancient Greeks, his more general argument is still useful. Foucault understood the self as a work of art – as an activity, a practice always in construction, rather than a process of discovering the true self (Nehamas 1998: 178). This specific form of diary writing involves a number of techniques by which subjects care for themselves and mould themselves into ethical subjects. These techniques often included practical exercises and self-examination. These particular 'aesthetics of existence' were limited to a small percentage of the population: free adult males (Foucault 1984: 253).

For Foucault this self-shaping involved questioning the social fabric of our everyday reality. Through reflexive engagement with our everyday lives, the rules and regulations we encounter and choose to adopt (or not), the self can be understood as the material form of our ethical reflection and practice. Like diaries, weblogs offer a space in which we can question ourselves, others and our social environment, and in doing so shape that environment and who we are.

We suggest that online a *digital self* is given shape – one that encapsulates a type of 'body drift' between physical spaces (Kroker 2012: 2–3). Through the bloggers' everyday accounts, relationships and struggles, their reflexive engagements with social rules and regulations and their worlds becomes visible. The bloggers question the norms that their communities live by, ideas for healthy 'proper' relationships, ideal ways of being a girl at school or a woman at university or an Iraqi/expatriate in the Green Zone. The digital medium of communication shows the self shifting in/between 'who we are and what we would like to be' (Kroker 2012: 2–3). Online bloggers are given the opportunity to agonise over different norms and patterns of social reality without necessarily being in the field that reinforces these norms.

Weblogs offer a space to imagine and live out a different reality, one with different rules and parameters. This is not like a virtual reality experience and the effects of blogging and online interactions are very real. Like many other bloggers, Neurotica built up a sense of self in her blog. This self can be understood as *digitally suspended*. What we mean by this is that digital affordances particular to weblogs preserve certain fragments of the self (shaped alongside comments/conversations). For instance, blog posts, text, pictures and time-stamped archives listed in a sidebar are all part of the interactive experience of blogging. By moving in/between digital and non-digital spaces, individuals drag and drop particular ideas, rules and expectations into the blog. Bloggers are then able to write the self against these fragments of experience they have left online (as do those that visit the blogs). The interaction between on- and offline spaces continuously unfolds. This 'suspended self' (Campbell 2015) in these ways impacts upon the conditions of this space, the types of behaviour, conversations, and relationships expected and encouraged. The reality and the effects of war may be written into the discursive space of the blog, but it is the parameters that are set up by the bloggers which determine what can and cannot be said. This relative and limited freedom permits women to shape themselves – publically, in relation to men and women, locally and globally – in ways that may not be as readily available in offline spaces.

'I Want to Escape': War, Weblogs, PTSD and Valium

HNK, Riverbend, Faiza, Neurotica and *Aunt Najma* each describe the challenges of trying to live a normal life with the constant threat of violence, death and the unrest caused by the presence of invading forces. Riverbend, Faiza and Neurotica worked, while HNK and Najma attended school and eventually married in Iraq. Some endured the war longer than others, and when it became clear that 'normal' life, as HNK would say, in Iraq was no longer possible, each of the five bloggers decided to leave the country.

HNK – also known as Hadia on her blog 'Iraqi Girl Blog' – wrote about the trauma of war and the emotional and physical stresses of daily life. As a teenager living through the early years of the occupation she wrote that living a normal life seemed like a dream:

> Here and in this blog nothing is normal. Here people are wearing a thick clothes under thick clothes till they become like a ball. Here people are drinking a dirty water, and take a bath once every week because the water is somehow closer to black colour than white. and if you are going to take a bath, you might possibly became dirty more than you are already. (HNK, 'Un normal', Friday, 15 December 2006)

HNK's sister Aunt Najma wrote that she wanted to escape the reality of life in Iraq:

> I want to escape, escape the reality, the world I'm living in, the country and all its disasters, the life and all its tests.. I want to escape the past, the present, and if not different, the future (Najma, 'A Day From Hell', Tuesday, 17 May 2005).

The sisters wrote about their love for Iraq and Iraqi people and their hope that they might have a future, a career and family there. They blogged about everyday events, going to school, cooking in the middle of the night when they could not sleep, not having electricity, studying to the sound of gunfire and anticipating house raids. Many

of the sister's posts are punctuated by despair, moments of sadness, depression, exhaustion and anxiety.

HNK often writes about her life at school, and the pressure to achieve high grades while chaos unfolds around her in the streets. She is a high achiever and has grown up in a family of doctors and professionals. She writes: 'I am completely surrounded by doctor, my father, my uncle, my sister and my brother in law' ('. . . ', Friday, 2 November 2007). Her post titled: 'Life is difficult', provides an insight into the stress of growing up in Mosul as she describes the way her studies are continuously disrupted by the war. She writes that she is always extremely nervous prior to exams, but when her exams are postponed over and over again due to violence in her town she becomes overwhelmed. She writes:

> No . . . No . . . Not again and she said 'Yes' and I crash into tears and I cries so hardly that all the family around the table looked at me feeling so sorry for the bad looking I was because my exam was postponed again.
>
> My sister was really feeling worried about me and she didn't stop asking my father to do something for me. After that my father gave me valium. (HNK, 'Life is difficult', Saturday, 8 September 2007)

On this one occasion HNK's father gives her Valium which is primarily used for the treatment of anxiety. For HNK, a young woman attempting to achieve her educational goals, immense stress was caused by the constant uncertainty and rescheduled exams, classes and events. After years of not being able to plan for her future, she writes that she is in a state of waiting – 'we are waiting our turn to die' (HNK, 'When the victims are your . . . ', Friday, 28 July 2006).

More than 1 year later HNK continued to experience anxiety and depression as conflict raged on in Iraq. HNK writes:

> I admit and acknowledge that my dreams are dreams.
> . . . what I can't admit and can't understand
> Why my life is not mine.
> I feel like someone being led, like some one being controlled.
> like someone stifling his voice and hide his tears . . .

> And keep pretenting he is fine and wish invisibly that he will be. ('Hidden tears . . . ', Thursday, 27 September 2007)

Her highs and lows continue over the years as she fights the frustration of not being able to move freely and plan for the future.

Fellow blogger Riverbend writes about wartime anxiety and how Valium has become 'a staple' during wars. After decades of conflict in the region this is, perhaps, not surprising, especially as it is an over-the-counter medicine in Iraq. Riverbend actually wrote the post (titled: 'Valium . . . ') after receiving an email from one of her readers, 'Will', who was concerned that women were taking Valium like 'Tic-Tac's' and becoming addicted. Riverbend responded:

> Valium is a staple during wars. I remember when we were preparing for the war, we would make list after list of 'necessities'. . . . No one in the family takes valium, but it was one of those 'just in case' medications – the kind you buy and hope you never have to use. We had to use it during the first week of April, as the tanks started rolling into Baghdad. We had an older aunt staying at our house (she had been evacuated from her area) and along with my cousin, his wife, his two daughters, and an uncle, the house was crowded and – at bizarre moments – almost festive. The bombing had gotten very heavy and our eating, and sleeping schedules were thrown off balance. Everything seemed to revolve around the attack on Baghdad – we'd hastily cook and eat during the lulls in bombing and we'd get snatches of sleep in between the 'shock and awe'. There were a few nights where we didn't sleep at all – we'd just stay up and sit around, staring at each other in the dark, listening to the explosions and feeling the earth tremble beneath. (Riverbend, 'Valium . . . ', Monday, October 25, 2004)

Riverbend was also keen to voice her opinion on the issue in response to an episode of the Oprah Winfrey show which discussed anxiety and women's use of Valium in Iraq (Oprah 2015). On the show Oprah interviewed Sabah, a female writer living in Baghdad, who had lived through three wars and the death of her father and brother during Saddam Hussein's rule. Sabah said that the situation for women was much worse after the invasion – women lived in fear and many took Valium to deal with the stresses of daily life.

Riverbend and HNK's accounts provide details about the ways that the physical health and mental well-being of Iraqi women has been affected by the war. As Sabah said, dealing with the stress of prolonged wars and invasions was a reality that many Iraqi people had experienced prior to the 2003 invasion. And as Riverbend writes, Iraqis knew how to prepare for the US-led invasion, they knew the stress and trauma that the war would cause, especially to older family members.

There are few studies on the impact of conflict and war on the mental health of Iraqis, and even less on the effects of war on Iraqi women. Murthy and Lakshminarayana (2006: 27) highlight one study which found that '45 Kurdish families in two camps reported that PTSD was present in 87% of children and 60% of their caregivers'. Given these high rates of PTSD alone, Kastrup (2006: 33) argues that it is vital to understand gender-specific mental health issues (see also Jansen 2006). Jansen (2006: 135–136) notes that women would most likely be more vulnerable to health and mental health issues 'because in war, women's bodies become a battleground'.

The Iraq Mental Health Survey (WHO 2009) argues that prolonged periods of war in Iraq have had negative effects on the mental health of many Iraqis. The survey of 4,332 Iraqis over 18 years old nationwide was conducted by the Iraqi government and the World Health Organization during a period of ongoing conflict (2006–2007) (World Health Organisation (WHO) (2009): 78). It found that 17% of Iraqis suffered from 'mental disorders of some kind, with depression, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety among the most common' (Rubin 2009). Interestingly, the report notes that PTSD is not the most common disorder, and it is important to recognise this so that appropriate support and treatment can be offered. The report states:

> contrary to the often expressed view that PTSD is the main expression of trauma exposure, there are other ways of expressing distress . . . Specifically the rates of generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobia and obsessive compulsive disorder are of great interest. (World Health Organisation 2009: 84)

PTSD has been commonly discussed in the media as a primary health concern. But where PTSD is discussed the focus has primarily been on military and professional personnel deployed to Iraq. The academic literature on PTSD and the 'consequences of trauma exposure' also focuses more on foreign troops deployed in Iraq and professionals working in war zones, than on the mental health of the Iraqi population[2] (World Health Organisation 2009: 21–22).

Neurotic Iraqi Wife is one Iraqi woman who blogs about having PTSD and working in the Green Zone in Iraq. 'Neurotica' (as she often refers to herself) was born in Iraq but left soon after Saddam came into power. She is an Iraqi-born-British-citizen having lived in the UK for 25 years. Neurotica writes that she majored in Finance and has her MSc in Investment Management ('The Great Iraq', no date October, 2004). Initially, her blog is written from her parent's house in Abu Dhabi. In 2005 Neurotica moves to Iraq to work in the Green Zone after her husband is deployed as part of the reconstruction effort. The Green Zone is a highly protected, fortified area in Bagdad which housed foreign diplomats and officials during the US occupation. This area came under the control of Iraqi forces in 2009, followed by the official withdrawal of US-led forces in December 2011 (BBC News 2015).

Blogging from the Green Zone in 2006 Neutorica writes that she is exhausted and that working in the Green Zone is 'hell'. She writes that it is not just a safe zone, it is a prison. Water supplies are limited and showers are a luxury: 'By the third day, you dont even give a damn if you stink' ('Date Trees of the Euphrates . . . ', 3 July 2005). She decides to leave Iraq and move back to Abu Dhabi, but her experiences in Iraq follow her causing her emotional and psychological distress:

> Memories of people, good ones, bad ones, are in my mind, and since all I wanna do is just be alone and contemplate, Ive been having loads of flashbacks . . . I mean loads of them . . . Memories that I buried deep inside and was surprised they surfaced back again . . .

[2] See, for instance, an article recently published in *The New York Times* which explores the growing drug and alcohol abuse amongst Iraqi soldiers (Williams and Al-Jawoshy 2010).

> I remembered H . . . H was a guy who worked closely with HUBBY . . . He was kidnapped a month after I got to Baghdad, and till now he wasnt found, nothing . . . not a corpse . . . and not alive . . . He has 5 kids . . . I remembered something I have buried deep down, I remembered a memory that at the time caused me to have a nervous breakdown . . . It was July of last year . . . Wow, and he's gone . . . Its difficult to let go of such things, and yet at the same time its difficult to continiously remember . . . Right now, my heart feels constricted . . . I dont feel too good . . . I guess yet again its a syndrome of being in Iraq. ('Pandora's Box . . . ', 11 June 2006)

After leaving the Green Zone, Neurotica wonders how she can be so traumatised. 'Is this normal?' she asks her readers. She writes:

> I look at the screen of my mind, and I try to reach these memories . . . Im trying so hard to touch them, to feel them again..Maybe I wanna live them again . . . But I know thats impossible . . . I try to press pause . . . to capture the moment, but the control of my brain is stuck, stuck on play . . . And that feeling, the feeling of emptiness is overpowering . . .
>
> But I shouldnt feel this way..I mean I wasnt in the army, nor in the front lines, so I cant say I have seen corpses, I have seen dead people, I have been traumatized . . . I cant have PTSD . . . Must be something else. . . . ('Pandora's Box . . . ', 11 June 2006)

After working in Iraq for so long Neurotica feels a sense of connection to the country, and a sense of loss for having to leave. She is not happy at home with her family in Abu Dhabi, but nor was she happy in Iraq. She attempts to hold onto particular memories, but these cannot be separated from difficult and painful experiences. Neurotica says that she is waiting to become normal again ('Heroes of today . . . Heroes of tomorrow . . . ', 5 May 2006).

Neurotica moves back to Abu Dhabi to start a family and have children with her 'Hubby'. She is ready to begin the next phase of her life. Her 2009 blog post about being a 'Neurotic Iraqi Mom' almost reads like a farewell. However, she returns to her blog after a long period to write about the death of her beloved father. The blog is a place to leave fragments of herself through sharing difficult emotions and painful memories.

In 2015, HNK, Neurotica and Faiza continued to post about the chaos unfolding in Iraq after the 2011 withdrawal of US troops. They

write about the influence of terrorist groups and organisations such as ISIS on their lives, and what this means in the context of Iraq's history. In 2014 ISIS took control of HNK's hometown; Mosul in the north of Iraq. HNK has achieved much, but she finds herself faced with a future even she could not imagine in the early years of her blogging career. She is now married, pregnant and preparing to leave her beloved country:

> #in a matter of days, I turned from an iraqi pharmacist from hight social class in Mosul to a refugee pregnant woman with no job, no home adress and only 2000$
> # a person who are counting the days to have a call from the IOM [International Organization for Migration] to get an appointment for interview which simply may take a year or so till the IOM will decide whether I deserve to have a station in UN to start my life over again or not. That's include to study and certify my pharmacy degree over again !
> # I am abviously have a chronic depression eposide and have no close person to talk to since all persons I know are already living their own tragedy.
> # I lost my uncle in the middle of this.
> # I lost *well all of us lost* the best historical and islamic mosque in Mosul due to ISIS attack.
> I didn't only leave mosul, Mosul left me back, old memories, places and friends all left me. I am alone all alone.
> And have nothing can do, all I am doing is crying !! ('A cry', Saturday, August 09, 2014)

Not wanting to burden her family and friends who face their own challenges, she turns to her digital audience, to her weblog to absorb the trauma. The impact of ISIS in Mosul forces HNK to flee Iraq in 2016.

Conclusions

The ways that women's lives have changed since Saddam was removed from power are complex and vary greatly depending on location. Different locations in Iraq introduce different freedoms and limitations, different ethnic and religious relations, conservative or

moderate political trends and ruling classes, and various tribal alliances (Goldfarb et al. 2008). Unfolding conflict involving ISIS in the North of Iraq is an example of how clashes for resources and power affect the everyday lives and rights of women. While young bloggers HNK and Aunt Najma found attending school and university difficult during the US occupation of Iraq, life in Mosul has become impossible under ISIS.

Human Rights Watch released their 2015 report which confirmed high levels of emotional distress, trauma, psychological and physical injuries among women who have been abducted by ISIS fighters:

> All of the women and girls interviewed exhibited signs of acute emotional distress. Many remain separated from relatives and sometimes their entire families, who were either killed by ISIS or remain in ISIS captivity. Several said they had attempted suicide during their captivity or witnessed suicide attempts to avoid rape, forced marriage, or forced religious conversion. (Human Rights Watch 2015)

Women and girls need trauma support and ongoing counselling. Only some had immediate access to treatment for injuries, emergency contraception, safe and legal abortion services, including sexual and reproductive health access, and psychosocial support (Human Rights Watch 2015).

> Psychosocial support for women and girls who escaped ISIS is a crucial service that is largely lacking in Iraqi Kurdistan. All the women and girls interviewed showed signs of trauma. Jalila, the 12-year-old raped by four ISIS fighters, said she 'can't sleep at night because I remember how they were raping me. I want to do something to forget about my psychological problems. I want to leave Iraq until things get better, I don't want to be captured again.' She had not received professional counselling. (Human Rights Watch 2015)

ISIS continues to wreak havoc and disaster throughout Syria and Iraq (Chulov 2014; Cronin 2015; Kilcullen 2015; Stern and Berger 2015). It

should be remembered at these times that ISIS is a product of US and its allied invasions in 2002–2003.

In the earlier chapters, we focussed on the lives of people living close to the global centre. The US and Australia are some distance from the fire and tragedy that rages throughout the world. This chapter reached further. It extended the lens of terrorism, violence and anxiety to places where the West regularly interjects but takes little responsibility, and shows little interest, in the aftermath. But in this, and the next chapter, we want to shed light on something disturbing. Not only do we – as a society, as a Western cohort of nations – often pay little attention to suffering that we have all played some role in securing, but we also, paradoxically, often pay little mind to our own security at home. As this chapter has demonstrated, insecurity – managed and governed through global wars on terror and the search for weapons of mass destruction – is unleashed in other parts of the world, with devastating effects. In the chapter that follows, we want to draw attention to something strange about Western culture and our attempts to safeguard our world. Namely, that we often don't take our own security very seriously either.

8

Security Guards and Counter-terrorism: Gaps in Terrorism Prevention

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, various organisations throughout the world including hotels, modes of public transportation, and building and locations in major cities have regularly been targeted by terrorists seeking to convey their violent message. As such, leaders and managers in these and other industries have claimed that they have carefully planned their security and counter-terrorism responses, almost always involving the hiring of *security guards*. It is here that we find something strange in our collective and often hysterical response to terrorism, which also represents a significant gap in counter-terrorism and national security preparedness. We argue that protecting people from terrorism is only possible if consideration is given to the effectiveness of security guards and understanding that their well-being will impact upon their ability to deliver security. We want to draw attention to the often ignored *social role of security guards*. On 9/11, 42 security guards died whilst helping save the lives of thousands. They performed their jobs admirably, despite being low-paid, underappreciated workers. In this chapter we explore the social role of security guards in the context of security and terrorism preparedness in Western cities. In doing so we draw on representations of security guards in popular culture and reports

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on the state of the security guard industry. We argue that there is a dark irony at the heart of the security guard question. Whilst we – as a society – reserve the right to exaggerate the threat of terrorism and panic in the face of people we deem to be potential sympathisers with ISIS, we seemingly also do not intend to take the threat seriously. We station security guards at key points in Western cities and ask them to be on the front line in preventing terrorism. We then pay them minimum wage, make jokes at their expense and dismiss them as insignificant pests interrupting our attempts to have a *good time*. We argue that the low social status of security guards is representative of a society in a state of disavowal, or perhaps one revealing our true religious and racial prejudices, and our propensity for exaggeration.

Terrorism and Industry

For managers, leaders and employees of organisations operating in various industries, especially those considered vulnerable to terrorism, and for the local, state and federal officials for whom safety is a priority, the *threat* of terrorism requires a security response. In many situations and contexts, this will involve a complex array of security systems and practices including security technologies such as metal and bomb detectors; close liaising with state intelligence and policing authorities; close screening of clients, customers and visitors; computer systems for tracking and monitoring staff and visitors; and, most importantly, a highly trained and dedicated team of security guards without whom all the security technology in the world is close to useless. It is here that we believe a significant gap in counter-terrorism preparedness persists. We argue that protecting any location is only possible if consideration is given to the effectiveness of security guards and understanding that their well-being will impact upon their ability to deliver security.

In the pages that follow – which we position as a somewhat serious but also light-hearted end to this book – we outline our understanding of the important role of security guards in counter-terrorism security. We explore the paradox that sees some of our most vulnerable locations

being protected by undervalued, overworked and underappreciated security staff. The existence of this paradox is a significant blind spot in any state's counter-terrorism efforts. To emphasise this situation, we examine the social role of security guards in the *public imagination*. To do this we rely on representations of security guards in popular culture and security guard stories from the post-9/11 world.

Terrorism, Human Behaviour and Security Thinking

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, people altered their travelling habits. Indeed, as many Americans abandoned air travel and took to their cars, the result was a sharp spike in interstate road deaths across the US (Mueller 2006: 3). The air transport industry was acutely affected, and tourism and related industries paid a heavy price for the fear that swept through many parts of the world (Alexander and Alexander 2002; Alexander 2004).

Mueller (2006: 146) argues that terrorists will likely continue to innovate in their efforts in spreading fear and doubt. Their goal in selecting potential targets is to create the belief in witnesses that 'if a bomb goes off in one of those [places], it can go off anywhere'. *Uncertainty*, it seems, is their weapon of choice. Mueller notes that whilst acts of terrorism in the US have been mostly concentrated in large cities, a number of locations not in major cities have been targeted overseas, often in tourist areas. Indeed, hotels, holiday destinations, sporting events and the methods of transport to these locations have been frequently targeted by groups seeking to send a violent message to an audience.

Indeed, the tourism industry has long suffered at the hands of the terrorist threat. As Pizam and Smith (2000: 123) argued, since before the end of the Cold War, a time which will be remembered by terrorism studies scholars as the years when terrorist organisations become aware of the transformative potential of spectacular violence, terrorism has been a part of the 'travel and tourism landscape'. Crisis and risk managers began

playing important roles in organisations responsible for managing locations that are regularly visited by travellers each year. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, terrorist attacks were having a significant impact on the tourism industry, often resulting in 'steep declines' in demand for travel and accommodation in the aftermath (Pizam and Smith 2000: 124). A steep increase in *fear* of terrorism targeting the tourism industry led to reductions in foreign travel, especially from the US to Europe, but was soon followed by a slowing of terrorist acts and an increasing demand for tourism services and products. This, in turn, was followed by 9/11 – the worst non-state act of terrorism in contemporary history which was, for a time, devastating for the tourism and travel sectors (Alexander and Alexander 2002; Alexander 2004). Airlines and air travel-related industries were particularly damaged (Alexander 2004: 155–156).

Korstanje and Clayton (2012: 10) argue that there is an inherent tension that reveals the effectiveness of terrorism as a weapon against difficult to secure 'soft' targets. Tourism, the authors note, 'involves freedom of movement and travel, and is a fairly effective way of disseminating cultural ideas and practices'. It is, however, precisely this *freedom of movement* that places tourists in vulnerable positions. When 88 Australians (out of a total of 202 victims) were killed in the first Bali bombings in 2002, among the stated grievances was the decadence of Western tourists and their drunken behaviour in the nightclub districts where the bombs were detonated. It may be that tourists are uniquely vulnerable to terrorism.

Mansfield (1999: 32) argues that while the impact of terrorism on tourism industries and destinations is 'unpredictable and highly differential', there are several steps that managers can undertake in order to prepare for terrorism and the threat of terrorism affecting their organisations. Mansfield (1999: 35–36) recommends that counter-terrorism should be viewed as a 'long-term process' involving the monitoring of trends in both security demands and terrorism events; cooperation and integration of all operations across related industries and sectors including law enforcement, government and intelligence organisations; representation from all key stakeholders at the strategic level; information sharing, especially on security and risk; and security budgeting. A significant difficulty here is the *loss of will* that often comes into play when people begin to forget the impact and fear associated with major

acts of terror. As one senior manager in a public transport organisation described it, his company secures his business to the extent that he can justify his and his company's actions in the event of a post-attack legal inquiry or royal commission (Howie 2009b: 161).

Indeed, perception is the key for understanding the damage that terrorism causes and the impact on any organisation or industry. It is well understood in terrorism studies scholarship that *fear of* terrorism has an impact far beyond any actual damage that terrorism causes (Friedland and Merari 1985; Howie 2012; Skoll 2010). This led Richard Clutterbuck (1977: 13) to argue in his seminal *Guerrillas and Terrorists* that 'the strongest single factor which leads governments to give way to terrorists, internationally or internally, is television' (and see Howie 2012: 33). Pizam and Smith (2000: 125) believed that:

> Fear and insecurity about the possibilities of terrorism affect . . . demand, even when, in fact, deaths and injuries from terrorism for US citizens are statistically insignificant – less likely to occur than being struck by lightning or killed in an accident on the roads or at home. At the same time, however, terrorism has gained premier power and efficiency as a political weapon through mass media coverage and the exaggerated perceptions about traveller safety and security that this perpetuates.

Understanding the role of the media is central to understanding the nature and threat of terrorism. As Mueller (2006: 2) argues, terrorists kill on average 'a few hundred people a year'. Around the same number drown in US bathtubs each year. One astronomer puts the 'lifetime' risk of dying at the hands of terrorists globally as '1 in 80,000'. This is about the same likelihood of dying in an asteroid or comet strike on Earth (Harris in Mueller 2006: 2). Mawby (2000: 109) describes this as the 'risk-fear paradox' where people fear becoming victims of crime or terrorism far beyond the calculated probability that such victimisation will occur. The media, however, renders these probabilities meaningless. There is even evidence that suggests this fear can reach clinical levels of anxiety. In the weeks following 9/11, Xanax prescriptions increased 9% across the US, and 22% in New York City (Stossel 2014: 8–9). This trend was repeated as the Global Financial Crisis neared. As stock markets

'went into free fall' prescriptions for antianxiety and antidepression medication and sleeping pills increased sharply. As we have described in these pages and in our other works, the media brings distant acts of international terrorism into our living rooms and provides fertile ground for deep-seated anxieties to emerge within us leading to perceptions that we are, somehow, personally threatened by terrorists (Howie 2014). Or, the media makes us all *witnesses to terror* (Howie 2009b, 2012, 2015). When it comes to terrorism and security, perception matters. As Korstanje (2009: 69–70) argues, it was not until the 9/11 attacks that risk perception theories became popular in soft-target security research. Risk and security is about fear and emotions.

Any location that receives daily workers and visitors remains a highly desirable target for would-be terrorists. Sites that many people visit create bottle-necks and mass gatherings which, from a terrorist's perspective, are an ideal 'soft' target. In Australia, 'mass gatherings' are an important focus in Australia's counter-terrorism preparedness (National Counter-terrorism Committee 2011). In this way, and from a counter-terrorism security perspective, we can potentially expand our understanding of organisational security to include any site to which people are attracted at various or cyclical times of the year with the purpose of *culturally experiencing or engaging* locations that have a particular *social or cultural* relevance. Such locations may include cultural or religious monuments and sites; sporting events; musical events and performances; adventure seeking locations like mountains, resorts, oceans, beaches and rivers; and a host of other locations like major cities. All face similar security dilemmas that require careful, counter-terrorism based, security planning. As depicted in the security guard-themed comedy film, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* (2009), security guards 'detect, deter, observe and report'. *Detect, deter, observe, report* – it is a powerful metaphor for officers who play a significant role in public safety whilst having no greater power than an ordinary citizens' arresting rights. Unlike police officers, security guards can be prosecuted for unlawful detention (Carlson 1995: 67–68; Parfomak 2004: 4). They can detect problems, deter the offenders if they can, watch and tell someone. However, as we will show throughout this chapter, in times of terror security guards do far more than this. Indeed, on 9/11 security guards were heroes and worked and died alongside emergency services personnel. They did so with far less acclaim, and for far less pay.

The Counter-Terrorism Role of Security Guards

The role of security guards in a nation's counter-terrorism preparedness or a business' counter-terrorism security is an issue that has not been widely studied or well understood (but see Shearing and Stenning 1983; Van Steden and Nalla 2010). It became a matter of public discussion when in 2005 New York's city council announced a proclamation that on 9/11 'Private security officers displayed great courage and professionalism as they risked their lives to maintain order, evacuate thousands and help save lives' (United Voice 2011: 8). Once the dust had settled, 42 security guards had lost their lives in the attacks on the Twin Towers. Since security guards are such a ubiquitous part of our safety-conscious culture we have been unable to locate a reliable estimation of how many security guards were on duty that day. What we do know is, remarkably, more security guards were killed in the attacks on the Twin Towers than NYPD police officers, and they worked for far less pay, fewer benefits and support, and with less social acclaim and privilege in the community.

The social significance of security guards has received little attention in the sociology, terrorism studies, and counter-terrorism studies literatures (but see Howie 2012: 133–154; Alexander and Alexander 2002: 55). Studies of the role of security guards is almost exclusively housed within criminological fields where guards are viewed as law and order appendages (Sarre and Prenzler 1998, 2000, 2011), 'private' or 'plural' policing (Loader 2000; Jones and Newburn 2006), or as a criminalistic population themselves. The numerous criminological contributions obfuscate what is the most dangerous black spot in domestic counter-terrorism functionality. To understand the role that security guards play in counter-terrorism it is not enough to consider their roles, practices, skills and behaviours as keepers of social control and as private police. We also need to consider their working conditions and remunerations; the expectations that people have of guards; their perceived social roles; their perceived social value and importance/relevance; their symbolic value; and their challenges, lives, well-being and health (St. John 1991; United Voice 2011).

We argue that security guards have a significant place in counter-terrorism security. It could be argued that security guards are the

first line of defence against suicide bombers. We might also say that security guards are the *first* first responders – already standing guard at entrances to buildings, sporting events or in the lobby of hotels when terrorists attempt their attacks. Security guards will be a visible and symbolic feature of counter-terrorism safeguards for any organisation as they work alongside police and intelligence officers. As a US congressional report showed, security guards 'fill the gap' created by limited public resources and insufficient numbers of police (Parfomak 2004: 5). Security guards, you see, are a much cheaper way of providing security, safety and the appearance of certainty (Howie 2009a). However, there is a dark underside for those who work as security guards, often for demanding hours, little job security and minimal reward. As one security guard at an Australian defence base explains, '*We're the first ones a terrorist or a maniac is going to see. If they've got a knife or a gun, we're the people who will cop it*' (emphasis in original. United Voice 2011: 33).

Indeed, security guards are often the victims of terrorist attacks. In fact, there are numerous examples of security guards becoming victims of an attack due to their successful execution of their role. It could be argued that security guards face a terrible paradox – successfully prevent an attack and be among the dead. Do little to stop an attack, and survive it to the detriment of those the guards are assigned to protect. These problems are not mere abstractions. In July 2011, Pakistan's *The Daily Post* reported that between 2006 and 2011, terrorist attacks in Islamabad claimed the lives of 40 security guards and seriously wounded 18 (Hassan 2011). Murdered security guards worked at the Marriott Hotel (in one such attack 17 guards were killed); a car park at Islamabad International Airport (the guard was the only victim); and at restaurants and cafes (Howie 2012: 143).

There is an incredible paradox at the heart of the security guard industry, especially when they stand guard at sites that are highly desirable targets to would-be terrorists. We routinely ask low-paid and undervalued workers to be on the frontline of some of our most important security operations. In some circumstances, we ask some of society's lower paid workers to save some of society's highest paid

workers (as was the case on 9/11, see DiMarco 2007; Howie 2012: 133–154; Parfomak 2004). Parfomak's (2004) US congressional report discussed some alarming realities:

- In the US in 2003, around one million security guards were employed and were being paid an average full-time, annual salary of $19,400.
- This salary places security guards well below the average annual salary across all occupations in the US.
- There were only 650,000 police officers during this same year being paid on average more than double that of security guards.
- Organisations and agencies responsible for counter-terrorism paid little attention to the security guard management practices for private companies, even when those private companies were responsible for the security of important public locations.
- It was 'an open question' as to whether companies that employ security guards at vulnerable locations 'have hired, trained, and otherwise *supported* security guards to the degree warranted by the *social value*' of the places they are stationed to protect (our emphasis, Parfomak 2004: 1).
- Intelligence indicated that it was likely that terrorist organisations pay close attention to the practices and behaviours of security guards at locations they are considering as targets.

What right do we have to expect underpaid and undervalued workers to protect us when terrorists strike? Surely, security guards would have little reason to risk their lives in defending strangers from becoming victims of terrorism. Evidence from the 9/11 attacks suggest that security guards will be nothing short of heroic when required. Gabriel Torres, a security guard in building 5 of the World Trade Center, risked his life to save others and saw many of his colleagues do the same. He rang his mother to tell her he was okay, but also to tell his wife and son that he loved them since he was about to risk his life in performing his job – 'I gotta do what I gotta do' (in DiMarco 2007: 101). Gabriel saw his colleagues running into one of the Towers as it collapsed to the ground. Ralph

Blaisi, a security manager working in a building across the street, had often asked his guards what they would do if there was a disaster and dead bodies littered the streets. 'The consensus was always that they would run' (Blaisi in Fink and Mathias 2002: 57). But on 9/11, guards did not run. Blaisi had 60 guards working for him that day. Not one ran. On the contrary, they guided 45,000 people out of Manhattan, saving countless lives. Then, there is the story of Rick Rescorla – a security manager working in one of the Towers. He ignored security advice that his building was not at risk and evacuated, saving the lives of almost 3000 workers. Unfortunately, Rescorla died in the Towers' collapse. He kept running back into the Towers to save as many people as possible (Wisloski 2011, and see rickrescorla.com).

Security guards play a vital role in society. They are ubiquitous features of travel – in airports, hotels, resorts, events and city spaces – and important contributors to perceptions of safety and security. With the significant threat that terrorism poses to many industries, security guards are asked to play important roles in counter-terrorism functionality.

Imagining Security: Guards in Popular Culture

As Momus (in Žižek 2014b: 141–142) argues, 'Certain scenarios in the real world can be as absurd as jokes, self-evidently laughable, no matter how tragic they are'. He believes that 'Comedy is a legitimacy crisis followed by the sudden appearance of a cornucopia'.

Security guards occupy an ambivalent place in contemporary society. We often imagine security guards as figures of failure, the subjects of jokes and humiliation. When they are not viewed as satirical under-achievers, they are often viewed as dangerous and potentially violent members of the social fringe, criminalistic and uncertain. Indeed, security guards are pilloried in many different forms of popular culture. The Southern Californian, pro-marijuana legalization music group, *Kottonmouth Kings*, included a song on their 2004 album condemning security guards for their violent tactics for crowd control especially

against younger people, their aggression and their paradoxical desire for power but low social standing:

> All these security guards, running around shows always acting hard.
> Why can't we get along, party all night until the break of dawn.
> Why don't you leave us alone? . . .
> Acting like you're a cop but you ain't got no badge.
> Trying to take my pot then you're getting a toe tag.
> Searching people's pockets, acting like a true jake.
> I can see you buying steroids with your minimum wage. ('Leave us alone', Kottonmouth Kings 2004)

Media reports on security guards often highlight criminality, delinquent behaviour and violence. In scholarly circles, studies of security guards are often housed in criminological discourses where the emphasis is on security guard's role as an appendage to legitimate policing forces and organisations or as private police – a literal replacement for the inability of police forces to deliver reliable public safety. In Australia, this was a significant concern during the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in 2006 where security workers and guards significantly outnumbered police force members (Ker and Murphy 2006). In the lead-up to the Games, there was considerable public debate about the role of security guards in public safety. After revelations that the original tender for Commonwealth Games security had failed to elicit a large enough pool of applicants in a timely fashion leading to a re-issue of the tender months before the Games began, security analyst Myles Newlove (2005) argued that 'You're going to have security guards being used in the Commonwealth Games that are ill-equipped and not trained to a level that is required for searching of vehicles for explosive devices'. This debate was framed in discourses of security guard criminality. An Australian sporting personality had been killed the previous year by an aggressive and violent security guard at a Melbourne hotel. Criminality and incompetence were almost assumed, and many believe that the Melbourne Commonwealth Games were vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

A November 2010 report by the labour union representing security guards in Australia, the *Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous workers*

Union (LHMU) (renamed *United Voice* in 2011) tells a similar story. The demand for security guards spurred by the threat of terrorism to Western cities has led to the market becoming flooded with 'rogue' providers that have set off 'a ferocious price war' that has seen the quality of security guards drop significantly. Profits in the security guard industry have subsequently been made by 'cutting corners' through understaffing, enforcing excessive working hours, lax regulation of health and safety, and by hiring dangerously unqualified, untrained guards (LHMU 2010: 6; Howie 2012: 142). In the report there are many examples of media stories depicting weak and ineffective security. The following is a selection of headings from articles recently published in Australian newspapers:

> Concerns organised crime infiltrating private security firms
> Security guards reprimanded for undue force
> Security chief faces drugs, firearm charges
> Security laws bent to allow brazen rorting
> Private police out of control
> Guilty plea on unlicensed security
> Elderly man thrown out of Sunshine hospital after complaining about wait
> Security firm flouting laws
> Student sues for 'slavery': $200 for 158 hours work
> Security operator stole $390,000. (LHMU 2010: 5, 18, 21–26, 31, 42)

Popular culture seemingly views security guards as a fringe, unruly and dangerous species. Quick to anger, poor and unsophisticated, useless and ultimately expendable. In films they are often killed with little concern or consequence. In *The Matrix* (1999) security guards are slaughtered en masse whilst doing nothing more than performing their jobs. The metaphor of 'the agents' becomes one of expendability. As Morpheus explains to Neo, 'The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy . . . these people are still part of that system and that makes them our enemy'. In *American Psycho* (2000) security guards in large buildings in New York City were easy targets of antihero Patrick Bateman's frustrations. He unnecessarily kills a guard in a building he mistakenly enters. It is a metaphor for sameness and a social commentary

on the horror of an indistinguishable identity and insignificance, something apparently exemplified by security guards – *every building has them, and they pass by mostly unnoticed*.

Paul Blart: Mall Cop (2009) tells the story of security guard Paul Blart (played by Kevin James), who works in a large shopping complex in New Jersey. We argue that the portrayal of security guards in this movie typifies the place of security guards in the social imagination. Paul Blart is white, overweight, and unmanly. His comedic buffoonery, incompetence, and failure to be a *real* cop is the context for his transformation from loser to unlikely hero. In a telling scene, Paul Blart is showing a new guard the procedures for protecting the mall:

Blart: Hey. Paul Blart. Ten-year veteran.
Sims: Wow. Veck Sims.
Blart: Well, Veck Sims, welcome to the show. Let's mount up . . . So what made you want to pursue security?
Sims: I never finished high school. This is all I could get. (Carr 2009; Drew's Script-O-Rama, no date)

The suggestion that being a security guard is evidence of failure, of being a drop-out, is quickly negated as it becomes apparent that Sims is that other form of security guard in the social imagination; *the criminal*. Betraying his colleagues, Sims violently takes control of the mall and holds several employees as hostages. He assembles a group of social misfits at the same social level as the security guard – a skater punk, a BMX rider, and tattooed and pierced young people. Paul Blart is the only man willing to stand up to these social misfits and resist despite being hopelessly untrained and incompetent. As his manager reminds him, 'Listen, I think you're making a big mistake. SWAT's on the way. And I'm not gonna sugarcoat it, you're untrained, you're unarmed. And let's face it, son, you present a huge target' (Carr 2009; Drew's Script-O-Rama, no date).

His personal transformation is mirrored by a pop-cultural reflection on the roles of security guards and a realisation that it is an 'undervalued job' but 'an honourable task' (Plotz 2013: 173). The metaphor is then tripled as his awakening is depicted as his pathway from femininity to

white masculinity. The film's message is that there are, apparently, no small roles in this life – only *small white men*. Paul Blart is able to reclaim his masculinity and redeem his life from the supposed obvious inferiority of his profession.

The film reminds viewers that security guards may be expected to be heroes when circumstances call for it. Indeed, Paul Blart realises his value, his role, and is able to save the day in true Hollywood fashion by *faking incompetence*. In this crucial scene Paul Blart pretends during a fist fight to succumb to his *Achilles heel* – he pretends to faint due to hypoglycaemia. In the moment when the *bad guy* relaxes believing Blart is defeated, he administers a vicious sweep kick that takes the villain down.

Žižek (2014b: 88–89) has made a similar argument in relation to George W. Bush's presidency and Dan Quayle's Vice-Presidency. He argues that Bush's 'slips' – those many moments when he would say something odd, wrong or ill-considered – may actually be psychoanalytic 'supreme slips', thereby providing more truth than any ordinary, 'correct', language could ever hope to. The secret psychoanalytic twist is that *incompetence is the ideal place for genius to hide*. You can achieve a lot when people expect little from you. As Žižek (2014b: 89) explains, these slips:

> . . . get a little bit more interesting when pure tautology is emphatically offered as a causal explanation; see the following slip of Quayle: "When I have been asked who caused the riots and the killing in Los Angeles, my answer has been direct and simple: Who is to blame for the riots? The rioters are to blame. Who is to blame for the killing? The killers are to blame".

Žižek (2014b: 89) notes that whilst this explanation was unacceptable to many and was ridiculed in some circles, there is a strong tenant of conservative, neoliberal ideology that supports it – *systemic forces are not to blame for violence. Individuals are. They should be responsible for their actions!* Bush Junior, for his part, gave the world this oddity – 'I believe we are on an irreversible trend towards more freedom and democracy – but that could change' (in Žižek 2014b: 90). Bush's slip contains a flawless ideological logic. Freedom and democracy is irreversible, until it isn't. A similar twist can be found in a *Futurama* (1999–2013) episode where

the robot, Bender, meets God in space. Bender asks, 'So do you know I'm going to do something before I do it?' God responds, 'Yes'. Bender, unsatisfied, quizzes, 'What if I do something else?' God plainly replies, 'Then I don't know that' (Dietter 2002). An action is only real once it has happened. Before it has happened it is in a state of quantum uncertainty. *God only know what we will do, not what we don't do.*

It is in this context that we should understand the final ironic twist in *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* (2009). Blart is assisted by his security manager to neutralise the final bad guy – a member of the police SWAT team – who is also a bully from Blart's high school – yet another metaphor portraying security guards as social losers and non-security others as successful 'winners'. As viewers we are led to believe that a police officer has shot this mastermind of the mall siege, but as the camera pans back we learn that a security guard has taken the policeman's gun from his holster and delivered the triumphant bullet. The films message is clear – police officers will often be looked on to provide public safety as first responders, but security guards are already there, already keeping you safe. They are the *first* first responders.

Conclusion: Who is Responsible for our Safety?

Korstanje and Clayton (2012: 11) argue that businesses and terrorist organisations share something in common; 'Both . . . rely on media management; the creation and manipulations of beliefs and perceptions'. Similarly, security often has more to do with providing the appearance and feeling of safety rather than providing actual, physical security. Indeed, security guards are mostly employed to deter vandalism, and prevent minor violence and damage. In short, to keep the peace, broadly defined. They cannot use violence, are often unarmed, and have little hope of stopping a determined criminal or terrorist. This is especially the case for suicide bombers. Denying a suicide bomber entry to a building or secured site will likely result in their device being detonated amidst security guards or some other crowded, public area. We ask security guards to preserve the safety of others and it has sometimes cost them their lives.

The words *security guard* carry particular, often negative, connotations. It implies refusal of entry, illegitimate control of public space, and the unlawful use of force. However, we hope that when disaster strikes, security guards will help, perhaps even come to our rescue as they did on 9/11. If their actions on that day are any indication, then security guards will be heroes when the unthinkable happens – a major terrorist strike in a large city. This may even involve guiding the wealthiest and most affluent members of the business world to safety and working hand-in-hand with policing and emergency services in saving thousands of lives. We hope they will do this despite the fact that they are low-paid and enjoy low social status. That is, perhaps, a big expectation.

Business leaders and managers should consider the consequences of having low-paid, highly stressed, undervalued security guards in their employ (United Voice 2011: 32). There are two sides to this coin – (1). Will cheap security provide effective protection? (2). Is it morally acceptable to ask low-paid workers to risk their lives when their job calls for it?

There are many precedents in industry where security guards are sometimes highly trained and well paid – at defence sites; at government and other important buildings and locations; at some sporting events; cultural and religious events; at nuclear, power and water facilities; and in war zones. It could be argued that there are many circumstances where highly effective security guards are essential. *Why are sites of everyday life in the city not among them?* It is a challenging question for which there may often be very good answers – perhaps your corner of the city is low-profile; in a non-volatile location; does not regularly see mass gatherings of people; or a host of other reasons. Whilst a security overreaction would provide terrorism with an unnecessary role in what would be an overanxious life, we should also remember that preventing terrorism is never just the responsibility of government and policing agencies. And we should all be mindful of the well-being of those who are responsible for our safety, especially when they are security guards employed in private companies.

9

The Politics of Anxiety

This book has come some distance. In the concluding chapter we find its end-game – the 'End Times' as Žižek (2010) characterised it. Unfortunately, as we argued in Chapter 8 where we examined the low social status of security guards who are effectively the frontline for keeping us all safe from disasters like terrorism, we in Western cities will regularly *kick own goals*. We contribute to our own insecurity – physically, socially and emotionally. We jump to conclusions. We assume the worst. In the language of the self-help literature for dealing with anxiety, the epidemic of society is *catastrophizing* (Leahy 2009; White 1999; Willson and Veale 2009).

Catastrophizing is rarely a helpful thing. It is born of a biological urge for fight or flight – either we ready our bodies and minds for battle with surges of neurochemicals, or we ready our bodies to flee at speed with surges of neurochemicals. These neurochemical flows can have the effect of paralysing the will, and befuddling the mind, to paraphrase a well-known quote from terrorism studies orthodoxy (see Fromkin 1975).

Robert Leahy (2009: 30–31), in his popular self-help book for being 'Anxiety Free', describes the 'Anxiety Rule Book'. It is a set of rules that, if we all follow them diligently, will guarantee that we live our lives suffering under the weight of anxiety and depression. We must, to ensure our pain

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is full and complete, be able to 'Detect Danger', 'Catastrophize Danger', 'Control the Situation' and 'Avoid or Escape'.

> The first rule is to identify a danger as quickly as possible so you can eliminate it or escape from it. If you fear spiders, you will be very quick to detect – or even to *imagine* – their presence. If you fear rejection by others, you will be quick to notice when people are frowning; ambiguous facial expressions may appear hostile. If you worry about disease, you may run from someone who so much as coughs; *the most casual item in the newspaper about an outbreak somewhere may grab your attention*. When you have severe anxiety, you tend to move through the world in a constant state of *alertness that hovers just this side of alarm.* (our emphasis, Leahy 2009: 30)

Once we cultivate these ways of seeing the world we can easily move to 'automatically interpret the danger as an utter disaster' (Leahy 2009: 31). In 2009, Howie drew attention to an Australian Police Chief who claimed that an Al-Qaeda terrorist attack in Australia was a matter of 'when, not if' (Howie 2009b: 88). As we write this concluding chapter, these cries fill the airwaves in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Brussels on 22 March 2016. The response to international terrorism in Australia is something bordering on hysterical. Muslim communities are feeling the brunt of this hysteria as the anxieties of the affluent white classes take centre stage. This is despite recent accounts from the Liberal US think tank The New America Foundation (NAF) that show 'white terrorists' are also responsible for a significant number of terrorism-related deaths on US soil since 9/11 but attract far less public and media attention (Cahill 2016; New America Foundation, n.d.). Naturally, this is accompanied by a dilemma – some will consider the attacks of far right groups to not *really* be terrorism. As a society, we have mostly, and wilfully, swallowed the myth that to be a terrorist you need to first be a black, brown and/or Muslim.

In this concluding chapter we argue that people in Western societies, and the societies themselves, suffer from anxiety and are trapped in cycles of *detecting danger, catastrophizing* the danger we detect, which leads to attempts to *control the situation*, and, ultimately, resulting in our often bizarre attempts to *avoid or escape*. This final chapter has three sections, each corresponding with a stage in Leahy's description

of the rules for staying anxious – pitfalls that, if we choose to live by them, are sure to deliver to denizens of Western cities never ending cycles of disaster, catastrophizing and bizarre overreactions. These three sections – *imagine their presence; the most casual item in the newspaper grabs your attention*; and *alertness just this side of alarm* – are our points of critique in an effort to redirect people back to a path of calmness, tolerance and a life lived with fears that do not consume our lives. It is a world where we become aware that our best defence against catastrophe is to be mindful of our responses to terrorism, disaster and crisis.

Imagine Their Presence: Living in the End Times

Slavoj Žižek (2010) argues that we – emotionally, psychologically and socially – find ourselves *living in the end times*.

> the global capitalism system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point. Its 'four riders of the apocalypse' are comprised by the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions. (Žižek 2010: x)

Žižek points to growing slums and enclaves in most of the world's major cities, new forms of apartheid and high-level corruption that is 'beyond corruption' in big businesses and governments on every continent. There are opportunities in this predicament, however, if we know where to look. The 'standard form' for these opportunities are to be found amongst the most marginalised in society. So where slums and enclaves are often viewed as hotbeds for gang violence, terrorism and religious extremism, these fringe social spaces are also locations for political innovative, forms of non-anxious governance and 'radical political organizations' (Žižek 2010: xi).

The dilemma is that such innovation is an affront to the profit orientations of the powerful in societies – corporations, government

and the media. They will *work hard to deny* the entrepreneurial power of those on the fringe amidst a sea of moral frights, fears of violence and attack, and a loss of cultural, religious and social purity: 'Although similar signs of the "great disorder under heaven" abound, the truth hurts, and we desperately try to avoid it' (Žižek 2010: xi).

Žižek relies on a metaphor from Swiss psychologist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and her five stages of grief to illustrate how we, as members of a society, are faced with an apparent constant stream of terrors, disasters and crises.

Denial – This can't be happening! And if it is, I must pin it on someone! There is someone to blame and if we can find them we can target them until they yield and fix the predicaments we face.
Anger – Anger explodes when we can no longer deny what is happening. How can this be happening? Perhaps it is time to lash out at those we identify as responsible!
Bargaining – Maybe I still have time! Let's act in such a way that we can survive the next 20 years. Maybe the problem will look different then. What can I do in the meantime (think, doomsday preppers, mindfulness meditation).
Depression – Apathy. Social disinvestment. If we're all doomed, why bother? Why try? Why vote? Cynicism wins the day.
Acceptance – I can't fight it. It's too late. Might as well accept it and prepare for the worst.

For Kübler-Ross, these five stages of grief can be applied to a variety of circumstances that involve 'catastrophic personal loss' including 'joblessness, death of a loved one, divorce, drug addiction'. These stages are not necessarily experienced in order, nor are all experienced by every 'patient'. They are more likely to form a melting pot of erratic emotional responses to risks and fears. For Žižek (2010: xi), it is clear that in the twenty-first century 'One can discern the same five figures in the way our *social consciousness* attempts to deal with the forthcoming apocalypse' (our emphasis). Our first reaction is often one of 'ideological denial' where people choose to believe that 'there is no fundamental disorder' and that environmental destruction is merely weather cycles, that the GFC was caused by freak economic conditions and few

financial bad apples, and that the people in ISIS are simply *evil* instead of being products of decades of US and allied violence and imperialism across the planet. Our second reaction is 'exemplified by explosions of anger at the injustices of the new world order'. This is the space that Donald Trump has entered. This is what paves the way for extreme-right and -left sentiments to again be popularised. This was the catalyst for Anders Brievik's ideological insanity in his terrorist attack in Norway.

Our third reaction revolves around being willing to make small changes to correct the problems we face, but never the structural changes required to truly address the problems created by capitalism and the inequality it generates (see Klein 2014; Wacquant 2009; Žižek 2014a). In this stage of grief we believe in odd ideas like carbon trade-offs, minor legal consequences for corporate criminals (whilst jailing minorities and people with low socio-economic statuses for minor drug and property offences), and the provision of minimal global support to collapsing nations to offset any influx of refugees. This is despite it being widely understood that only major, structural change will stand a chance of addressing these globally experienced ills. Klein (2014: 3) shares this view, arguing that this logic relies on telling 'ourselves comforting stories about how humans are clever and will come up with a technological miracle that will safely suck the carbon out of the skies or magically turn down the heat of the sun . . . [it] is yet another way of looking away'. Alternatively,

> we look but try to be hyper-rational about it ('dollar for dollar it's more efficient to focus on economic development than climate change, since wealth is the best protection from weather extremes') – as if having a few more dollars will make much of a difference when your city is underwater. Which is a way of looking away if you happen to be a policy wonk. (Klein 2014: 3)

Or we simply consider challenging issues like climate change or economic crisis as being too abstract or distant to do anything meaningful about it (pretty much the exact opposite to our response to terrorism). But as Klein (2014: 1) warns, 'One way or another, everything changes'.

'When the bargaining fails', Žižek (2010: xi) argues, 'depression and withdrawal set in'. Political apathy reigns. People don't turn out to vote. Saving the environment suddenly seems so hard, so we don't diligently separate our rubbish, limit water consumption or offset our carbon footprint. Since doing something is hopeless, why do anything at all?

Finally, after passing through the zero point, the point of no return, 'the subject no longer perceives the situation as a [personal] threat', but instead as a possibility of a new beginning and a chance to put something in the place of the terror we have felt.

It is this 'social consciousness', Žižek (2010: xi) describes, that has resulted in a common refrain from people in many diverse locations – 'I reckon my life will be easy, but my kids will be buggered' (Threadgold 2012: 17). This is the result of research conducted with young people who were asked to imagine their futures. Young people, it seems, are both incredibly motivated and positive about their futures in terms of well-being, employment prospects and chances at happiness. They are, paradoxically perhaps, pessimistic about the chances of the world and society being liveable beyond their generation. Citing Ellis (2004), Threadgold proposes that young people's negativity towards positive social change can be characterised in three themes: 1). It's not my problem, 2). It's not my responsibility, and 3). I am powerless to do anything. There is then, perhaps, a deeper negativity to be found amidst the mostly positive stories we told from our data in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Where 'risk' was the driving force of the first decade of the twenty-first century in responding to terrors, disasters and crises, it was 'resilience' that was meant to be the defining characteristic of the second decade (Walklate and Mythen 2015: 144). But we wonder whether this perceived resilience may be better described as *entrepreneurialism* – a space where personal doubts in imagining a future can coexist with highly productive adaptive techniques to the grief we feel in the face of the impossible demands of capitalist economics and finance. The anxiety rule book demands we do something, and not simply succumb to catastrophizing. It may be that forms of cynical participation can play important roles in short term futures when long-term ones do not seem possible.

The Most Casual Item in the Newspaper Grabs Your Attention

Even a casual viewing of major Australian newspapers in the days after the Brussels attacks provide evidence that terrorists are succeeding in their goal of having 'a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead' (Jenkins 1987; Howie 2009b, 2012: 31, 2015). It is evidence that we are not winning the war against terror, anxiety and dread – we succumb to it every day. We are a society in need of Leahy's self-help literature when catastrophizing is not only routine and everyday, but also an essential feature of news media empires.

'BROTHERS OF EVIL' confronts Melbournians on the front cover of their most popular daily newspaper, the *Herald Sun* (Herald Sun 2016: 1). Terrorism, according to this account, is at a 'crisis point', and no one is immune. Page four of the *Herald Sun* features its saturation coverage with the headline 'Cut Down by Hatred' (Dowling and Blake 2016: 4). With little effort, the editorialising of the *Herald Sun* invokes an emotional response – there can be no understanding, no mitigating circumstances. The fact that the US and its allies have waged protracted wars in nations made up of predominantly Muslim populations from which ISIS has emerged and flourished is apparently of little importance now. These 'terrorists' are simply 'evil' and filled with 'hatred'. They are supposedly beyond understanding, so why try? This article begins to transform these attacks that have occurred in a distant land into something personal, echoing Hugh White's arguments following 9/11 (in Birmingham 2005: 37). We begin, on page five, to learn of victims from the UK and the US. This is in Australia code for *people in France and Belgium are a little dissimilar to us, but victims from the UK and US make it feel more real, more personal, more terrifying.* Then, the inevitable:

> Australians in Brussels were shocked by the violent turn of events. 'It is very difficult for me to comprehend this. It could have very easily been me,' said Perth woman Nicola Pisano, as tears welled up. 'Yes, it is upsetting now. It's still hard'. Every working day for a year, at the same time, the 26-year-old would make her way to work on the same train, getting off at the same station and making the short few steps along the

> same road to her office. Just three weeks ago, she moved house so she would be able to walk to work. As she stood in central Brussels last night, among a sea of candles and chalked messages of love and hope, it hit home what that decision had meant. 'I would catch that metro every day, twice a day, to get to work . . . every day at the same time as when this explosion took place.' (Dowling and Blake 2016: 5)

It is our controversial claim that *this* is, precisely, what terrorism is. Terrorism is not violence alone, nor just the people who witness it, or the government's response. Terrorism is about personalising violent acts that are not personal in order to make people, in places that are long distances away from where terrorism takes place, catastrophize and feel terribly afraid that they will be the victims of seemingly random violence. The absence of Australian victims in these attacks (at the time of writing) meant that these journalists had to stretch to find a relatable victim. The person who *would have* been a victim will do nicely. Terrorists want us to feel afraid despite the risk of dying in a terrorist attack being very slim. ISIS would find little success in their campaign without a complacent news media. Journalists often do more to further terrorism's cause than the violent ideologues themselves.

And this is all before we reach the opinion columnists. In op-eds often the number one public enemy are 'Muslim terrorists' (Bolt 2016: 13):

> Brussels is Europe's biggest Muslim city, home to a virtual colony large enough to sustain its own culture and hide entire networks of terrorists from the police . . . Japan has nearly 127 million people – nearly 80 times the population of Brussels and six times Australia's. Only 100,000 of them are Muslims – one-third the number in Brussels and one-fifth of that in Australia . . . See, Japan limits immigration.

We are told to accept a simple equation - more Muslims equals more terrorism. Articles like this can be the petrol to the fire of ISIS. It might be argued that stories like this can threaten societal well-being and security.

Australia's national, daily newspaper, News Corp.'s *The Australian*, fared a little better. 'EUROPE'S PERFECT STORM' is the headline that greets readers. It heads the front page article that links immigration, fluid European borders, and a failure of security and intelligence to terrorism events. A smaller headline above this article declares that 'Failed migration and open borders fuelled terrorism' (Maley and Fitzpatrick 2016: 1). We are interested at how in these moments in the aftermath of a major terrorist attack in a Western city journalists seem to forget about how the rise of ISIS came in the wake of failed post-9/11, counter-terrorism policy and ill-considered wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, without which ISIS would likely not exist. It is also interesting to note how nothing is attributed to more than a decade of systematic racism and discrimination in Western nations directed against minorities of all kinds, and how this fosters radicalisation (Wacquant 2009).

Page two ups the rhetoric with the banner running across the top of the page across a European Union flag reading 'Europe at War'. The headline on page two borrows the same techniques adopted by most media after terrorism in a distant location – personalising and catastrophizing. The terrorism in Brussels is, accordingly, a case of 'Horror disguised as the everyday' (Higgins 2016: 2). There is more truth to this than some journalists likely realise. For Higgins (2016: 1–2), the everydayness of violence was evident in the routines that were carried on unabated right up until the moment the terrorists detonated their bombs. Higgins writes of a chilly Brussels morning that saw passengers arriving at Brussels Airport in their winter gear. He reports of Starbucks coffees, security checkpoints and mundane everydayness being altered by, first, an argument and then an explosion that tore apart – among others – a women taking money out at an automatic teller machine. But for Žižek (2009: 1–2), violence is everyday when its consequences pass mostly unnoticed. He identifies two broad categories of violence: *subjective* and *objective*. Subjective violence is the most visible, most shocking violence that we witness every day in newspapers and on television. Rapes, murders, assaults, terrorism and other forms of interpersonal violence. The terrorism in Brussels and the spectacular media response are examples of subjective violence. We have a sense of what has happened, we know details about the numbers of perpetrators and the numbers that were killed. We internalise and personalise this violence and it becomes forever part of our lifeworlds

and our narrative maps for walking around our cities. Objective violence lies beneath these most visible outbursts of violence. It is never visible in the same ways that subjective violence is, but subjective violence would not be possible without it. Objective violence takes form as structural inequalities, systemic discrimination, and 'the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems' where a few have far more than they need, and most have not enough to survive comfortably (Žižek 2009: 1). Objective violence in Brussels takes form as underprivileged Muslim ghettos where young, increasingly angry, men and women live marginalised existences on the fringes of affluent society (see Jacoby 2016; Baeten 2001). It takes form as international wars in Syria and Iraq as Muslim men and women across Europe, America and Australia fret for the lives of loved ones left behind (see Brown 2015). It takes form in right-wing politicians and journalists making veiled threats against the Muslim populations in their countries, blaming them for the ills of the world, and accusing Islam of being inherently violent and archaic.

We should compare the mediated response to terrorism in Australia to the response to the GFC. The GFC was thought to have started when, on 2 April 2007, New Century Financial Group filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The company itself fired 3200 workers, more than half of its workforce, on this date. New Century was the 'largest independent U.S. provider of "subprime" mortgages' (Stempel 2007). Their collapse sent off a ripple effect that was felt throughout the world, resulted in global recession, company failure and widespread, generational, economic, financial and social consequences. But the reporting of the imminent economic failure was reported, mostly, as cold, hard facts. There were few embellishments, certainly no spectacularisation, probably because economic crises do not provide heinous imagery and moments of subjective violence that can be captured on a camera phone or by a photographic journalist. Although, in many respects, this is not true. Certainly, photographs and video could be taken of marginalised and impoverished communities but, as we know, this would not sell many newspapers or much advertising space. One can also imagine a world where corporate criminals are punished with the same vigour as minority criminals in the marginalised ghettos of major US cities, as Michael Moore did in 2000. In a skit on his *The Awful Truth* television series he depicts a fanciful world where this vigour in

policing was applied to white collar criminals too. In comedic scenes we witness a white man in a suit casually walking down the street before spotting the *corporate cops*. He runs away in a panic before the scene changes and suddenly this white collar criminal is being violently pinned against a chain-wire fence, shirtless, writhing against his arrest (Moore 2008; see Howie 2012: 116). Naturally, this is an impossible scene in the contemporary West. The scene is completed by the 'Bad Cops, Bad Cops' jingle that accompanies the hit television show *Cops* that features dramatic arrests by US police officers in various jurisdictions across the country, usually against poor, marginalised and minority 'alleged' offenders (Mastro and Robinson 2000).

Economic crisis reporting in 2007 and 2008 simply stated this or that company had failed and that 'x' number of people had lost their jobs. There were few emotional tales of lives destroyed (although that was to come later). But there was some acknowledgement in the initial reports that the subprime failure could soon spread. In CNN Money (2007), staff writers reported on 'problems in subprime lending' extending well beyond the New Century failure. They reported on the importance of the subprime market for America's continued financial existence:

> Lenders made $640 billion in subprime loans last year, nearly twice the level just three years earlier . . . The Mortgage Bankers Association says subprime amounted to about 20 percent of the nation's mortgage lending and about 17 percent of home purchases in 2006. Financial firms and hedge funds likely own more than $1 trillion in securities backed by subprime mortgages . . . about 13 percent of subprime loans are now delinquent. (CNN Money 2007)

The reality of this situation would have made it highly appropriate for global news networks to offer dramatic, spectacularised headlines. Something along the lines of 'World Economy on Brink of Collapse – Panic Predicted' might be comparable to some of the media reporting in the aftermath of the Brussels attack if proportionality is of any concern.

Alertness that Hovers Just This Side of Alarm

A terrorist attack in Australia is a matter of when, not if, lamented Simon Overland, Victorian assistant police commissioner in 2005 (see Howie 2009b: 88). He believed at the time that it was 'inevitable that, at some stage, we will have an attack here'. Overland was thinking about this inevitability in the context of the Al-Qaeda threat when he uttered these words. There has been a similar chorus since the rise of ISIS that terrorism in Australia and many other Western nations is simply a matter of time. Indeed, Australia has in recent years been targeted by people inspired by ISIS and intelligence and policing agencies have thwarted planned attacks. But, thankfully, Australia has yet to be the stage for a mass casualty terrorist attack.

And, of course, maybe doomsayers are right and a significant attack is just around the corner. That's the nature of speculation of this kind – it is very hard to argue with. Who can, after all, say for sure that terrorism will not happen? Naturally, this is what terrorists want from us. The notion that it is only a matter of time until previously untouched cities, lands and territories are targeted by ISIS is the very definition of *terror*ism. It is our societal own goal – terrorism does not need to occur for us to feel very afraid by its potential to occur. Quite unlike the GFC where Australia was one of the few countries to not go into economic recession (Alexander 2013). Most people shrugged, preferring not to think about the economic calamity that was about to drop. But where most economists were unable to predict the GFC and its incredible fallout, there were those who warned of the looming economic disaster before 2007. These same groups continue to warn of the next economic disaster, this time alongside economists. It was anti-globalisation protesters that had long warned of the impossibility of continued growth, a lust for credit, and post-9/11 record low interest rates.

In 1999, the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' was one of the most significant protests in US history. It quickly descended into violent confrontations between heavy-handed police forces and the violent

protesters, some of whom were thought to be radical anarchists who made the trip north from Oregon. They have been described as the 'Occupy Wall Street of their time', and focussed their attentions on the impacts of globalisation rather than on the 'excesses of finance' (Smith 2014). The protesters were a consortium of social justice oriented and political organisations including trade unions, environmentalists, consumer rights groups, 'labor rights' groups, and various other left-wing, anti-capitalist organisations.

> In the decade that followed, the Seattle protests came to seem as not only silly, but also misguided. After all, what were the excesses of globalization compared to the travesty of the Iraq War, or the disaster of the financial crisis? America seemed to decide that we had much more important things to protest about, and the Seattle protesters have been largely forgotten in our pop media culture. It is a shame, because the worries of the Seattle protesters have been proven right on nearly every count. (Smith 2014)

But we can perhaps even go back further to see looming economic catastrophe. Bret Easton Ellis (1991), in his cult novel *American Psycho*, created literary anti-hero Patrick Bateman who was a symbol for heinous corporatism in the 1980s and a predicator for its downfall. Via the metaphor of a serial killer, Ellis draws attention to the unsustainability and murderous potential in unrestrained and unmitigated wealth accumulation. This critique is best captured in a scene where Bateman is speaking with a young woman in a New York City nightclub:

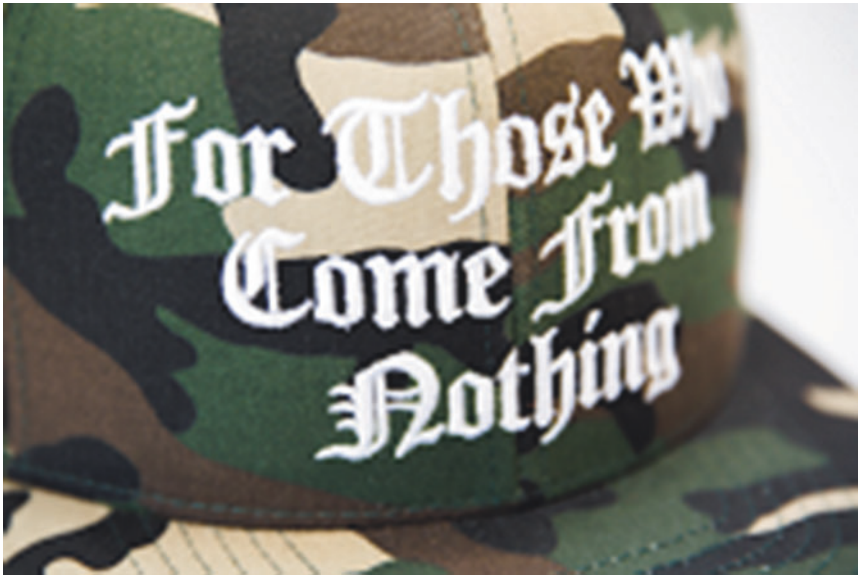
> *Woman*: So what do you do?
> *Bateman*: . . . I'm into, oh, murders and executions mostly . . .
> *Woman*: Well, most guys I know who work in mergers and acquisitions don't really like it. (Ellis 1991: 197)

Indeed, the idea that wealth and greed are negative human attributes saturates popular culture. So what is our collective response to this? Something that sits just this side of alarm? We incorporate marginalised and poor lifestyles into our lifeworlds and they become normalised

narratives of twenty-first century capitalism. *We own the uncertainty*. To struggle is honourable. To be self-made has value. To rise above difficult odds makes you more resilient than those born into privilege. But when a supposed history of economic and financial struggle meets privilege, something dangerous is produced. Sociology calls this *poor chic*. Halnon (2002: 501) defines 'Poor Chic' as:

> an array of fads and fashions in popular culture that make recreational or stylish – and often expensive – 'fun' of poverty, or of traditional symbols of working class and underclass statuses. Earlier historical examples of Poor Chic are 1920s Harlem 'white slumming parties', 1960s Levi blue jeans, Parisian costume balls where the rich adorned themselves in expensive rags.

Practices of poor chic may be comparable to other cultural appropriations including 'playing Indian, black face minstrelsy, and drag that involve privileged members of society impersonating down the social ladder of stratification'.



This is an image of a skate/surf culture hat that we purchased in a wealthy community in the US, in Orange County, California. The insignia reads '*For Those Who Come From Nothing*' and the brand is *DGK*, or Dirty Ghetto Kids. The hat cost around $35USD. One of the company's founders claims that he created the company – specialising in skateboards and skateboarding products – for his children so he can tell them 'Once upon a time' tales from the perspective of those who were once marginalised and who have since become successful (see Williams in Wall Street Journal YouTube 2012). DGK is fast becoming one of the most popular skate brands in the world, building its empire on the profiles of skaters from other highly successful brands and selling a narrative of marginalisation and failure to its consumers.

Perhaps it is easier to be resilient in the face of a slow moving threat. We embrace it! Tighten the belt. Be more selective consumers. How do we avoid terrorism? We cannot. We do not. It is inside of us. It is our emotional response to a complex *social* dilemma. We can, however, fight terror by fighting the anxiety that threatens to take over our will and befuddle our minds (see Fromkin 1975).

Lakoff (2004: 247) has argued that anxieties go to the heart of what it means to participate in globalisation. In his research during economic crises in Argentina, he found that sales of antianxiety and antidepression medications spiked sharply. Indeed, at a time when pharmaceutical companies were labouring under the effect of 4 years of recession, sales of antidepressants were the saviour – 'income from antidepressant sales jumped markedly: 16.5% from June 2000 to June 2011 alone' (Lakoff 2004: 248). Culturally, what would be an intervention for clinical depression in the US was routinely being proscribed in Argentina for 'socially induced stress' and the anxiety that flows from it (Lakoff 2004: 249).

There is evidence that not only does economic collapse and the uncertainty that ensues cause anxiety, but also that anxiety and stress may well be a factor in the decisions of the merchant bankers and financiers that cause the economic carnage. It seems that some hormones rise in traders when they take greater risks – the riskier

the deal, the greater the high (Kandasamy et al. 2014: 3608). Where it was once assumed that financial traders followed relatively stable decision-making pathways in which they acted as utility maximisers;

> Since the financial crisis of 2007–2009, evidence has suggested they are not. For example, a small number of empirical studies have shown that financial risk preferences do fluctuate. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that traders and investors experience a greater willingness to take risks during a rising market and a reduced willingness during a falling one. If risk preferences do indeed move in tandem with the market cycle, they may exaggerate the peaks and troughs, thereby contributing to financial instability. (Kandasamy et al. 2014: 3608)

The punchline to this study is that sharp rises in stress did not seem to effect riskiness of traders' behaviours, but sustained stress made them more risk averse and pessimistic. Not only does the sustained presence of stress hormones impair judgement and decision-making, but it also changes the basis for decision-making itself – highly stressed traders seem to adopt habitual, status quo decisions instead of innovative and goal-directed decisions (Kandasamy et al. 2014: 3612). As social scientists, what we are to conclude from this is clear – financial traders are affected by the anxiety produced by a declining market, and may subsequently take actions that make the situation worse. This may indeed be cause for some dramatic headlines in the right-wing media (but we doubt we will ever see it). It is our claim that perhaps there should be spectacular coverage of devastating economic downturns that, in turn, lead to definitive actions in the same style as our overblown responses to terrorism threats (such as dramatic dawn raids and arrests at the homes of corporate criminals and those who facilitate and support them, law-making to make illegal acts that were previously only frowned upon, and profiling-styles that would put most traders and bankers under an institutional microscope).

These measures might seem extreme, but we want to draw attention to something that we think is obvious – financial crises kill,

injure and affect the health and well-being of potentially billions of people (De Vogli 2013: 391). We would also add that the responses to terrorism are certainly extreme. In Australia, billions of dollars have been spent on a problem that has never materialised into a mass casualty event, and may never. Anticipating criticism, some would argue that there have indeed been acts of terror in Australia. This is true. Almost all of these were before 9/11, and before we began spending billions of counter-terrorism. The Lindt Café siege in Sydney in 2014 was an act of terror. Two people died, one of whom died as a result of a police officer's bullet. It was hardly comparable to the sort of terrorist violence felt across Europe and the rest of the world. We wonder whether the billions spent on counter-terrorism may have been better spent on creating a world where inequality is not inevitable. We also believe that addressing global anxiety and our idiotic, anxious decisions, and our exaggerated responses to seemingly existential threats may be a more productive step in the right direction.

Conclusion: The Rules of Political Anxiety

Our stories of anxiety, dread and terror in this age of terrorism and political violence and wars fought in their name; financial crisis and collapse; drug use, poverty and marginalisation that have disproportionately affected young people; debt; and the terrible mental and physical health consequences that have flowed from these catastrophes have covered considerable ground. In the early chapters we set the scene by referring to a diverse body of literature that included research and analysis of anxiety and trauma, social theory of uncertainty, dread and doubt and accounts of terrorism, economic crisis, and the chaos that is sometimes left in its wake. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 told stories from data that we collected in the US in 2014 and 2015 about how young people were surviving and struggling, but also sometimes thriving, in the aftermath of the worst economic downturn in close to a century. These people were robbed of their futures in some respects, but they have learned to imagine

their futures in other terms. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 we expanded our analysis to include culture more generally, and popular culture in particular. We reported on post-GFC televisual pop-culture, on blogs kept by young women living and working amidst war in Iraq, and we explored the irony inherent to a panicky, anxious society that nonetheless hold security guards as low-class citizens – workers that we somehow expect will save us when that terrorist attack occurs (remember, we are meant to believe it is a matter of when, not if!).

We could add to the analysis of anxiety, its causes and sustaining narratives contained in these pages with descriptions of the emergence of ubiquitous social media websites and technologies, borne from the seats of power and which have conspired to keep us plugged in but also distracted, stressed, always 'on', deprived of sleep and of mindfulness and self-awareness as we get lost in a world of self-managed, perception control and personal transformation.

And thinking and writing about anxiety has extended well beyond the domain of medical and mental health professionals. Literature, film, television, self-help books, social networking websites, and some fields of social scientific endeavour have dragged debates and discussions out of its scientific quagmire. This has, in turn, influenced the psychological and medical disciplines themselves. The lesson we have learned is that the people best placed to think about anxiety and challenge the often catastrophizing responses to it are the chronically anxious. It is the people who feel the terror, dread and anxiety – who live the stress, who experience the neurochemical flows, who live a life with upset stomachs, panic attacks, substance abuse and a myriad of coping mechanisms – who are the pioneers of our sociology of anxiety. It may be that the emergence of right-wing mainstream political movements throughout the world is evidence of a world succumbing to anxious thoughts. Would we have the Tea Party or Donald Trump as President if we were not so anxious? (see Rosenthal and Trost 2012).

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