

**Young people's experiences of work
placement and part time work**

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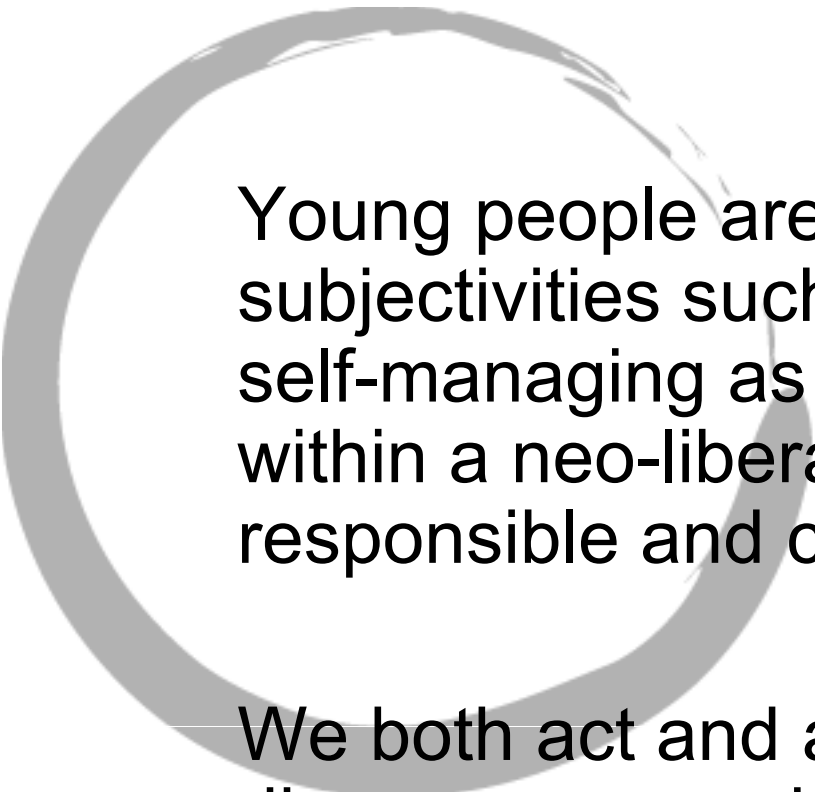


Post school transitions

- Transitions are no longer a linear pathway (for example from school to work)
- Transitions are now describes as 'destandardised' and 'individualised'
- Declining predictability of timing and sequencing for events associated with transition from childhood to adulthood

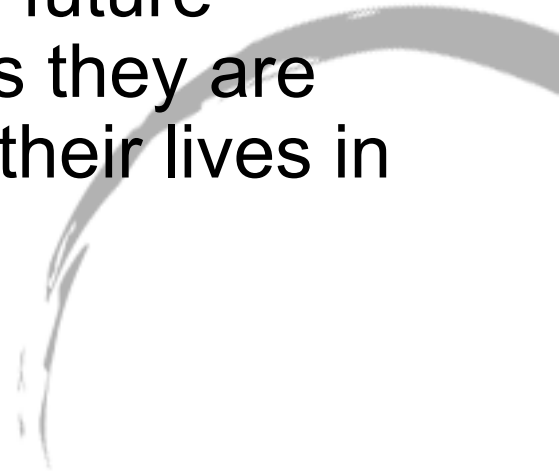
Transitions and identity work

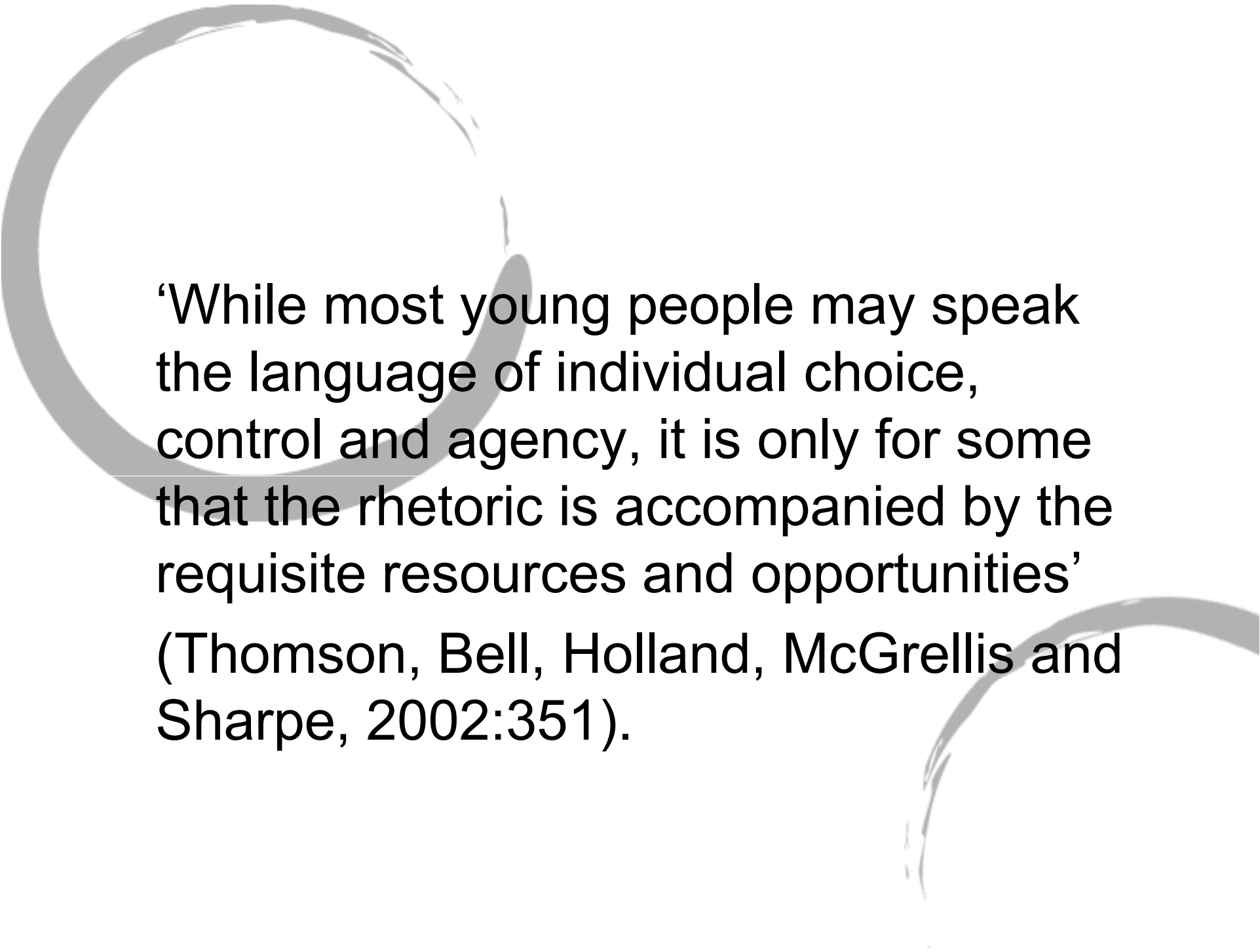
- The boundaries between school and work have become blurred
- Young people engage with complex identity work while at school. Young people are both students and workers while at school



Young people are currently drawing on subjectivities such as being enterprising and self-managing as they position themselves within a neo-liberal discourse as reflexive, responsible and choice making citizens.

We both act and are acted upon by available discourses, so while young people may appear free to choose in regard to future careers and imagining their futures they are also 'obliged to be free and enact their lives in terms of choice' (Rose, 1999:87).



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‘While most young people may speak the language of individual choice, control and agency, it is only for some that the rhetoric is accompanied by the requisite resources and opportunities’
(Thomson, Bell, Holland, McGrellis and Sharpe, 2002:351).

The Young Visions Project

The *Young Visions Project* - This included:

- In depth exploration of young people's perceptions of work placement and its role in assisting them to understand the industry they were working in;
- The impact and breadth of career education;
- The role of part time work; and
- The role and experience of enterprise education in schools.

The interview sample

- A cohort of 396 young people was selected from schools in all States and Territories.
- Group interviews with students in Years 10 - 12 were conducted in 26 schools in all States and Territories. Up to four students were in each group. Interviews were of approximately 50 minutes duration.
- 169 interviews were then analysed in detail

Research Sites

NSW

- Metro
Southern Metropolitan High School
- Regional
Autumn City Boys Boarding School
Sun Harbour Catholic College
- Rural
Cotton Town High School

Queensland

- Regional
Beef City Girls Grammar School
Beef City Catholic College

Victoria

- Metro
Inner City Secondary College
Eastern Metro Independent School

South Australia

- Metro
Outer Suburban High School
Western Suburban Catholic
College
Outer Suburban Independent
School
- Rural
Fishing Town High School

Where are the young people working?

- 59% of the sample of 169 young people had part time work. This included:
- 37% in hospitality
- 30% in retail
- 15% agricultural (holiday farm work)
- 7% in offices
- 3% in tourism or entertainment

Hours worked

- Typically between 8 and 15 hours per week.
- Young people would work longer hours in Year 10 (up to 20 hours per week) and cut down to a single shift in Year 12 (approx 6 hours)

Work by schooling sector

- Young people in independent schools far more likely to report their work was in the family business
- Young people in Government and Catholic sectors in regional and metropolitan areas far more likely to report they worked in fast food chains or supermarkets

Work placement

- 62% of the young people studying a VET subject were doing work placement. They completed 70 hrs in the workplace
- The VET courses included hospitality, IT, business admin, aviation, seafood industry, retail, tourism, multi media, automotive and sheet metal

Questions of identity

- Discussions with young people about the role of work, and their involvement in the workplace generate broader questions of identity as young people think about: Who am I? and Who do I want to be?
- Involvement in the workplace either through work placement or part time work provides access to resources not available in school



Part Time Work

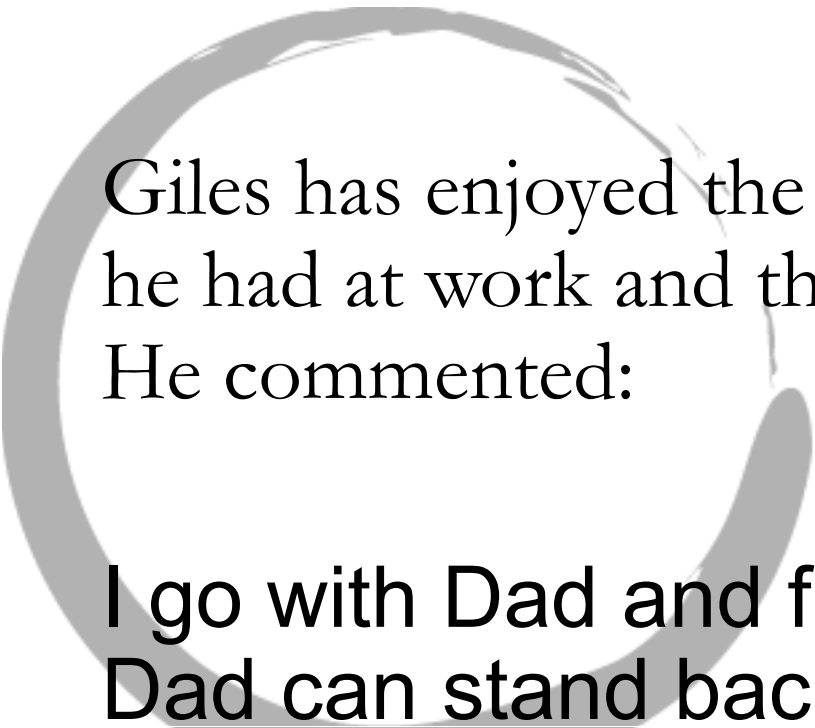
Work as a site for identity development

- Initially young people identified part time work as ‘just for the money’
- But young people also identified ‘enterprising’ skills including:
 - Showing initiative ,
 - Taking responsibility,
 - Communicating
 - Time management and
 - Working in teams

Recognising the young person as worker

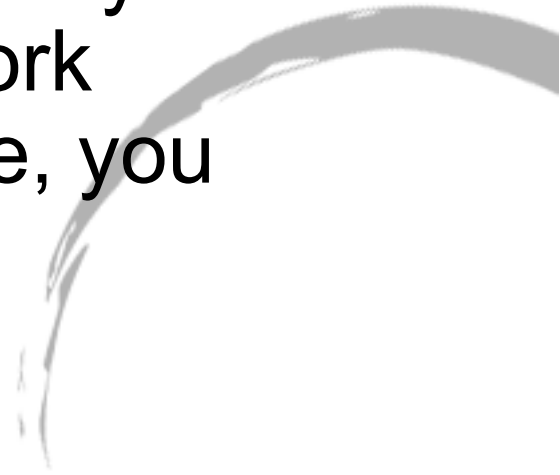
Giles is in Year 10 at a metropolitan High School. He works with his father in his father's computer business. He comments:

You have more responsibility at work I reckon, at school you don't care as much. You also learn about being more responsible, learn about working with other people, like in teams. You learn some of that at school, but out there [when working] it is different. You learn to use initiative too.



Giles has enjoyed the level of responsibility that he had at work and that he could help his father. He commented:

I go with Dad and fix up some of the jobs. Dad can stand back and let me do it. I also go to the computer wholesalers and work for them sometimes. It's work so they expect you to make deadlines, work promptly and you have to be there, you can't slack off.



Developing skills

- Developing communication skills depended on the workplace

You get customer service skills, you learn how to deal with customers, including the rude one. It gives you a boost in your confidence because you learn how to talk to people

You learn to shut up and do it, just the same as being in school

Managing competing interests

- Time management

Work in an inner city café

To do the work I have to notice and to be aware of things around me. I have to juggle things and remember to do my homework. I have lots on after school because I like to do performing arts. So I have to allocate time better. It's harder with a part time job but it's better

Managing risk

- Although not a career choice for the future, part time work provided a back up plan

At the moment I am working in a restaurant. I don't know what I want to do. If I want to go to uni but don't get the score then this gives me something to fall back upon.



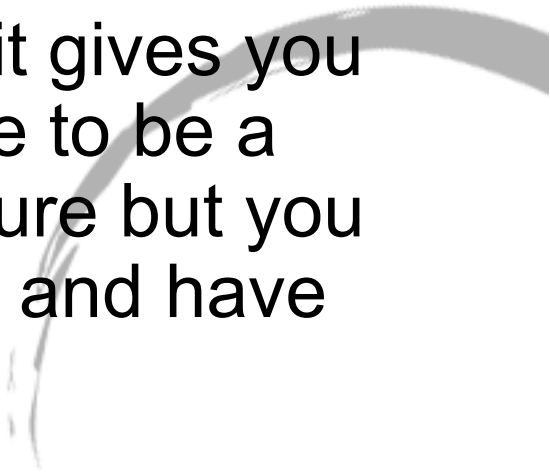
Work Placement

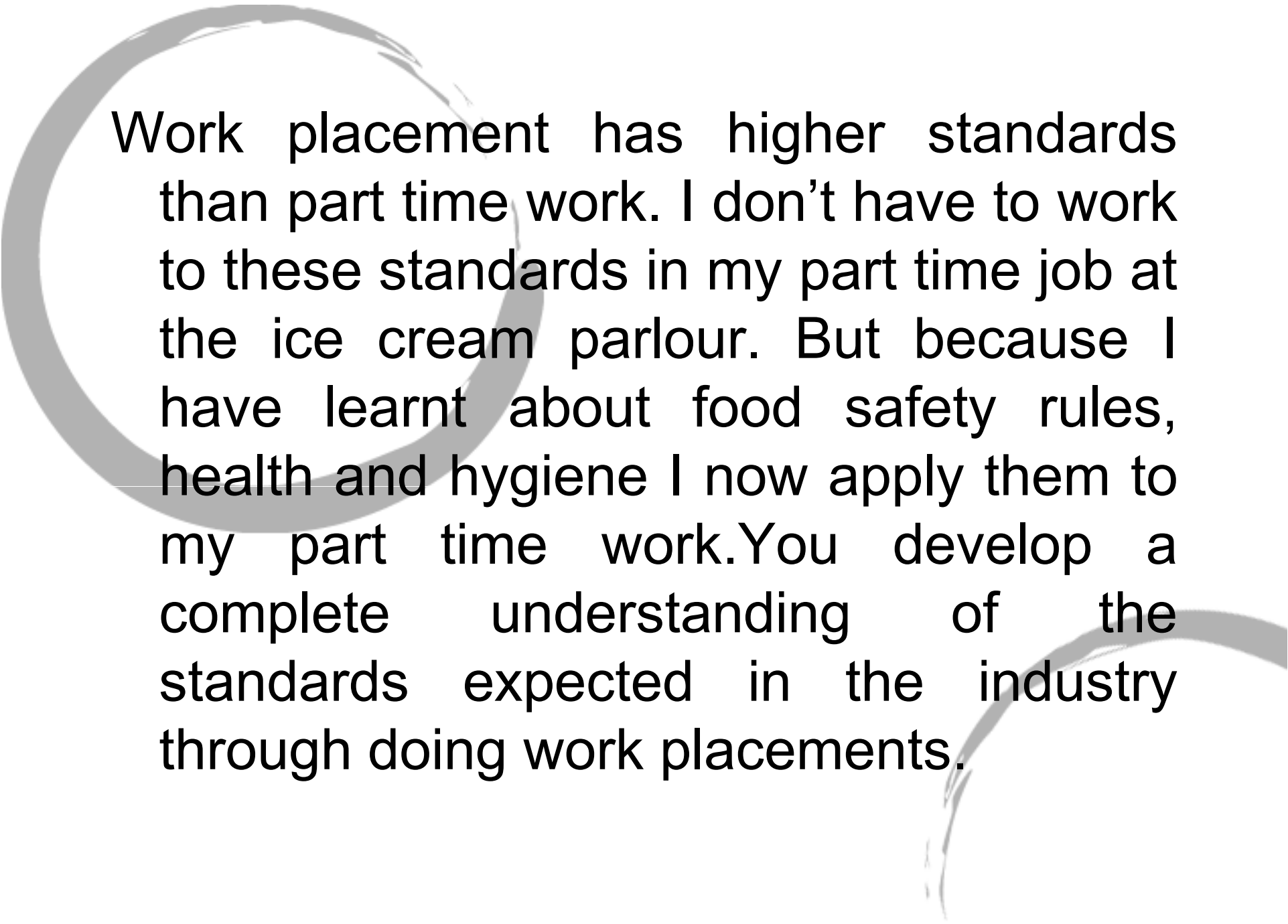
Making career decisions

- Gaining an understanding of an industry area (either positive or negative)
- Being 'talked to like another worker'
- Providing skills and qualifications to assist with lifestyle choices eg. Travel
- Providing a break from academic work
- Providing motivation to stay at school



Nicole

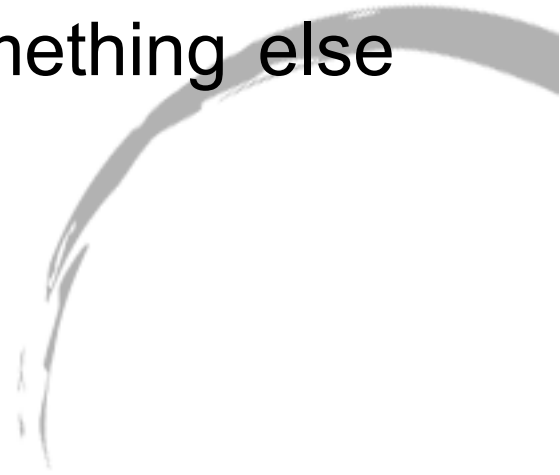
- I work at one of the big hotels in the kitchens. It is different to doing cooking at school. It helps you understand the industry and learn about hygiene and practical things as to how chefs work. The people in the work place talk to you like another worker. They are blunt. I like the way they do that because it gives you a good idea of what it would be like to be a chef. Chefs get angry under pressure but you have to learn not to take it to heart and have a bit of a thick skin.
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Work placement has higher standards than part time work. I don't have to work to these standards in my part time job at the ice cream parlour. But because I have learnt about food safety rules, health and hygiene I now apply them to my part time work. You develop a complete understanding of the standards expected in the industry through doing work placements.




Darren

- I went to work at a big IT retail store for my work placement. I learnt about the practical side of the industry and dealing with the hardware and the software. I did want to go into a career in IT but after work placement I realised I did not want to be stuck in an office and I am now thinking about something else to do.
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Nicole


- I end up with a responsible service certificate. I am not sure what I want to do but I want to travel so I will be able to do that and do waitressing. Having the hospitality qualification will help me find work after school.
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Unequal access to resources

Young people are attracted by images of individual achievement, access to higher education, travel and consumption that within a discourse of neo-liberalism is said to be available to all with the appropriate hard work.

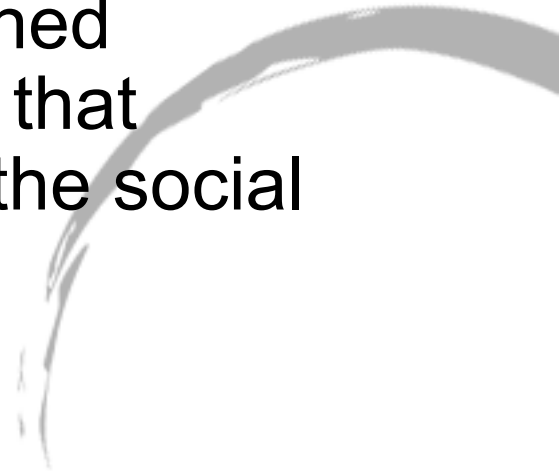
The neo-liberal individual is described as free from classed, gendered and geographical constraints



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- Young people's stories about themselves:

Reflect the worlds to which they have been exposed and in which they have already engaged (Wierenga 2008) and

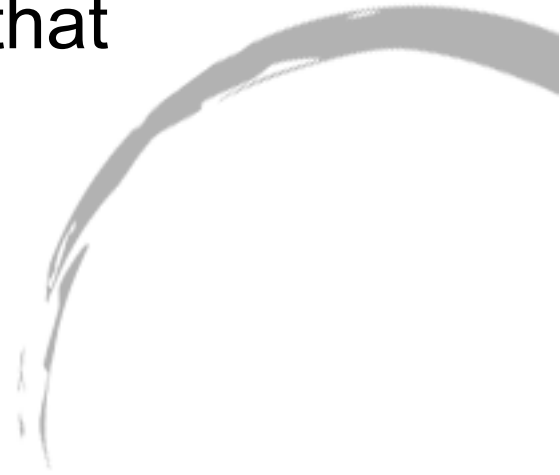
An understanding of class as 'a learned position, an identity and a lifestyle that provides a set of perspectives on the social world' (Ball et al 2000:57)





Place- based identities

For young people living in a neo-liberal world characterised by progress in a globalised context, placed identities such as rural identities are seen as limiting their personal futures and are often associated with a lack of mobility and inability to be part of that globalised world (Bauman, 1998)



Gender, SES and geography

- The young women and men from Fishing Town High School
- The young women from Beef City Girls Grammar School
- The young men from Autumn City Boys School
- The young men and women from Cotton Town High School

Work placement in rural areas

- It's hard to be informed about careers in rural towns like ours. There are very limited places for work placement and no industry. You can only work in pubs, farming or the hairdressers.
- It is hard to get traineeships. There are traineeships advertised at school from Job links but often they are three hours away in the sticks.

Conclusions

- Young people have seen their involvement in the workplace as an identity investment
- Part time work and work placement can provide young people with the opportunity to perform, be recognised and be seen as competent in the process of taking on a worker identity.
- They undertake tasks that enabled them to develop their skills and capacities in communication, time management, taking on responsibility, planning, risk management and making informed choices