A national history curriculum, racism, a moral panic and risk society theory

Grant Rodwell
University of Tasmania

With a proposed Australian national history curriculum, many Australians began to question what historical content would be taught in the nation's schools and colleges. While pressure for a national history curriculum had been building for many years, the final impetus came from a moral panic that gripped Australian society during late 2005, possibly reinforced by risk society imperatives. This paper argues that the history taught in Australian school education is highly politicised, the product of a moral panic, and of risk society thinking. This paper further argues students should be enabled to appreciate these factors underpinning national history curriculum through a more rigorous teaching of historiography in the school education.

Introduction

In his autobiography, former Prime Minister John Howard (2010/2013, p.782) wrote on the deficiencies in Australia's school education system — i.e., education as administered in a formal school setting under an educational authority — relating as they are "predominantly to how and what students are taught, and how government schools are administered". For Howard, "these are overwhelmingly state responsibilities, although the Commonwealth has a say in the National Curriculum, where a major repair job is required in history (and perhaps also the English) syllabus".

Considering the inroads the Commonwealth had crafted in school education, at the time of writing this paper, Howard's (2010/2013) statement seems altogether moderate, while at the same time many commentators would advance an argument even in 2010 the Commonwealth's involvement is school education extended beyond "a major repair job is required in history (and perhaps also the English) syllabus" as stated by Howard (2010/2013, p.782). It seems as if some politicians are almost compulsive meddlers in national history curricula! "Of all school subjects, history is the discipline most targeted by politicians", claimed Taylor (2014, n.p.). Indeed, "ideologically based abuse of history education is a global phenomenon" (Taylor, 2014, n.p.). All the time advancing the Commonwealth's impact on school education, Howard continued his relentless assault on the Australian history curriculum, particularly during the last years of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Government. Similar to his apparent motivation in which he personally annotated Taylor's initial draft of the national history curriculum, as reported by Taylor (2008), Howard wrote in the Liberal Party friendly *The Australian*: "My fear is that if this curriculum remains unamended, young Australians of the future will be denied a proper knowledge of our nation's history" (Howard, 2012, n.p.). As usual, when Howard addressed himself to what should be in the national history curriculum, readers are left wondering exactly what constitutes *a proper knowledge of our nation's history*?

"Of all school subjects, history is the discipline most targeted by politicians", claimed Taylor (2014, n.p.). Indeed, "ideologically based abuse of history education is a global phenomenon" (Taylor, 2014, n.p.). Taylor (2014, n.p.) laid the blame at the feet of conservative politicians, because of what has happened in "the US in the 1980s, in Canada in the 1990s and the early 2000s and in the UK from the early 1980s through to the present day". The more progressive Australian Labor Party, however, has rendered similar ideological control over the school education history curriculum. The politics of the history curriculum has long attracted researchers (Apple, 1990; Goodson, 2005; Erekson, 2012; Lawton, 1980/2012), but there has been little research on the linkage between the politics of the history curriculum, moral panic theory (Rodwell, 2017a; Rodwell, 2017b), and risk society theory (Beck, 1992; Bialostok, Whitman & Bradley, 2014).

What we teach the nation's young people in history lessons in schools and colleges must be at the core of any national concerns of thoughtful citizens. *The Australian Curriculum: History* ('ACH') provokes similar concerns (ACARA: *Foundation to Year 12*, n.d.). Highly politicised in its conception, it was a product of a racist-based moral panic, and risk society imperatives.

In part, driven by a moral panic surrounding the 2005 Cronulla race riots, the roots of ACH are bound in political ideology and politics. The ACH is little different in this respect than other national history curricula. As taught in school education, history often has been the tool of political elites.

This paper looks to the issues surrounding the founding of the ACH — the moral panic surrounding the 2005 Cronulla race riots in its plethora of nuances, the dominant historical ideology of the moral provocateurs, moral entrepreneurs and political elite who pushed for the establishment of the ACH, and the general political and economic climate of the time, dominated as they were by risk society theory. First, it is necessary to examine briefly the Cronulla race riots.

The 2005 Cronulla race riots

By the time of the 11-12 December 2005 race riots in Sydney's southern beach suburb of Cronulla, the John Howard Coalition (conservative) Government had been in power for almost ten years. During that time, no doubt, Howard was aware of the race riots in the United Kingdom (e.g., Bradford, Oldham [2001], Birmingham [2005]), and in the United States: (e.g., St Petersberg, Florida [1996], Cincinnati, Ohio [2001], Benton Harbor, Michigan [2003], Toledo, Ohio [2005]).

Australia has had its own race riots, but these were back in colonial times or the early twentieth century, and usually sparked by Chinese-European friction on goldfields (e.g. Lambing Flats, New South Wales [1861] and Kalgoorlie, Western Australia [1919 and 1934]). Despite the brief setbacks, for decades leading up to the early twenty-first century, racial tolerance was a growing part of the Australian ethos and national character — held

as preciously as its images of athletic, bronzed surfing masculinity. The so-called 'athletic, bronzed surfing image' had its origins in Sydney beach suburbs, such as Cronulla.

On Sunday 4 December 2005, following a report of an assault on two off-duty surf lifesavers by members of a group of men of Middle Eastern appearance, police were called to North Cronulla Beach. As with the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) — formed in 1915 to confront the Turks and Germans in the Dardanelles — tradition in Australia, lifesavers have occupied a highly esteemed position within Australian society (Rodwell, 1999). Moral provocateurs and political elites were provided with 'a field day', as Sydney media outlets expressed outrage that volunteer lifesavers could be assaulted on 'their beaches' by 'invading' youths from the other side of town (Reid, 2010). The general message of the media, particularly through the radio 'shock jocks' was that Muslims (the 'Other') were invading what was for many Australians an almost sacred site, and assaulting 'our' surf heroes.

For some Australians, severe protests were in order. On the following Sunday, approximately 5000 people gathered to protest against alleged incidents of assaults and intimidatory behaviour by groups of these youths of Middle-Eastern appearance from the suburbs of south-western Sydney. Initially assembled without incident, but fuelled by excessive alcohol consumption, soon violence broke out amongst the crowd. Police and ambulance officers were also attacked. The racist aspect of the incidents was reported widely overseas (Reid, 2010). As ugly as all this was, how could these events lead to the establishment of a national history curriculum, and the mandating of the teaching of history to all Australian school education students from Year 1-Year 10 (5 to 16 year-olds)? Our explanation should begin with another 'tussle' in Australian history. This one was of an academic and intellectual kind.

Australia's history wars and 'black armband' politics

As with most countries, there had long existed opposing views, or ideological positions and interpretations, on Australia's history (Taylor & Guyver, 2012). By the mid-1990s, with the urbane Paul Keating as Prime Minister of the Labor Government, and John Howard as Leader of the Liberal (conservative) Party Opposition, this had developed into "open warfare", principally centred on interpretations of how the history of British "settlement" or "invasion" of Australia might be told (McKenna, 1997).

With the 1996 federal election, the Keating Labor Government gave way to the conservative John Howard Coalition Government. Now the history wars opened up on new fronts, not the least was one surrounding the opening of the National Museum of Australia on a new site in Canberra in March 2001. National questions arose of how this museum might interpret the relationship between Australia's First Peoples and the British colonialist powers and cultures. McCarthy (2004, p.3) argued: "... the cultural wars in Australia took on a new phase with the election of the Howard government in 1996". Particularly, McCarthy (2004, p.2) noted: "... while in Opposition, John Howard had asserted a narrow version of Australian identity, tied to a settler modernist version of

history". However, "... once in power Howard set about constructing Australia to match his cultural predilections. Howard sought to displace pluralistic versions of Australian identity and history with his old-fashion notion of the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon culture and Australia as a march of modernist progress". This phase of Australia's culture wars was about "... the government's triumphalist historical vision" (McCarthy, 2004, p.2)

Prime Minister Howard pushes for a national history curriculum

Many Australians were badly shaken by the 2005 Cronulla race riots, not the least was Prime Minister Howard. Encouraged by her leader, Julie Bishop, Minister for Education in the Howard Government, pushed for a national curriculum, which would include history as a mandatory subject in Australian school education. Bishop would organise a 'History Summit' for late 2006 (Bishop, 2006). The vested interests and stakeholders began to organise themselves.

National hegemony in the Australian curriculum had been evolving slowly since the federation of the six Australian colonies in 1901. The Australian Constitution mandated school education to be the jurisdiction of the States (Barcan, 1980). But gradually since 1907, through various Sections of the Constitution the Commonwealth had been asserting influence over school education. With the growing influence of risk society imperatives, even by the late 1980s with the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments, there had been much national discourse concerning the need for a national curriculum (Rodwell, 2017).

A race riot and a moral panic

The Cronulla race riots provoked a nationwide moral panic, stimulated by risk-society imperatives, leading to Howard's push for a national history curriculum which would instil 'Australian values' in school education students. The repercussions of this moral panic lasted at least a decade. "On 11 December … Australians confronted a clash of races on the beaches, where the iconic lifesaver and freedom of the surf intersected with suburban isolation and territorial proprietorialism" wrote a 2015 editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "National unity will never be achieved until we recognise that racism remains a clear and present danger" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2015, n.p.).

The extent to which this emerging moral panic reached into nearby schools during the days following the riots is unrecorded, though the media reported many young people associated with the surf culture being present. So, not expectedly, the social media ran hot during the following weeks (Lattas, 2007; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008). Clearly, social media contributed much to feeding this moral panic.

Certainly, while at the time Howard came under national criticism for avoiding any racist labels in his discourse on the riots, he rode out the moral panic to push for a curriculum that would instil in Australian school students his version of Australian history with its accompanying values (Reid, 2010). In the ensuing moral panic, Howard himself avoided any public role of a moral provocateur, while pushing harder for a national history

curriculum (Nicholson & McMahon, 2005). However, any hopes of his version of Australian history being developed in a national and mandated curriculum faded with the election of the Rudd Labor Government in 2007. The links between the Cronulla riots, the national curriculum, moral panics and risk-society theory is yet to be written, but increasingly, from both sides of federal politics, the history curriculum was becoming perceived as a panacea for all kinds of social dysfunctions (Kostogriz, 2011).

While race riots have been scarce in Australia, this is not so with racism-provoked moral panics. Without the degree of moral panic manifest when racism challenged white Australian icons such as the surf-lifesaving culture, racism also was a principal driver in First Nations Australians-European relations in Australia. This often feeds into school education, where again under the proposed national history curriculum school education, students would learn a particular view of these relationships. Gale (2007, 21) described how "The extensive media coverage of Indigenous violence during 2006 began with a focus on a report on the incidence of violence in remote Indigenous communities by the Crown Prosecutor in Alice Springs". Gale (2007, 21), referred to a media report by Moscaritolo (2006), stating: "Much of the reporting reflected a moral panic, associated with what was reported as a 'vicious cycle' of sexual abuse and violence". Allegedly, this included "... predators taking and abusing children when their parents are drunk, of violence and stabbings, of communities overwhelmed by hopelessness and unceasing tragedies" (Moscaritolo, 2006, n.p.). It appears that racist-based moral panics surrounding Australia's First People lacked the political clout that racist-based moral panics engendered concerning Australian icons such as the beach culture. For example, Gale (2007) catalogued a vast array of media reports on this topic during the latter years of the Howard Government, including one by Keith Windschuttle, a principal figure in the history wars of the same period (Ianziti, 2004).

An Australia Day speech, a History Summit and 'root and branch renewal'

Australia Day 2006 — January 26 — was memorable for reasons other than 'celebrating' two hundred and eighteen years of Europeans in Australia. In the words of Michelle Grattan from *The Age,* "In an Australia Day eve address to the National Press Club, Mr Howard exhorted a 'coalition of the willing' to promote changes to the teaching of history, which he said was neglected in schools and too often questioned or repudiated the nation's achievements". Here, Howard promoted his ideas on the Cronulla race riots of December 2005 (Grattan, 2006, n.p.).

For Howard, the fault was in our schools where political correctness and 'black armband' ideas which had wreaked ruin on Australia's national identity. In his address, Howard "called for 'root and branch' renewal of history teaching in schools — increasing the number of students who studied it and overhauling the way it was taught" (Grattan, 2006, n.p.). According to Howard, as reported by Grattan (2006, n.p.), "Fewer than a quarter of senior secondary students took a history subject, and only a fraction of this study was Australian history". Indeed, for Howard, "Too often, it is taught without any sense of structured narrative, replaced by a fragmented stew of 'themes' and 'issues' … And too often, history, along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a

postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated" (Grattan, 2006, n.p.). The teaching of history, for Howard had a national purpose, "Part of preparing young Australians to be informed and active citizens is to teach them the central currents of our nation's development" (Grattan, 2006, n.p.). Consequently, Howard called for a history summit, and his Minister for Education, Julie Bishop delivered (Bishop, 2006).

Two months before Julie Bishop's history summit, in July 2006, Ann Curthoys addressed the Professional Historians Association in Sydney on the vexed topic of history in the Howard era. When Howard spoke of 'heroic achievement', the central question would be *whose* 'heroic achievements' — *whose* history? This prompted Curthoys (2006, 1) to ask: "Why has Howard talked so consistently of balance in history? Why does history matter to him and to the government he heads? What does he really mean?"

In her analysis of these questions, Curthoys (2006) takes us back to the so-called 'History Wars' of the late 1980s and 1990s, where Howard had expressed his support for conservative, Whiggish, evolutionary idealist interpretations of Australian history. Curthoys (2006) explored Howard's views, showing how McKenna (1998) and Brawley (1997) demonstrated how the political issues involved here sharpened during the Keating Labor Government years (1991-96). This was during a time when Keating accused the Opposition of being "relics from the past, remaining British to their bootstraps despite Britain's decision not to help Australia defend itself against the Japanese advance in 1942". The Liberal and National parties, Keating growled, "are the same old fogies who doffed their lids and tugged the forelock to the British establishment" (Brawley, as cited in Curthoys, 2006, 2). Curthoys contended the debate further intensified when the Coalition lost the 'unlosable election' in 1993. Keating had succeeded in positioning Labor as the champions of "what was truly Australian" (Curthoys, 2006, 3).

Bishop threw her support behind her leader, saying she "... would like to see Australian students echo the American sense of pride in learning about their nation's history". She said few students are learning about Australian history, as history has fallen victim to a crowded curriculum, and "Currently it tends to be in themes, it tends to be fragmented, the narrative of Australian history is so important..." (*ABC News*, 2006).

Curthoys (2006) interpreted Bishop to mean a thematic treatment of history in the manner in which many historians write their history. However, what in fact Bishop was referring to — or perhaps, what her advisers had told her — was the manner in which historical topics were dealt with in a social studies classroom: in an integrative and thematic manner. In a critical moment in the history of the teaching of history in Australian schools, the curriculum now took a sharp turn to a discipline approach, away from an integrated approach with its own pedagogy dating back to at least John Dewey's project method of the 1920s.

On 5 July 2006, in establishing the agenda for the history summit, Bishop delivered a major statement on the teaching of history, "... repeating her earlier point about the crowded curriculum, and specifically advocating a return to the teaching of history as a

stand alone course..." (Curthoys, 2006, 3). History would be taught as a distinct discipline instead of a social studies-type curriculum. She went on to echo Howard's statements concerning a heroic narrative of Australian, rich in dates and facts. The History Summit would take place on 17 August 2006.

For Curthoys (2006), however, there were some troubling aspects to Bishop's announcement. She saw Bishop's responses as a "... delayed response to the Report of the National Inquiry into School History, presented to the government in 2000, commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) in September 1999 and written by [the Director of National Inquiry into School History], Tony Taylor and others" (Curthoys, 2006, 4). This report, Curthoys (2006) explained, "made several recommendations, including the holding a national seminar on history in schools, much like the history summit that is now proposed" (Curthoys, 2006, 4). Moreover, "It also drew attention to the need to upgrade the role of history in schools, give it a stronger focus, allow for more in depth study, and direct resources to teacher training and professional and curriculum development accordingly." (Curthoys, 2006, 4). The report also recommended the establishment of a National Centre for History Education. The latter was implemented quickly, and Taylor appointed its director.

For Curthoys (2006, 5), "All this is very welcome, if delayed. On the more worrying side, there is more than a hint that the Federal government will attempt to influence what kind of history is taught, and that it will a form of history which will be nationalistic and simplistic". The seeds were thus sown for direct involvement of the Commonwealth in the content of an Australia-wide, mandatory history curriculum (DEST, 2006).

Topsfield (2007, n.p.) from *The Age* reported: "Mr Howard will use today's announcement to launch an attack on the states over the standards of schools". So anxious was Howard to use Commonwealth powers to correct perceived wrongs of the past, according to Taylor when a draft of the new national history curriculum was returned from Canberra to him it had what Taylor considered to be Howard's very own hand-written annotations (Taylor, 2008).

In a nationwide ABC *Insiders* program, Cassidy (2006, n.p.) had asked, rhetorically: "John Howard and his handpicked bureaucracy will decide what is taught in our schools?" But as fate would have it, it would not be Howard's handpicked bureaucracy which would write the national history curriculum, but by a handpicked bureaucracy from a Labor Government.

The Australian Curriculum: History (ACH) is founded

While responding to the 2005 Cronulla race riots, it was the conservative side of Australian politics which pushed for a national history curriculum, but the politics of the day had it that the Labor Government and its own curriculum bureaucrats would write it. This twist in the narrative came with the landslide Kevin Rudd Labor victory of 3

December 2007. A plank in Labor policy was the establishment of a national curriculum. Now the history component would be written from the Labor perspective.

Moreover, politicians' own ideological views began to impact on school education. For example, Commonwealth leverage on the school curriculum also increased, even to the extent of pushing for not only what should be taught in the history curriculum, but also how it should be taught — its pedagogy. The Howard epoch signalled it sought an end of the integrated social science-type curriculum, and flagged the re-entry of the discipline-based history curriculum. However, that would occur only with the advent of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) national curriculum under the incoming Rudd Government. The formation of this body illustrated that despite the oftentimes political advantages at a federal level, the Commonwealth still needed to negotiate with the states and territories for changes to school education.

In December 2008, the Commonwealth established ACARA, with it becoming operational in mid-2009. According to its own website, ACARA is "the independent statutory authority responsible for the overall management and development of a national curriculum, the National Assessment Program (NAP) and a national data collection and reporting program supporting 21st century learning for all Australian students" (ACARA, n.d., n.p.; for a similar version currently available, see ACARA, 2009). Labor's version of Australian history now became mandatory for all Australian school education students.

At a theoretical level, how do we explain this series of events which appears to have materialised from the 2005 Cronulla race riots?

Moral panic theory at work: Challenges to cultural and social norms

Often moral panic involves issues related to challenges to cultural norms. For example, in the US the civil rights and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s dramatically altered society's rules about sex, race, and gender. Any large-scale shift towards social liberalism tends to create a fearful moral panic among certain social groups, who believe these trends could lead to the unravelling of the pillars of stability. Witness, also, the moral panics associated with the suffragette demonstrations — women seeking the right to vote, a century or so ago (Jorgensen-Earp, 1999). Or again, witness the perceived excesses of the legislative program of the Whitlam period of 1972-75 in Australia. In the UK, Stanley's (1972/2002) pioneering research into the state, government policy and youth culture was set during a time of rapidly developing moral panics associated with youth culture challenges to social norms. That was written from a sociological perspective, and more recently researchers have turned to historical analysis to explain changes in school education policy (Rodwell, 2016; 2017).

Confronting the deeply held belief in the Australian beach culture, and challenged by what was perceived as 'invading' Muslims (the 'Other'), the Cronulla race riots provoked a moral panic of hitherto unrealised proportions in Australia. Fed by the mainstream media

and social media, moral provocateurs and moral entrepreneurs, the political elite from all sides of the political spectrum quickly weighed in with proposed changes to the school education curriculum. But these proposed changes were from their ideological point of view — their view of what constituted Australian history. Now, all Australian school education students would be taught a particular version of history, and one which would be determined by a federal election.

Moral panics concerning the Cronulla race riots, however, also embraced other aspects of Australian society — social class and perceptions of young people. The 'invading' groups of Middle-Eastern looking youths in Cronulla on those fateful days were basically working-class. These factors had been common with other moral panics researched by sociologists.

Underpinning the often social-class base to moral panics, and the precarious positioning of youth to these socio-political-cultural anxieties, is Marsh and Melville's (2011) research on moral panics and youth culture, where they have illustrated the fickleness of many of these moral panics. A recent example was a moral panic associated with the wearing of hooded jackets by young people, often associated with youth's street skateboard culture. Of course, there is a close parallel here with postwar street culture-based moral panics of the kind that first attracted the attention of researchers such as Cohen. Here, the folk devils — the mods and rockers — could be identified readily by their clothes. Social class and youth culture — the latter long associated with various forms of moral panics — combined to generate a new wave of moral panics, and clothing readily could identify the folk devils. Of course, the same imperatives were in place during the Cronulla race riots, where clothes distinguished the invading 'Other' from the bronzed beach heroes of Australian legends.

Why the fascination by researchers on moral panics with childhood and youth? In his overview of the concept and phenomenon, Thompson (1998, p.44) considered possible reasons why research on moral panics so often engages with youth issues: "No age group is more associated with risk in the public imagination than that of 'youth' ". Indeed, youths are in an invidious position. They "may be regarded as both at risk and a source of risk in many moral panics. This is not surprising in view of the transitional status of this age group, occupying a position between childhood and adulthood".

In Thompson's (1998) view, researchers in the UK tend to investigate moral panics involving youth, because youth is prone extraordinarily to controversy, and equally likely to be seen as threatened by a rising social problem, or as the problem itself — even in the course of a single moral panic. Almost by definition, adolescents are problematic and prone to heightening adult anxiety. Not surprisingly, then, that many researchers on moral panic theory devote considerable space in their publication to the vagaries of childhood and youth (e.g., Heir, 2011; Greer, 2015). One such study endorsing these conclusions is Bessant and Hil (1997, 3-4), especially linking moral panic and youth with the media, showing, *inter alia*, the historical role of the media in moral panics associated with youth.

One reason crime fascinates the general populace is that it is almost always linked to the special role of fear in popular media, such as TV drama. Consequently, "this emphasis has produced a discourse of fear: the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are a central feature of everyday life" (Altheide, 2003, p.10). A media pre-occupation with the discourse of fear, and a focus on the victim is now commonplace. Certain claim-makers, moral provocateurs, moral entrepreneurs and political elites feed on this: witness the moral panic associated with the Cronulla race riots.

Mythen (2014, 81) demonstrated the central role of the media in moral panics and risk-society theory. He wrote: "The need to meet profit margins" has led to "exaggerated coverage of crime issues which are designed to pander the apparent fascination about crime amongst the media audience". The same applies with terrorist attacks. Not surprisingly, most commentators argued the politics of the construction of crises, outrage, fear and moral panic assumed new dimensions with the terrorist attack on Manhattan's Twin Towers on 11 September 2001, a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group, al-Qaeda. However, some research illustrated these claims to be problematic(Altheide, 2006, 11). One suspects, however, for many Australians caught up in the moral panics of the Cronulla riots what occurred here, simply was an extension of the 11 September 2001 moral panic.

There is an additional ideological dimension to moral panics through the role of interest groups and political elites. Right-wing nationalist groups are provided with point and purpose when a mosque is proposed for a regional centre. With a pointer to what might happen in school education, Miller and Reilly (1994) argued moral panics can be used to change public opinion, and thus act as a form of "ideological social control". For example, the media's coverage of Islamic terrorism — a coverage which many would describe as Islamophobia — has resulted in government anti-terrorism policies receiving broad public support, despite seriously reducing ordinary people's civil liberties (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008).

Social media fed the Cronulla race riots, and this form of media continues to feed racism in Australian society (Soutphommasane, 2015). Indeed, the moral panic paradigm underwent massive changes with the advent of social, or participatory media, such as *FaceBook* and *Twitter* during the early 21st century, so much so that national academic conferences were given over to interrogating these influences (Calenda, 2015). In fact, the social media has generated its own moral panic. Titley (2013, n.p.) wrote how Irish society witnessed its very own moral panic concerning social media: "While the primal evil being attributed to the 'tweet machine' is faintly embarrassing, all such moral panics are politically instructive, and this is no exception".

Stemming from social media, new light can be cast on how mediatisation of social relations leads to renegotiating a number of democratic balances. Included here are relationships "between private and public spheres as well as the role of publics in constituting collective dynamics, such as the formation of public problems" — or at least *perceived* public problems (Calenda, 2015, n.p.).

The ACH and risk society theory

A question arises whether it is possible to isolate particular moral panics, because, as Thompson (1998, cited in Poynting & Morgan, 2007, 2) observed, the increasing rapidity in the succession of moral panics makes it impossible to distinguish the boundaries between each. Moreover, as Ulrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1999) suggested, "modern societies have become so engulfed by a sense of risk and uncertainty that it's impossible to distinguish particular moral panics from the background radiation of popular anxiety" (Poynting & Morgan, 2007, 2). Critcher saw this aspect as "a higher level of moral panic" (2003, 175, cited in Poynting & Morgan, 2007, 2). He posited three perspectives of moral panic: a progression from the identification of a problem, to seeing that problem as a threat to the moral order, then to a third level where the discourse becomes less specified and more generalised.

The threat is no longer localised: "We are all at risk; we confront not people mostly like us but the Other embodying evil" (Critcher 2003, 175, cited in Poynting & Morgan, 2007, 2). Here, there is an obvious application of this reasoning to the ACH. With shock jocks drumming out a common message on the nations' radio, in addition to the plethora of social media activity, for some Australians the whole nation was 'going down the drain'. Through the history curriculum, school education could play an instructive role.

By the second decade of the 21st century, the notion of moral panics was coming under severe criticism by researchers. Particularly connecting with the Cronulla race riots, researchers argued the foundations of the moral panic myth, its politics, and the hidden world of progressive panics are a part of sectional interests by certain socio-political groups — political elites, and moral provocateurs. The role of a compliant media and the almost undefined role of social media were vital in generating the moral panic in a society beset with anxieties surrounding risk (Critcher 2003, 175, cited in Poynting & Morgan, 2007, 2).

Coming as it did on the eve of the US federal election and daily TV viewing of Republican candidate Donald Trump's views on Islam, the 2016 Australian federal election cast new light on changes of government and consequent social and economic change. Much earlier, Beck (1997, 41) had written: "As interpreted by social scientists, the change of governments is the central operational criterion which gives an essential indication of a society's democratic quality". Thus, "blinded to the consequences by the central ideology of economic growth, and with the blessings of a policy that invokes safety and order, predicably unpredictable side-effects are continuously unleashed that are irreversibly binding on future generations, which are excluded from the decision-making process and for which no one can be held liable" (Beck, 1997, 41). One such 'side-effect' of the Australia's 2016 federal election was the re-emergence of Hanson's One Nation Party, and with it a powerful rekindling of Islamophobia, the very same welling or fears and anxieties which resulted from the Cronulla race riots, and the emergence of the ACH.

This is what Beck, Giddens and others have labelled 'reflexive democracy'. These researchers would have it that the rise of Hanson's One Nation Party, and its accompanying Islamophobia came about, not because of the failure of the ACH to offset racism in Australia, but because of deeper problems with modernity, its system of government and economy. In Beck's (1997, 40) words, this is because of a belief in "the parliamentary rule system is the answer to all transitoriness that modernity brings into the world". Indeed, it is "where all the securities of traditions, values and scientific truth is dissolved and replaced by procedures, methods and modes of voting, it seems that an abyss is opening up when these modes in turn become transitory and malleable". Thus, according to risk society thinking, issues surrounding Islamophobia and racism in society require a complete rethink, and not simply a single belief in the nation's school history curriculum to ameliorate the developing imbroglio.

Increasingly, risk society theorists have turned to researching educational history and issues (e.g., Bialostok, Whitman & Bradley, 2014). In commenting on the connection between the Australian National Curriculum and risk society theory, Kostogriz (2011) argued that, just as Australia's draconian border security legislation is a product of the risk society, so, too, is the National Curriculum. Both essentially are the means to control national risk. In the case of the ACH, it is a perceived risk concerning the teaching of certain knowledge and the development of certain values in the nation's youth.

Analysis and conclusions

Seldom explained by school education authorities to students and school communities, is the fact that the knowledge imparted through the history curriculum is likely to be politicised and the result of moral panics and other imperatives such as those of risk society. Possibly, this has been the case since in Australia colonial governments began mandating public school education back in the nineteenth century. It is almost as if there are two types of history — on one hand, the highly politicised history taught through the curriculum in compulsory school education, and on the other hand, the type of history, typically researched and presented in journals such as this, and similar, all of which justify a reasoned history.

Would there have been an ACH if there had not been the 2005 Cronulla race riots? One suspects its development was inevitable, given the pressures from risk society imperatives. But we can state with some certainty that the moral panic surrounding the Cronulla riots brought about much bipartisanship agreement on the need for an ACH, albeit, political elites and compliant school educational bureaucrats would determine the content of the curriculum.

But just as competent historians look to historiographical issues in the topics they are researching, this paper contends through a more rigorous use of historiography in the school history curriculum, school authorities should encourage their teachers, schools and school communities to understand the political imperatives underpinning the history curriculum (Parkes, 2009; Parkes, 2011; Rodwell, 2013). Any history taught in schools and colleges needs to be accompanied by a rigorous immersing of students in historiography.

References

ABC News (2006). PM's history speech gets mixed reception. *ABC News,* 26 January. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2006-01-26/pms-history-speech-gets-mixed-reception/786106

ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) (n.d.). *History: Foundation to Year 12.* https://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/learning-areas-subjects/humanities-and-social-sciences/history

ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) (2009). *National initiatives and achievements: 2.6 Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment.* http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/nrosia2009/national-initiatives-and-achievements/curriculum-and-assessment

Altheide, D. L. (2003). Mass media, crime, and the discourse of fear. *The Hedgehog Review,* 5(3), 9-25. http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/Fear/5.3CAltheide.pdf

Apple, M. W. (1990). *Ideology and the curriculum.* New York: Routledge.

Australian Human Rights Commission (2008). *A human rights guide to Australia's counter-terrorism laws.* https://www.humanrights.gov.au/human-rights-guide-australias-counter-terrorism-laws

Barcan, A. (1980). *A history of Australian education.* Melbourne: OUP.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity.* London: SAGE.

Beck, U. (1997). *The reinvention of politics: Rethinking politics in the global social order.* (trans. Mark Ritter). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bessant, J. R. & Hil, R. (1997). *Youth, crime and the media.* Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

Bialostok, S., Whitman, R. & Bradley, W. S. (2014). *Education and the risk society: Theories, discourse and risk identities in education contexts.* Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei. Sense Publishers.

Bishop, J. (2006). Australian History Summit. Media release, Minister for Education, Science and Training, 18 July. http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/64134/20061011-0000/www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2006/07/B001180706.html

Brawley, S. (1997). 'A comfortable and relaxed past': John Howard and the 'Battle of History': the first phase - February 1992 to March 1996. *The Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History.* http://pandora.nla.gov.au/nph-wb/19970904130000/http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/article/brawley.htm

Calenda (2015). Participatory media and moral panic. *Calenda,* 12 February. http://calenda.org/317291

Cassidy, B. (2006). National curriculum push criticism 'misguided'. *ABC Insiders,* 8 October. http://www.abc.net.au/insiders/content/2006/s1758091.htm

Cohen, S. (1972/2002). *Folk devils and moral panics: The creation of the mods and rockers* (3rd edn). Oxon.: Routledge.

Critcher, C. (2003). *Media and moral panics.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Sydney Morning Herald (2015). Editorial. Cronulla riots a decade on: Are Australians racist. 10 December. http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-editorial/cronulla-riots-a-decade-on-are-australians-racist-20151209-gljxui.html

Curthoys, A. (2006). History in the Howard era. Talk to Professional Historians Association, Sydney, 19 July. http://www.phansw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CurthoysHistoryintheHowardEra.pdf

DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training) (2006). *The Australian History Summit.* http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/64134/20061011-0000/www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/key_issues/australian_history_summit/default.html

Erekson, K. A. (Ed.) (2012). *Politics and the history curriculum: The struggle over standards in Texas and the nation.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gale, P. (2007). Moral panic and white Australia. In S. Petrilli (Ed.), *White matters: Il bianco in questione.* Meltemi Editore, Rome.

Giddens, A. (1999). *Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our lives.* London: Profile.

Goodson, I. F. (2005). *Learning, curriculum and life politics: The selected works of Ivor F. Goodson.* Oxford/New York: Routledge/Falmer.

Grattan, M. (2006). Howard claims victory in national culture wars. *The Age*, 26 January. http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/pm-claims-victory-in-culture-wars/2006/01/25/1138066861163.html

Greer, J. (2015). Children and Internet pornography: A moral panic, a salvation for sensors and Trojan horse for government colonisation of the digital frontier. In V. Cree, G. Clapton & M. Smith (Eds), *Revisiting moral panics.* Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Heir, S. P. (2011). Introduction. In S. P. Heir (Ed.), *Moral panic and the politics of anxiety.* London: Routledge.

Howard, J. (2010/2013). *Lazarus rising.* Sydney: Harper Collins.

Howard, J. (2012). Bizarre history curriculum studies Kylie not capitalism. *The Australian*, September 28. http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/bizarre-history-curriculum-studies-kylie-not-capitalism/story-e6frgd0x-1226482887138

Ianziti, G. J. (2004). Windschuttle at war: The politics of historiography in Australia. In C. Bailey, D. Cabrera & L. Buys (Eds.), *Social change in the 21st century conference.* Centre for Social Change Research. http://eprints.qut.edu.au/636/

Jorgensen-Earp, C. R. (1999). *Speeches and trials of the militant suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1918.* Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Kostogriz, A. (2011). The future of diversity and difference: Can the national curriculum for English be hospitable? In B. Doecke, G. Parr & W. Sawyer (Eds), *Creating an Australian curriculum for English.* Phoenix Education, Putney, NSW, pp. 201-214.

Lattas, J. (2007). Cruising: 'Moral panic' and the Cronulla riot. *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 18(3), 320-335. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.2007.tb00099.x

Lawton, D. (1980/2012). *Politics of the school curriculum.* Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Marsh, I. & Melville, G. (2011). Moral panics and the British media - a look at some contemporary 'folk devils'. *Internet Journal of Criminology.* http://www.bodmincollege.cornwall.sch.uk/mediastudies/Bodmin_College_Media_Emporium/A2_Media_Studies/Entries/2011/11/12_Moral_Panic_files/Moral%20Panic%20Journal%20Article.pdf

McCarthy, G. (2004). The 'new' cultural wars: 'Constructing' the National Museum of Australia. Paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Adelaide, 29 September-1 October 2004. https://www.adelaide.edu.au/apsa/docs_papers/Others/McCarthy.pdf

McKenna, M. (1997). *Different perspectives on black armband history.* Research Paper 5 1997-98. Parliament of Australia. http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_ Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/RP9798/98RP05

Miller, D. & Reilly, J. (1994). *Food 'scares' in the media.* Glasgow University Media Group, Glasgow. http://www.dmiller.info/food-scares-in-the-media

Moscaritolo, M. (2006). The vicious cycle. *The Advertiser*, 19 May.

Mythen, G. (2014). *Understanding the risk society: Crime, security and justice.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nicholson, B. & McMahon, N. (2005). PM under attack on race riots. *The Age*, 14 December. http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/pm-under-attack-on-race-riots/2005/12/13/1134236064277.html

Parkes, R. J. (2009). Teaching history as historiography: Engaging narrative diversity in the curriculum. *International Journal of Historical Learning Teaching and Research*, 8(2), 118-132.

Parkes, R. J. (2011). *Interrupting history: Rethinking history curriculum after 'the end of history'.* New York: Peter Lang.

Poynting, S. & Morgan, G. (2007). Introduction. In S. Poynting & G. Morgan (Eds), *Outrageous! Moral panics in Australia.* Hobart: ACYS Publishing.

Reid, C. (2010). Will the 'Shire' ever be the same again? Schooling responses to the Cronulla Beach riot. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(1). 47-62. http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/view/1411

Rodwell, G. (1999). 'The sense of victorious struggle': The eugenic dynamic in the Australian popular surf-culture, 1900-60. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23(62), 56-63. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14443059909387500

Rodwell, G. (2013). *Whose history? Engaging history students through historical fiction.* Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press. https://www.adelaide.edu.au/press/titles/whose-history/whose-history-ebook.pdf

Rodwell, G. (2016). Safe Schools: Challenges to moral panic and risk society theories: the politics of national school educational policy. *Discourse Journal of Educational Research*, 3(2), 15-24. http://www.resjournals.org/IJER/PDF2/2016/July/Rodwell.pdf

Rodwell, G. (2017a). *The Commonwealth influence on Australian school education: A history: 1901-2015.* PhD thesis. University of Tasmania.

Rodwell, G. (2017b). *Moral panics and school educational policy.* London/New York: Routledge.

Simmons, K. & Lecouteur, A. (2008). Modern racism in the media: Constructions of 'the possibility of change' in accounts of two Australian 'riots'. *Discourse and Society*, 19(5), 667-687. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42889222

Soutphommasane, T. (2015). There are echoes of the Cronulla riots on our streets today. *ABC News: The Drum,* 11 December. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-11/soutphommasane-echoes-of-the-cronulla-riots-on-our-streets-today/7020388

Taylor, T. (2000). *The future of the past: Executive summary of the Report of the National Inquiry into School History.* Victoria: Monash University. http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/26080/20050807-0000/www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/national_inquiry_into_school_history/executive_summary.htm

Taylor, T. (2008). *Denial: History betrayed.* Melbourne: Penguin.

Taylor, T. (2014). Australia is only one front in the history curriculum wars. *The Conversation*, 11 September. http://theconversation.com/australia-is-only-one-front-in-the-history-curriculum-wars-30888

Taylor, T. & Guyver, R. (Eds.) (2012). *History wars and the classroom: Global perspectives*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Thompson, K. (1998). *Moral panics*. London: Routledge.

Titley, G. (2013). Column: Social media has society in a panic. What does that tell us? *The Journal*, 4 January. http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/social-media-political-reaction-gavan-titley-740790-Jan2013/

Topsfield, J. (2007). PM to make Australian history compulsory. *The Age*, 11 October. http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/australian-history-to-be-compulsory/2007/10/10/1191695993793.html

Dr Grant Rodwell is an Adjunct in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania. Grant has completed his fifth PhD, and his third at the University of Tasmania. He publishes on a range of topics: Commonwealth involvement in Australian school education; history of school education; and history of risk society thinking impacting school education. Recently, he has completed a book on the history of the impact of moral panics on school education (Routledge).
Email: grant.rodwell@utas.edu.au