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From *Hope & Glory* to *Waterloo Road*: mediating discourses of 'crises' surrounding schools and schooling in British television drama, 1999–2011

Anthony Blake* and Gail Edwards

Education, Communication & Language Sciences, Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

Popular television drama is an important discursive site engaging the public with debates about schooling and professional identity. Between 1999 and 2011, external discourses of 'crisis' (of academic achievement or students' mental and emotional health) were mediated as alternative discourses of 'crisis, failure, and salvation' in which a Standards agenda predominated, or that of the school as a 'caring community'. *Genre* analysis reveals how 'school' dramas exploited distinctive narrative types to privilege a particular discourse. Adapting Schatz's (1981) scheme of Hollywood *genre* types, these dramas are characterised by a narrative strategy of 'restoration' of the 'failing' secondary (high) school to its public function of raising achievement, or after 2007 of 'integration' more concerned with assimilating 'troubled' students into the school community. This shift in representation is consistent with, and contributes towards, the 'rise of therapeutic education' where the Head Teacher and teacher are portrayed more as counsellor than educator.

Keywords: television; drama; *genre*; school; discourse; therapeutic education

Two 'crises' of schooling: competing discourses about the inner-city secondary or high school

In the United States and Europe, public discourse on education has been characterized by a 'message of crisis' in which schools are seen as failing to prepare children to work effectively in the global marketplace (Cohen, 2010). In Britain, a range of reforms and initiatives aimed at 'raising standards' and making schools more accountable for the academic achievement of their students, have been and continue to be, central to educational policy and debate (Alexander, 2010). Importantly, Meighan and Harber (2007) describe how such 'semi-permeable' discourses of performativity (to guarantee high quality), accountability (through which performance is audited and displayed), and surveillance (through which audits are managed and legitimated through the technology of inspection) are held together by, and reliant on, a discourse of 'standards'. Discourses about effective school performance, as Thomas (2011) noted in the case of Australian government policy are linked with teacher quality, and monitoring the work of teachers as well as Head Teachers has become central to the process of public accountability in Britain carried out by the government's inspection body, the Office for Standards in Education,

*Corresponding author. Email: anthony.blake@ncl.ac.uk

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Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED). OFSTED played an important part in the deficit discourse surrounding the representation of the urban secondary (high) school in British television drama, because of its capacity to identify and publish details of schools which are 'failing' to raise or maintain academic standards. OFSTED is empowered to place such schools in 'Special Measures', which may involve the dismissal of the school's senior managers and teaching staff (OFSTED, 2011). Also influential in shaping television's representation of the 'failing' school was the British Labour government's introduction of the 'Fresh Start' scheme (a new school opening under new leadership in place of a school in OFSTED's 'Special Measures' or with 'serious weaknesses'; see Day, 2005; Matthews & Kinchington, 2006; DfES, 2007) and trust in leadership solutions for 'failing' schools reflected in the high-profile appointment of what the press quickly dubbed 'superheads' (Blackstock, 2000; Smithers, 2000; Storey, 2004).

However, for others a crisis of standards has been superseded by another crisis—one of the mental health and emotional well-being of students faced with problems caused by 'the materialism of Western society, bad parenting and the pressures of schooling and modern life' [making] childhood "toxic" for the majority of children' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009, viii). Ecclestone & Hayes argue this has led to a dangerous 'rise of therapeutic education' where socio-emotional literacy is prioritised over the acquisition of knowledge. Defined as, 'any activity that focuses on perceived emotional problems and which aims to make educational content and learning processes more "emotionally engaging" ' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009, xi), therapeutic education became the focus for a number of the British government's educational initiatives particularly after 2007 when schools were required to more actively and explicitly promote students' happiness and well-being. In tracing this 'therapeutic turn' in education Ecclestone & Hayes point to an 'alternative thinking' curriculum focused on affective 'soft outcomes' such as self-awareness, empathy, managing feelings and conflict resolution. Consistent with these outcomes is a discourse of the school as a caring community, which promotes values of inclusion, understanding, and respect for others, limiting the risk of polarization and social conflict in a more diverse society (Battistich et al., 1997; Osterman, 2000).

Between 1999 and 2011, British television drama operated as an important discursive site mediating these debates for a viewing public not directly involved in education. The portrayal of schools and schooling, hitherto with rare exceptions restricted to children's television and situation comedy, now became a subject for popular prime-time evening drama. By examining three dramas which directly engaged with these discourses of 'crisis'—*Hope & Glory* (BBC, 1999), *Ahead of the Class* (ITV, 2005) and *Waterloo Road* (BBC, 2006 onwards)—it can be shown how competing discourses were mediated in terms of narrative and characterisation privileging particular kinds of school leadership style and teachers pedagogical role. The first two dramas recount how 'failing' secondary or high schools were removed from OFSTED's 'Special Measures' by the transformative leadership style of charismatic 'superheads' in raising academic standards by improving the quality of teaching. *Waterloo Road* is also set in a secondary/high school, but engages with a different discourse; this time the focus is on how the school as a community responds to students on-going personal and relationship problems. In contrast with the first two dramas, *Waterloo Road* 'decentralised' the image of the single hierarchical Head Teacher, challenging the myth of the charismatic leader, and privileged a dominant

pedagogy that is more pastoral than academic. Closely associated with such alternative discourses about education and schooling is the presence of what Cohen (2010) has identified as different 'social languages' employed in newsprint media reporting. A social language of accountability positions the school as a public institution mainly concerned with raising standards and subject to external authority and evaluation. References are made to statistical data and descriptions used such as 'failing' and 'meeting the standards', with institutional processes highlighted over individual actions. In contrast, a social language of caring 'foregrounds teacher knowledge, action, and professional identity . . . in which *individuals* and *relationships* are paramount to successful teaching and learning' (2010, pp. 112–113, emphasis added).

Television drama as a discursive site: discourse, *genre* and narrative

Discourses about schools and schooling have the potential to influence understandings and opinion especially where such discourses are directly related to current educational debate and policy (Cohen, 2010; Thomas, 2011). At a time when the public perception of schools, teachers and Head Teachers has become increasingly media-led (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004), television can 'capture' contemporary issues of political and public concern. Popular television drama in particular has a 'sense-making' and 'agenda-setting' role, if not telling audiences *what* to think, telling them what they should be thinking *about* according to Bernard Cohen (quoted by Hossler, 1998, p. 164). Meskill (2007) insists that popular television programmes as a mirror on real life stimulate audience reflection regarding the work of schools and schooling. As with other forms of visual media in popular culture (Thompson, 2007; Tisdell, Stucky, & Thompson, 2007), television drama also has a role in identity-construction (here the professional identities of teachers and school leaders), reinforcing or challenging dominant stereotypes represented by specific discourses about schools and schooling.

In popular culture, external discourses about a 'crisis' of standards or students' socio-emotional well-being were mediated by British television drama between 1999 and 2011 as two contrasting discourses: one of 'crisis, failure, and salvation' in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class*, and that of the school as a 'caring community' in *Waterloo Road*. Each of these discourses is located in a different television drama *genre* where distinctive narrative structures and strategies construct characters, settings and storylines that function to privilege a particular discourse. *Genre* is important because it shapes representation, situating audience and text (Fiske, 1987) by helping determine what and how something should be portrayed, and where narrative, characterisation and setting operate in relation to audience identification and expectation associated with a particular *genre* (Hansen et al., 1998; Thornham & Purvis, 2005; Turner, 2001). Thus importantly, any change of *genre* in which the school-based drama is situated will alter how the inner-city school and schooling are represented and understood, and the particular discourse that is being privileged.

A 'school' *genre*: the inner-city school and schooling in film and television (*subject and form*)

Although not an unproblematic concept (Neale, 2001; Turner, 2001), *genre* theory does provide an informative way to classify and describe the 'school' television drama as

both an identifiable *subject* (as with for example, the 'hospital' drama or as we argue, the 'school' drama), and *form* such as 'serial drama', the 'single play' or 'soap opera'.

Subject

A case can be made so that representations of schools and schooling in film and television share a sufficient number of conventions such as setting, character and plot to justify the claim that they constitute a recognisable 'school' *genre*. Even as *genre* evolves to maintain audience appeal and topicality, later dramas are at the same time are constrained by past representational conventions in line with audience expectations. Thus the three British television dramas discussed inherited a number of standard representational characteristics from cinematic and previous television portrayals—the school as a site of conflict, the 'problem' student(s), and the teacher or Head Teacher (Principal) as central protagonists, in causing or resolving such conflict. The 'school' film and television drama or comedy have a history of drawing on contemporary social, political, or educational discourses to construct the representation of the inner-city school and the work of teachers—whether this be fears in America and Britain about 'juvenile delinquency' in the 1950s and 1960s, or later concerns about student under-achievement, classroom disorder and teacher quality. Hollywood films since *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) have familiarised viewers with the setting of the urban secondary or high school as a 'battleground' to be conquered (Bulman, 2005; Dalton, 2004; Farber & Holm, 1994; Smith, 1999). Although representations of schools and schooling have occurred less frequently in British film (here defined as films made in Britain about British schools), *Spare the Rod* (1961) and *To Sir with Love* (1967) perpetuated the image of the teacher–hero struggling to 'civilise' and inspire students in the 'urban jungle' of the inner-city secondary school. Often isolated and conservative (Thomas, 1998), the image of the Head Teacher has varied from being seen as a contributory or causal factor in the demise of these schools or more rarely (*The Principal*, 1987; *Lean on Me*, 1989), as the instrument of their salvation, overcoming the challenge of 'problem' students and 'bad' teachers to transform violent and low achieving schools (see Smith, 1999; Thomas, 1998; Thomsen, 1993; Wells & Serman, 1998).

It has been on television, however, not film, that fictional representations of British schools and schooling have concentrated, and not until the mid-1990s with the increased political (and press) profile of education that schools and school leaders began to figure more frequently (Ellsmore, 2005). In 1999, the drama serial *Hope & Glory* featured the heroic Head Teacher–saviour able to transform not just a problem class, but a 'failing' school, a plot repeated six years later in the semi-fictional single-drama *Ahead of the Class*. Yet, in what would become a significant change in representation, *Waterloo Road* abandoned this familiar plot and key conventions were reconfigured. Now the 'heroic' teacher and Head Teacher worked more collectively than individually and were less concerned with saving students from academic than socio-emotional failure. The school was no longer a jungle to be tamed but a site where staff struggled to support students facing more immediate challenges resulting from issues like social deprivation, substance abuse, and alienation. This shift was marked by a change in the *genre* form in which the school drama was located, where a different narrative structure and contrasting narrative strategies privileged this alternative discourse of schooling.

Form

Drawing on earlier work about gender-specific narrative forms, Fiske (1987) describes how the 'feminine' narrative structure of soap-opera differs from more traditional 'masculine' narratives in significant ways. Applying this to the 'school' drama the syntagmatic narratives of *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* concentrate on the flow of events to show how, using Todorov's model which highlights the linear nature of such narratives (Turner, 1999), a disturbed pre-existing, desirable state of equilibrium has been restored. Here the single narrative strand of the serial (an on-going story set over a number of episodes and reaching a conclusion in the final episode) or single 'one-off' drama trace how the 'failing' school is 'turned around' by the exceptional school leader bringing with it narrative closure. In contrast, the paradigmatic narrative structure of *Waterloo Road* focuses more on character development and relationships explored through multiple narrative strands characteristic of soap opera. Resolution of individual story-lines does not mark a final complete narrative closure; instead, the diegetic world of soap opera is one of continuous disturbance marked by the absence of a stated pre-existing equilibrium from which the school has departed.

Besides these distinct *narrative structures*, the different *genre* form of these dramas also employ different *narrative strategies*. To show how specific narrative strategies privilege different discourses in *Hope & Glory*/*Ahead of the Class* and *Waterloo Road* we have adapted Thomas Schatz's classic model (1981) of Hollywood film *genre*. Different film *genre* according to Schatz are characterised by certain types of settings, characters, conflicts and what he calls 'thematics'. Although mindful that we are applying Schatz's model not only to a different medium (television) but to television drama in particular where generic boundaries are less fixed, his scheme nevertheless provides a structural framework where discursive themes can be distilled from narrative elements according to *genre* type. A narrative strategy of 'restoration' in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* centres on how the school as a public institution returns to its *pre-existing* equilibrium or preferred state, and function in line with external expectation and accountability. Here leadership is individual and 'masculine' with the school a contested space where conflict is external, sometimes violent and resolution brought about by the 'elimination' of 'problem' teachers or students. Salvation-redemption and a macho code are central themes, and teacher agency is constrained. In contrast a narrative strategy of 'integration' in *Waterloo Road* focuses on showing how the school successfully assimilates students by meeting their socio-emotional needs within the *existing* caring community independent of external accountability. Here leadership is collective and 'feminine' with the school a civilised space where conflict is internal and emotional, and resolution brought about by 'embracing' challenging students or under-performing teachers. Integration is a key theme along with a dominant maternal-familial code where teacher agency is fore-grounded.

A discourse of crisis, failure and salvation: *Hope & Glory* (BBC, 1999) and *Ahead of the Class* (ITV, 2005)

Hope & Glory is a prime-time fictional television drama which tells the story of Head Teacher Ian George, played by Lenny Henry, who turns down a prestigious

government job to confront the challenge presented by the aptly-named inner-city secondary school, Hope Park, condemned for its low student achievement by OFSTED. Six years later, *Ahead of the Class* followed much the same narrative trajectory but this time based on a real school, St George's Roman Catholic secondary school in North West London. Already known to the public as the school where Head Teacher Philip Lawrence had been murdered in 1995, St George's was later taken out of Special Measures under the leadership of Marie Stubbs (Stubbs, 2003).

A serial drama, *Hope & Glory* illustrates many of the features of a 'masculine' narrative in mapping the transformation of a 'failing' school through the charismatic school leadership of the Head Teacher—hero Ian George. Leadership solutions for 'failing' schools then favoured by the Labour government and enthusiastically taken up by sections of the press reporting on the appointment of so-called, 'superheads' (Blackstock, 2000; Smithers, 2000; Storey, 2004) directly shaped representation in *Hope & Glory*. The drama was also shown in June of the same year as the 'fly-on-the-wall' documentary series, *Making the Grade,* which followed the work of real-life 'superhead', Carole McAlpine in her quest to improve what had been dubbed one of the worst schools in Britain (Adams, 1999). Issues addressed in *Hope & Glory* are 'public' rather than 'domestic' (the reform of Hope Park school is in line with the external discourse of standards) with dialogue and plot employing a social language of accountability situating Hope Park school as a public institution where particular actors and actions are evaluated and measured. In *Hope & Glory,* and later in *Ahead of the Class,* this is mediated as a discourse of 'Crisis, Failure and Salvation'.

Crisis: inner-city secondary schools are in a state of disorder, their students disruptive, violent and underachieving

Opening scenes from *Ahead of the Class* feature the signature theme of the inner-city school drama—establishing shots of chaos and disorder: windows broken, violence in the school yard, lessons disrupted. Programme titles or school names, 'Hope & Glory', 'St George's' after the dragon-battling saint, and 'Waterloo Road' draw on the cinematic image of urban secondary schools as battlegrounds, contested spaces to be fought over and conquered. Early in the narrative exchanges between characters and damning official OFSTED inspection reports make clear the magnitude of the task facing the heroic Head Teacher (and the scale of their subsequent achievement), if these schools are to be 'saved'. New Head Teacher Marie Stubbs (*Ahead of the Class*) is told in an early scene by one OFSTED inspector:

> St George's is at the bottom end of limited progress. Given that it has been on Special Measures for two years this is alarming. Since our last inspection four months ago almost nothing has improved. In a third of all lessons it is the pupils dictating the pace not the teachers. Almost all lessons are disrupted. Only 20% of the teaching is good and in some subjects that drops to zero. Many subject criteria fall short of what's required and the whole management of the school, especially in relation to discipline, time-keeping, the dining hall, and movement between lessons is a major cause for concern.

Failure: 'bad' teachers and teaching, and weak leadership are to blame

Why St George's and Hope Park Secondary schools are in crisis is not difficult for the audience to judge. Cross-cutting the opening scenes of school yard violence and classroom chaos are added images of ineffective (i.e. 'bad') teachers—stereotype characters of the school *genre*—who fail in their duty as role models, cannot control students or help them achieve academic success. Thomas (2011) describes a similar deficit discourses about teachers when she analysed the ways in which the popular Australian sitcom, *Sit Down, Shut Up* which also depicted teachers as incompetent, lacking commitment and having little concern for their students. Existing or previous school leaders are shown simply not to have the 'right stuff'; in fact they are part of the problem as it was under their 'watch' that the school 'failed' to provide an acceptable standard of education.

Salvation: the charismatic school leader as hero–saviour

Success rests with the central character of the charismatic 'superhead' played by an established and popular 'star' (Lenny Henry and Julie Walters). Early scenes in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* confirm the existing celebrity status of these school leaders; both enter in a fanfare of publicity making it clear that they are no ordinary Head Teachers, but already have proven track records of transforming challenging schools. Ian George ('whose school moved up 15 percentile points during the last two years under the dynamic leadership of Britain's youngest Head', according to the announcer in the opening scene) is acclaimed at a National Association of Head Teachers' conference. Interspersed with scenes of classroom chaos and student violence in *Ahead of the Class*, a fictionalised Marie Stubbs runs the gauntlet of journalists' questions and comments ('Lady Stubbs comes with quite a reputation . . . people say she's a maverick') following the announcement of her appointment to St George's school, effectively positioning her in the minds of the audience as the solution to the 'crisis'.

Hope & Glory draws directly on the discourse of charismatic leadership in characterising Ian George (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Crawford, 2002; Yukl, 1999). As a school leader, Ian George is everything that his predecessor Neil Bruce was not: dedicated, passionate and above all he has vision, summed up by their contrasting *motifs* in the first episode: 'What would you change?' (Ian George) *vs.* 'End of story!' (Neil Bruce). Casting popular comedian Lenny Henry recognises the importance of 'stars-as-text' (Turner, 1999), which constructs Ian George as a character in terms of Lenny Henry, already invested with charisma as a popular entertainer. Yet what confirms Ian George as a charismatic leader are his transformative 'charismatic behaviours', which are responsible for returning Hope Park School to a more desirable pre-existing equilibrium state. Table 1 shows how charismatic leadership behaviours identified by Conger & Kanungo (1998) – environmental sensitivity, possessing and achieving an idealised vision – are expressed in terms of characterisation, narrative and dialogue embedded within an overall syntagmatic narrative structure which follows the progressive stages by which Hope Park school is transformed by Ian George.

Privileging the discourse of crisis, failure and salvation in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* is a narrative strategy of 'restoration'. The individual male

Table 1. How characteristics associated with transformative charismatic leadership behaviours identified by Conger & Kanungo (1998) are represented in *Hope & Glory* in terms of characterisation, narrative and dialogue.

Ian George's environmental sensitivity: challenging the status-quo . . .

- Ian George's pre-appointment visit (episode 1) to Hope Park school and the need for change:
  - dilapidated state of the school building;
  - demotivated teachers; the 'good' and the 'bad' teaching;
  - de-motivated and under-achieving students;
  - ineffective school leadership

Ian George's idealised vision: future goals and likableness . . .

- *Ian George:* 'All I'm trying to do is give these young people the education they deserve and that means change . . .'
- *To Ian George:* 'You are the school . . . the place is unrecognisable, Ian. The kids are different, the air's different . . .we've all worked our socks off for you . . . Sally's so worked up about letting you down that she's been throwing up all night long . . . Elaine's lying for you . . .'

Ian George realises his vision: behaviour novelty and personal risk . . .

- Ian George is a maverick, by-passing proper channels to finance the refurbishment of the vandalised 6th Form centre
- Besides sacrificing his health (he has a heart condition and should avoid stress) and the offer of a prestigious, well-paid Government job, Ian George forsakes his personal relationship symbolically represented by his discarding the photograph of a girlfriend who proved an unwelcome distraction in his quest to transform Hope Park school.

protagonist Ian George (or the 'masculinised' leadership style of the fictional Marie Stubbs), is a redeemer figure who becomes the focus of dramatic conflict within the setting of a contested space—student resistance to learning, poor classroom discipline, ineffective teaching and the threat of closure from OFSTED. Here conflict is externalised and occasionally violent, played out in the public space of the school yard or classroom, and where resolution is brought about by the elimination of threats to the proper function of the school whose core business is raising the academic achievement of its students. We witness the metaphorical 'death' of 'ineffective' teacher Jan Harvey forced to resign from Hope Park School. A dominant theme is a macho style of school leadership (evident in Ian George's and Marie Stubbs' task-centred, directive and hierarchical leadership) where teacher agency is constrained with teachers primarily functioning as the instrument of the Head Teacher's vision to raise standards. Following the school's transformation at the end of *Ahead of the Class* the OFSTED inspector offers his congratulations to the governors on their inspired appointment, the public acclamation and recognition of the Head Teacher as hero–saviour, while the reflective caretaker-character Thomas concludes, 'You've got to admit she's bringing it back to what it was'. But this rather telling statement tells audiences *what* Marie Stubbs has actually accomplished that was so praiseworthy. Here the thematic of salvation–redemption constitutes the *restoration* of the school to its pre-existing equilibrium state and function as a public institution by now idealised in the mind of the audience, thereby 'saving' the students from academic failure.

A discourse of the school as a caring community: *Waterloo Road* (BBC, 2006 onwards)

Waterloo Road is a popular on-going multi-series prime-time BBC drama about the lives and loves of teachers and students in a Lancashire Secondary school. *Waterloo Road* promotes an 'inward-looking' discourse characterised by a social language of caring centred on the pastoral work of the school. Adopting a more 'feminine' *genre* form the narrative of *Waterloo Road* espouses the 'maternal' values of caring, nurturing and the emotional consistent with a discourse of the school as a caring community which shaped these representations and their consumption, privileging particular kinds of audience reading and understanding. Importantly, parallel and multiple storylines marginalise concerns over student academic achievement. Even as early as the first episode of Series 1 (2006) a significant scene drew audience attention towards an alternative discourse of schooling. Challenging the Standards agenda personified by the Deputy Head Teacher character Andrew Treneman (Jamie Glover), is the competing discourse of student socio-emotional well-being represented by pastoral care teacher Kim Campbell (Angela Griffin):

> Andrew: You've got a school filled with kids who know they can create hell and get away with it, thanks to teachers like you.
> Kim: Have you any idea of what we're dealing with at Waterloo Road? 70% of our kids are from one-parent homes . . .
> Andrew: It doesn't mean that they shouldn't behave . . .
> Kim: No, it doesn't but it causes difficulties. Twenty-two of our kids are on ASBOs. God knows what percentage are on drugs. We've got the highest under-age pregnancy rate in the whole country—basically, we're talking poverty.
> Andrew: If you lower your expectations of what poor kids can achieve they're going to stay poor . . .
> Kim: Yea, meanwhile in the real world we've got a kid who's about to go into care because of your 'back-to-basics' rubbish. Oh, another statistic for you. Over 50% of kids who go into care end up in prison...

By Series 2, the technical vocabulary of measurement and institutional performance evident in the first series had been displaced by narratives centred on relationship issues *within* the school more characteristic of 'soap-opera', as *Waterloo Road* was now being described by reviewers (Andrew, 2007; Stephen, 2006) with some justification. A number of signature soap-opera themes (love, conflict, secrets) and character stereotypes (the 'gossip', the 'good woman', the 'villain') are evident in *Waterloo Road*, along with an emphasis on problem-solving, intimate conversation and the presence of sensitive professional male and female characters (Alexander & Cousens, 2004; Fiske, 1987).

Traditionally, in terms of its audience address, soap-opera has been associated with the feminine and the domestic (Fiske, 1987; McCarthy, 2001), emphasising emotional rather than empirical realism (Ang, 1985). With a paradigmatic narrative structure focusing on revelation and the development of characters, the public world of schooling and education is subordinated in *Waterloo Road* to the domestic and private world of teacher and student relationships. Unlike the 'traditional realist' narratives of *Hope & Glory* or *Ahead of the Class*, *Waterloo Road* has no defined beginning, middle and end in relation to the disruption and restoration of an equilibrium state. Here the school is an already established community trying to meet the socio-emotional needs of its students. Success is seldom final as the

'soap-opera' world of *Waterloo Road* is one of perpetual *disturbance* and *deferment* (Fiske, 1987).

Storylines follow the personal lives and traumas of student and teacher characters within what Nelson (1997) calls a 'flexi-narrative' structure moving back and forth between multiple but often linked, narrative strands. As soap-opera, *Waterloo Road* is a 'social realist' text where writers and producers claim to tackle social questions of the moment (Lay, 2002). In place of a concern to raise standards, storylines therefore engage with contemporary social issues such as the dysfunctional family, social deprivation, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse-issues which are less 'school-specific' than ones of concern to the wider national community. Narrative resolution is firmly centred on helping individual students address these issues within the existing context of the school as a caring community through supportive professional and personal relationships. Key to this notion of community is the imperative to 'embrace' troubled students (existing or new) into the culture of the school 'family' by a 'feminine' process of caring and nurturing. In *Waterloo Road* this is characterised by a narrative strategy of 'integration':

Setting: a civilised space

The image of inner-city secondary school as a blackboard jungle or 'war-zone' is absent in *Waterloo Road* after 2007. Audiences no longer witness scenes of violence, classroom disorder, alarming inspection reports or statistical evidence of poor performance, which threaten the school's future. Instead, the narrative is located within a 'civilised' space of the school where students generally conform and there is no significant threat of closure from the external (accountability) body OFSTED. Classroom scenes are not used to showcase instances of 'good' or 'bad' teaching or disruptive student behaviour but instead are only situational contexts for relationship problems between teachers and individual students or between the students themselves.

Conflict resolution and thematics

In *Waterloo Road* conflict is internalised and emotional, occurring for the most part in the 'private' space of the school office, staffroom or discrete parts of 'public' spaces such as the school yard margins. Resolution is not through 'elimination' but by 'embracing' ('loving') troubled students. Post-Series 2 storylines are based on the central theme of the integration of difficult or traumatised students who after an initial period of resistance and 'critical incidents' are welcomed into the caring community of the school. At Waterloo Road the Head Teacher and teaching staff practice an 'alternative thinking' curriculum. Helping students develop a sense of empathy—understanding the feelings and concerns of others (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009)—underpins the narrative concerning 16 year-old 'special needs' student, Karla Bentham (Jessica Baglow) in Series 3 and 4. Karla has Asperger's Syndrome; she is bullied by fellow students and runs away from school, but appropriate pastoral support from teaching assistant, Davina Shackleton (Christine Tremarco) means that her former tormentors now have a better understanding of Karla's unique needs and willingly assist her integration into the school community. More dramatically at the end of the fifth series disruptive student Finn Sharkey (Jack McMullen), ignored by

parents preoccupied with their own careers and unaware of their son's growing sense of anger and alienation, enters into a suicide pact with his girlfriend. At the last moment, he is rescued by Deputy Head Teacher Chris Mead (William Ash) who metaphorically and literally embraces Finn becoming the surrogate father that he craves. Mead counsels Finn in learning to manage his feelings, to find ways of handling his anger and sense of despair. With his emotional needs met, Finn is integrated into the school community and his resistance in future is more muted.

Another dominant theme in *Waterloo Road* is what Schatz calls a 'maternal–familial code' reflected in both in the leadership style portrayed and in the representation of the teacher characters. Rachel Mason (Eva Pope) and her successor Karen Fisher (Amanda Burton) are Head Teachers who personify the change from school performance and accountability earlier represented by the tenure of the first Head Teacher, Jack Rimmer (Jason Morells) to a 'social problem' focus. The series website described Mason as having a no-exclusions policy because she believes every child can be helped and recognises that, 'it's not enough to just educate her kids—the school needs to be attending to their emotional needs too' (*Waterloo Road*, BBC, 2009). Consistent with its soap-opera form where there is no single main protagonist, the school leader in *Waterloo Road* is no longer portrayed as *the* central character, a unique and exceptional individual like Ian George, but only one of a number of main characters who collectively confront the more urgent personal and social problems of the students. The Head Teacher of Waterloo Road has to prioritize 'saving' students from more immediate personal and social failure than academic, consistent with what school leadership theory (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992) describes as a different, less 'masculine' more 'feminine' leadership style. This is more people- rather than task-centred, more participatory and democratic than autocratic and hierarchical, creating a school culture which promotes teacher-agency where a different more pastoral pedagogy is practiced.

Unlike *Hope & Glory* or *Ahead of the Class* audiences seldom see teachers actually teaching for any length of screen time in *Waterloo Road*; instead narrative space is given over to their pastoral and proactive role in dealing with students non-academic needs. Tom Clarkson (Jason Dones) and Chris Mead also engage with their students' socio-emotional problems unilaterally. Displaying 'feminine' values of caring and nurturing, Tom Clarkson supports the dysfunctional Kelly family through the tragic and emotionally draining episodes which chart the terminal illness of student Sambucca (Holly Kenny). In Series 7 Chris Mead prioritises the needs of student Jodie Allen (Katie McGlynn) abandoned by her mother over his responsibilities as a senior manager when he absents himself during a Local Education Authority (the local government body similar to School District authorities in the United States) inspection to 'rescue' Jodie.

Significantly, school inspection which had been such a familiar and important narrative device to highlight the poor academic standards of the school and need for change in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class*, in this episode of *Waterloo Road* was portrayed as an absurd distraction from the school's more pressing and important function of addressing the 'real' needs of students like Jodie Allen. Head Teacher Rachel Mason's maternal stewardship is complemented by the re-characterisation of significant 'others' from the first series. Far from suffering the metaphorical 'death' of their counterparts in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class*, 'bad' teachers are (re)aligned with the pastoral focus of storylines. For Stephanie Haydock there is now

less emphasis on her (in)effectiveness as a Modern Foreign Language teacher post-Series 2 than on her 'maternal' capabilities which 'save' troubled homeless student Maxine Barlow (Ellie Paskell) from a life on the streets.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article has been to describe how two perceived external discourses of 'crises', those of standards and students' mental and emotional health, have been mediated in popular culture through *genre* subject and form in British television drama between 1999 and 2011. This was either as a discourse of 'crisis, failure and salvation' or after 2007 when schools were now required to more explicitly promote their students' happiness and well-being, as a discourse of the school as a 'caring community'. Employing contrasting 'social languages' these discourses represented the inner-city school and schooling either as an 'outward-looking' publicly accountable institution concerned with raising academic standards or as a more 'inward-looking' domestic community prioritising the development of students' socio-emotional literacy. We argue that changes in the *genre* form of these dramas exploited different narrative structures and strategies—with the 'masculine' narrative conventions of the serial or single dramas of *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* giving way to the more 'feminine' narrative conventions of *Waterloo Road* associated with soap-opera—were instrumental in promoting these alternative discourses.

Yet in representing the school exclusively as a caring community, British television drama is consistent with, and arguably contributes towards, what Ecclestone & Hayes (2009) insist is the dangerous 'rise of therapeutic education' where feelings of student well-being are prioritised over the acquisition of knowledge. In this the roles of Head Teacher and teacher resemble more those of the social worker or councillor than educator with social and interpersonal skills seen as more valuable than pedagogical or leadership skills claim Ecclestone & Hayes. The representation of the school as a caring community in British television drama changed the dominant style of school leadership hitherto portrayed in the school drama. In *Waterloo Road* in place of the single hierarchical school leader we witness a more 'distributed' leadership practice (Harris, 2005a, 2005b). In showcasing this alternative leadership style, *Waterloo Road* challenged the myth of the charismatic school leader (Crawford, 2002; Day, 2005) portrayed in *Hope & Glory* and *Ahead of the Class* in the mind of the public. Myth functions as an 'anxiety-reducing mechanism' (Fiske, 1987) and given the 'normalising' effect of stereotyping in television drama (Hall, 1997) charismatic leadership became more acceptable as a 'realistic' solution to the problem of 'failing' schools and as *the* determinant of a school's success. But in *Waterloo Road* school leadership is less heroic, less charismatic and no longer central. Small-scale successes over assimilating 'dysfunctional' students back into the caring community of the school are the result of many hands—arguably a more realistic portrayal of school organisation and management.

The 'school' television drama like the Hollywood film is worthy of attention by those interested in how discourses about schooling and professional identities are constructed and circulate in popular culture. Television drama is a flexible and influential medium able to draw on a range of *genre* forms making it adaptable and responsive to external discourses about schools, school leadership and teachers for

those not directly involved in education. The propensity for hybridity and mutation in television drama *genre* (Turner, 2001), also meant that the 'school' drama benefited from what has been claimed to be the trend of popular television drama generally towards the flexi-narrative form of the soap-opera focused on 'social realist' issues explored through multiple storylines and range of characters in place of a single narrative featuring one central protagonist (Creeber, 2004; McCarthy, 2001).

Finally, more than just 'entertainment', television drama is an important discursive site capable of operating in conjunction with other discourses (here, for example, government policy, newsprint media and television documentary) to provide an authoritative voice (Thomas, 2011) shaping public perception of educational issues and government policies by how it represents the school and those who work there.

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