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HIDDEN PRACTICES

Reclaiming Social Justice in Neoliberal Times

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Abstract

Over the last thirty years, educational and social reforms have introduced major changes to the way education is managed and implemented in New Zealand. These reforms emphasise market ideologies while measuring and monitoring school quality and effectiveness. As neoliberal agendas infiltrated the education system, they foreshadowed shifting ideas of what it means to be a teacher. This presents a significant challenge to teachers, often forcing them to confront fundamental antagonisms between policy mandates and their own educational values and beliefs.

Founded on a yearlong critical ethnography, this study investigates how six secondary school teachers negotiate the complex relationship between their own commitments to social justice and the priorities associated with neoliberalism in their work as teachers. On one level the research is an exploration of the challenges teachers face in embodying their personal and pedagogical commitments. At a deeper level the research identifies tensions where various discourses converge and the role each contribute to cultural transformation and transformation within the school.

In this thesis, I draw on the work of Antonio Gramsci, James Scott, and Pierre Bourdieu to illustrate how the teachers act out institutional demands in the face of authority, yet off stage in more private quarters, they manage to reclaim their personal notions of what socially just teaching entails. Their hidden practices represent an agency that enables them to interrogate and expose issues of power in their school, to make independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions and to exercise judgement in the interests of others. As the teachers keenly assess the degree of surveillance and the consequences of non-compliance, they find means of acting as intellectuals. Their performative stealth enables them to appropriate school spaces where they can resist, and challenge, the dominant conceptions of teaching by enacting their own commitments to social justice. While their atomistic acts of resistance are unable to overthrow the hegemony of neoliberalism, they still manage to disrupt, and even displace, unjust discourses.
Dedicated to Trevor Wackrow and Sr. Claire Bouchard.

Forever a learner, forever a teacher.
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Richard’s gutsy determination to make a difference to education for young people has helped me to understand the political dimensions of my work. His advice, along with that of Katie Fitzpatrick, strengthened my desire to engage in research that is authentic, critical, and embedded in the real lives of teachers and students.

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Prologue

This thesis is the distillation of my long relationship with the public schools of New Zealand, and my academic search for answers. My own experiences of teacher and school culture have impelled me to examine the professional landscape of teaching in order to understand how society is reproduced. My experiences within and outside of the education system have inspired a deep commitment to justice and equality and the young people who make up New Zealand’s schools. My work as an educator over the last ten years has pushed me to understand how schools that reproduce inequality might also become sites of democratic purpose. And, my endeavours to teach in socially just ways have drawn my attention to the many constraints that teachers with similar commitments come up against. This thesis seeks to reveal these constraints and shed some light on the practices of teachers who are making it work for themselves: teachers who are creating cracks in the wall of hegemony for social justice to seep through.

I wish to make explicit here that the data and descriptions that inform this research did not simply gather themselves. Rather, these accounts of social life were composed during a time in history, in the lives of the researcher and the researched, and in a particular social world of values and practices. It was I who went into the school, who listened and learned and researched, and constructed and carried away these stories. Denzin and Lincoln note that behind the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the research process stands the personal biography of the researcher, “who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective” (2011, p. 21). For that reason, it was impossible for me to be ‘objective’ and distance myself from my own values and biases.

The conditions for legitimation and validation of qualitative research are very different from those of a positivist paradigm, but no less demanding. These requirements are discussed in some detail in chapter two. In brief, however, my intention in this section is to identify and describe the intellectual resources on which I draw, so that this dissertation can be read in light of them.
My concern about schools reproducing inequality and hegemony grows out of my own experiences as both a student and a teacher in the public schools of New Zealand. I recognise the forces of culture in shaping the impact of school efforts because I experienced how school policies reproduced and transmitted expectations based on culture, class and gender.

My understanding of socially just education originates in my work as a health and physical education teacher at Kia Maru College\(^1\), a school in Manukau City. Despite professional support and encouragement I had a sense of vulnerability and professional isolation while at this school. I was a Pakeha\(^2\) from a (recently) middle-class background, working in a school made up primarily of Pasifika\(^3\) and Maori\(^4\) students. I was continually troubled by the idea that my own background and cultural knowledge may not have been serving my students in the way I intended. Foremost in my mind was the thought that my frame of reference could have been unconsciously indoctrinating students into my world, and by doing so making them forego that which was important to them. I was also concerned with understanding and critiquing inequalities that I witnessed with regards to the students who I was teaching. My students were predominantly Maori and Pasifika children and young adults from working class families. They each came to school with commitments to learning and aspirations for success. Yet many students left school without gaining qualifications and few continued on to further education.

My experiences at this school challenged my beliefs about equity. Here I came face-to-face with class, race and cultural based stereotypes. On the one hand I had the chance to witness the glaring inequalities in the daily life of my students and to realise that these inequalities were not the result of individual intelligence or work ethic, but social injustice. On the other

\(^1\) This school was part of a previous research project and as such its name has been changed to protect the identity of participants in the original study.

\(^2\) Pakeha is the Maori term for a New Zealander of European lineage.

\(^3\) Pasifika is a collective term that is used to refer to people of Pacific heritage who have migrated to, or been born in, New Zealand.

\(^4\) Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.
hand I also witnessed the individual agency reflected in the tremendous efforts of both teachers and students.

I worked with teachers who sincerely believed that their students were the most important people in the learning process. They demonstrated to their students that they were truly valued and took the time to foster relationships and support within their classes. It was this collective of teachers who restored my faith in schools as sites for democracy. Their teaching practices pushed my own understanding of what distinguishes outstanding teaching by addressing and embedding social justice concerns within the everyday practices of the classroom. Their practices presented cultural differences as a source of strength and empowerment, not as a bunch of deficits which portray subordinate groups as pitiable or ‘problems’. They used experiential, exploratory and constructivist pedagogies to link community service with opportunities to teach about democracy. And their work to develop and apply strategies of teaching and learning in response to the widespread nature of oppression, injustice and power imbalances in education, and also in the lives of their students, were absolutely connected with pedagogies of collaboration, love and hope.

My experiences at Kia Maru College show that while schools do legitimate existing inequalities, there are also possibilities for creating a more just society. The intervention of teachers helped to counter some of the oppressive forces in students’ lives. Even though I was critical of some school practices, I learnt to believe in the possibility of schools to act as places where students were valued and acknowledged. They are sites upon which meanings are produced and contested. As a teacher I unlearned much of my previous beliefs about good teaching and school success. Thus, I was left with the contradictory perceptions that schooling perpetuates cultural, class and gender inequalities, while also being a ticket away from the power of those oppressive forces that reproduced such social divisions. This paradox of the school keeping most students down at the same time that it was the only way up for others has driven my interest in schooling’s relationship to democratic culture.

I remained at Kia Maru College for two years before taking time-out to move to the Coromandel and continue study towards my Master’s degree. My Master’s thesis sought to
understand my experiences and address my initial vulnerability at Kia Maru College by addressing the question ‘What was the impact of what I taught and the way in which I taught it?’ This study turned the spotlight back on to me as a teacher, examining my role in the cultural politics of the school from both my own perspective as well as that of my students.

Upon completion of this critical reflection, I had a desire to return to a school where I would be able to apply my new learning and, to some extent, take up that difficult challenge which is often put to critical scholars – ‘What is the alternative?’ So, in 2009, I commenced a position as Head of Department at St Cardinal’s College\(^5\), Auckland.

In contrast to the multicultural, collegial character of Kia Maru College, St Cardinal’s was a somewhat affluent, Catholic, single-sex (girls) school, underscored by what I later ascertained to be conservative values. I had hoped to implement some of my findings from my Master’s research, with regards to co-constructing a culturally responsive curriculum with my students and developing supportive and productive relationships with the families of my students. However, much of this work was undone by the oppressively conservative operation of the school and the management within. For instance, on my second day at this school the deputy principal took me aside to talk about my form class. He made a joke about it being a difficult initiation to the school for me as I had been given the class of “dummies” who would “never amount to much”.

More disconcerting than the content of his joke was the normalisation of (out)spoken bigotry inscribed in the school. This bigotry permeated many sectors within the school, taking different forms of discrimination, including culture, class, ability, and sexuality. Bourdieu’s (1990b; 1977) notion of symbolic violence can be used to explain this process. The historic norms by which social power was created and transferred in this school was a result of the dominant groups exerting their power by imposing their own cultural perspectives in everyday thought and practice. By making their own cultural forms publicly valuable at the expense of other forms, dominant groups exerted symbolic violence on

\(^5\) A pseudonym.
subordinate groups.

I was pulled into the symbolic and practiced realms of St Cardinal’s. As a result, the tensions of vulnerability and isolation were even more evident. I had returned to teaching with hopes of enacting some of my learning from my Master’s. Instead, I was confronted by the structures and practices of injustice that I thought I had left behind. While these experiences were very difficult to deal with, I consequently became even more evident of my teacher-self and the social, cultural, and political forces that actively shaped my work. However, I was not simply at the mercy of those forces. I had become a teacher thinking I could make a difference in the lives of others. But, I became aware that an individualist model of upward mobility was utterly inadequate in the face of institutionalised oppression. Meaningful change in schools, I came to believe, must make school meaningful for the majority of students. Socially just educational experiences must become commonplace if social justice in society is to be imagined.

With the support of my partner and my family, I worked to assert my own agency in a form of resistance. I laboured to expose the various structures that shaped our positions as teachers at this school. I attempted to co-construct curriculum with my students and together we negotiated forms of assessment and their due dates. I advocated for my students when others wrote them off.

By drawing on my own personal history I elbowed my own space in hopes of crafting a better schooling experience by challenging the injustices that I saw. In enacting my transformational aspirations I sought to reveal the concealed and speak of the silenced; an act that Park-Fuller refers to as “reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics” (2000, p. 26). But in doing so I strayed beyond the generally accepted boundaries of practice at St Cardinal’s. I felt the pressure to conform to the domineering approach to teaching and the individualist notion of learning that was prevalent, as well as the unquestioning of management decisions and practices that I deemed to be unjust. Fromm (1947; 1990, p. 143) provides an explanation of this process through his concept of ‘authoritarian conscience’. As a result of a system of rewards and
punishments where I, being in a subordinate position, was obliged to seek the acceptance of my superiors through the substitution of my own wants and desires with those specified by the powers that be. This, in turn, produced a feeling in me of low self-concept complemented with sentiments of guilt and insecurity that, ironically, were only alleviated with renewed compliance and capitulation – a vicious cycle of growing dependence on the authority and increasing separation from the self. By standing idle while various forms of symbolic violence were enacted, I felt like I was contributing to the reproduction of local power inequalities. I was seen as in solidarity – and thus complicit; a teacher that in turn collaborated in the veiled production of violence and oppression over students along the lines of class and culture.

In light of the above experiences, I was not just a social scientist when I commenced the fieldwork for the present study. I was also a native; a native in the sense that I was a teacher with experience in two very different school contexts in Auckland, and was thus inculcated with a practical sense of school realities. But this socialisation was never completed to the point of becoming unreflected habitus. My teaching career was interspersed with periods of postgraduate studies of education where I was encouraged to question the doxa of schools and society. In the reporting of my study, therefore, I offer the fresh insight of a ‘learned foreigner’ combined with the intimate knowledge of a native. Bourdieu considered this a special observational advantage, similar to that involved in his own study of village life in south-western France, where he himself originated (Bourdieu, 1990b, 2008).

In my own narrative, my solution was to leave the school. But I was continually troubled about whether this was the only action I could have taken. I believed it was the best solution given my circumstances, but I wanted to find out how other teachers negotiate the tensions that such structures pose. How do they create a space for themselves? This is the focus of my dissertation.
Hegemony, Teachers and The Politics of Blame

In many ways, Winstone Grammar\textsuperscript{6} mirrors other high school communities in metropolitan areas of New Zealand and, indeed, the world. Hoodie sweatshirts, custom-made Chuck Taylor sneakers and large hoop earrings adorn teenage bodies despite strict enforcing of the school’s uniform policy. Boys mock each other, pushing their power before receding into the relative safety of the classroom. Amid flirtations and embraces, teachers usher students into classrooms, unrelenting in their lessons and assessments that put credits in the kitty. Through the clamour of bustling playgrounds, swear words float out of smiling faces. As they fly past the ears of passing teachers they are made instantly inappropriate.

On the face of it, there is no denying that these occurrences are reflective of the challenges that teachers have perpetually faced. Indeed, \textit{the school} is often imagined as a fixed entity; the most stable of all our social institutions, the anchor of communities and the rock on which social order is built. Yet we know that schools, and the happenings inside them, change over time. They are complex agglomerations of people and discourses, differing along political lines and value orientation, and often pursuing different agendas. Large-scale social transformations such as colonialism, industrialisation, mass migration and war have all impacted on the New Zealand education system and the functioning of its schools.

In recent times, we have witnessed the inundation of neoliberal policies in education, characterised by emphases on choice, accountability, marketisation and privatisation (Ball, 1994; Rancière, 2010), and governed by logics of competition, instrumentalism, and individuation (Clarke, 2012). In this rethinking of education the role of the state has shifted from being a purveyor of collective wellbeing, equality and general social welfare, to that of a manager or auditor overseeing progress towards established economic goals and checking that accountability mandates are being followed.

As neoliberal agendas have moved into education systems, they have foreshadowed shifting ideas of what it means to be a teacher. Teachers have come to be treated more as

\textsuperscript{6} A pseudonym
employees than as autonomous professionals. As employees, they are to follow the dictates set from above rather than professionally controlling and monitoring their own performance, curriculum and expertise (Ward, 2012).

The neoliberal polycscape (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) treats the idiosyncratic and the contingent as if they simply do not exist. The lived experiences and expectations of teachers and students have been subjugated. The highly varied resources and facilities commanded by schools have been ignored. And as Smyth (2010) points out, more philosophical and ethical matters, such as what values and aspirations hold resonance and what knowledge and learning might mean to different people in different places at different times, have been disregarded.

As such, the conception of teachers’ work has been radically altered. As Furlong (2000) has suggested, neoliberalism has undermined their knowledge, authority and autonomy, and subjected them to the “terrors of performativity” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). This process presents a significant challenge to teachers, often forcing them to confront fundamental antagonisms between policy mandates and their own educational values and beliefs. Yet teachers’ responses to these challenges remain a “provoking absence” (Phelan & Sumsion, 2008, p. 3) in educational research, particularly in the New Zealand context.

**Research Question**

This ethnographic study seeks to bring increased understanding to the challenges faced by New Zealand secondary school teachers in relation to the inclusion of neoliberal and social justice discourses within school practice. The research focuses on teachers’ management of the complex relationship between these competing priorities, and the emotional and professional strains and tensions this generates. This, in turn, is a reflection of the dispositions each teacher holds concerning the educational significance and cultural value of these priorities. On one level the research is an exploration of the challenges teachers face in embodying their commitments to social justice. At a deeper level the research identifies tensions where various discourses converge and the role each might contribute to cultural transformation and transformation within the school.
In examining these challenges, I am guided by a central critical question:

*In what ways are secondary school teachers negotiating the complex relationship between their own commitments to social justice and the priorities associated with neoliberalism in their work in schools?*

To answer this question, I firstly examine how a public high school serving an increasingly diverse socio-economic and ethnic community in Auckland, New Zealand, reproduces hegemonic discourse regarding the purpose of education and accepted teaching practice. I then draw on the experiences of six teachers who work in that school to consider the notion of teachers as intellectuals and the political meaning behind that role. Finally, I ask whether spaces exist within the work of teaching in which teachers can disrupt hegemonic reproduction and displace unjust discourses, and in what ways.

**Critical Theory**

Concerns with democratising education originate from the intellectual canon known as critical theory. In essence, critical theory is concerned with the conviction that modern capitalist society cannot realise the Enlightenment ideal of a rational, just and humane society: at least not without substantial reconfiguration. Drawing on classical Marxism’s concern with the relationship between oppression and the economic exploitation of labour, critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research brought a cultural lens to analyses of society. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1972) in particular articulated how the power relations and oppressive forces of capitalism expressed themselves in the alienating symbolic forces of culture, music and art. New forms of cultural Marxism were added to this body of critical theory in the 1960s and 70s, extending beside and beyond the classical analysis of social class based economic inequalities. British writer Raymond Williams (1977) revived and refined the work of Antonio Gramsci and the relationship between ruling classes and the maintenance of existing structures of domination. Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband (1972), writing in France and Britain respectively, debated the role of the state in serving the interests of capital by focusing on how privileged elites were recruited into powerful state positions,
and questioned whether this was inevitable irrespective of who occupied top state positions. French sociologist Louis Althusser (1969, 1977, 1979) extended their work in suggesting that while the modern state (and its educational system) had a degree of ‘relative autonomy’ from the economic base of capital accumulation and exploitation, and could ‘act back’ on it and modify it from time to time, it still supported the interests of the economy in the last instance.

While not ordinarily classed as critical theory, the work of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis has been influential to many in this camp. Writing in the context of the US, Bowles and Gintis (1976) undertook a meticulous economic analysis of schooling at all levels, and demonstrated that school success has more to do with parental income than anything else. In response to their work, Jean Anyon (1980) engaged in a qualitative ethnography that examined interactions in schools serving different economic classes. She found that assumptions about students’ class based futures completely shaped the structure of the schools, the rules, the nature of teaching and the type of work assigned to students.

However, in work of lasting impact, particularly in education, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu revealed that it is not just economic capital at work in perpetuating social class structures and inequalities from generation to generation, but also differences of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1990b, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1990) cultural capital regards one’s differential access to what dominant groups determine to be the legitimate symbolic tools of culture, taste, distinction and discernment, through the family and education. It is one’s access to cultural capital, Bourdieu suggested, that subtly distinguishes and demarcates powerful groups from powerless ones.

British sociologist of education Michael Young (1971) drew on many of these cultural and critical theories throughout the 1970s as he developed critical theories of classrooms, cultures, and curriculum in schools. In combining such theories with his own studies of classroom interaction, he argued that the school curriculum both presumes and perpetuates elitist forms of cultural capital by valuing the forms of knowledge in which elites excel. That is, abstract, impersonal knowledge that is hierarchically organised and
separated from commonsense, everyday life. British historian of education Ivor Goodson (1984, 1985a, 1985b) and American Barry Franklin (1986), subsequently reinforced these claims by providing empirical evidence that showed that what is legitimated as official school subjects, what content is seen as valid for school subjects, and what practices are seen as appropriate methods of demonstrating school knowledge, results from struggles between dominant and subordinate groups in society, particularly the types of knowledge and understanding that each of them value.

While these critical theories demonstrated how societies and schools reproduced social inequalities, others pointed to the ability of social actors to resist oppression and exploitation. Paul Willis (1977) for instance, noted the capacity of working class, British ‘lads’ to ‘see through’ inequalities of their secondary school experience and engaged in practices of resistance in response to their perceived educational oppression. I will return to Willis’ study in chapter five.

In North America, writers such as Michael Apple, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, and Shirley Steinberg have been influenced and inspired by the Europeans. Under the umbrella of critical pedagogy, they developed critical perspectives in education by demonstrating how the curriculum-in-theory and the curriculum-in-everyday use are imbued with ideological influences of capitalist societies. They also considered how teachers and youth cultures are able to create pedagogies and practices of resistance in response to these ideological forces. While their writings initially lacked an empirical research base to support it, with arguments developed largely at the level of theory itself, the work of Paulo Freire served to change this. Working with illiterate peasants in South America, Freire believed that learning should be rooted in and connected to the profound contradictions in the lives and experiences of the people. I will also return to Freire’s work in chapter five.

**Schools and Hegemony**

In response to the provocations that critical theory posed, critical scholars of education, such as Michael Apple, Wayne Au, Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, bell hooks,
Gloria Ladson-Billings, Peter McLaren, Paul Willis, and Michael Young, have called for a focus on the ways educational purposes and cultural practices are contested within the framework of struggles for hegemony. Theories of hegemony, they argue, highlight how ideas, attitudes, and cultural practices legitimating unequal power relationships come to be accepted as common sense. This study responds to their call. It focuses on a key site of societal reproduction – the public school – and examines how, despite its democratic efforts, the school reproduces hierarchies of power and legitimates them as just.

While hegemony is the central focus of chapter four, it warrants further discussion here. Theories of hegemony are associated with the work of Antonio Gramsci, who was unconvinced by the relegation of ideology and culture to the superstructure in traditional Marxism. Gramsci questioned why the proletariat bought into the dominant ideology and culture when it favoured the interests of their oppressors – the ruling class – over their own. In doing so, he established a theory of cultural hegemony to explain how the dominant culture becomes widely accepted as ‘common sense’, operating to win the hearts and minds of the masses. The concept of hegemony, however, refers not simply to ideological domination. Rather, it involves a lived system of meanings and values and the internalisation of a lived dominance and subordination, such that it creates a sense of reality beyond which it is, for most people, difficult to move (Williams, 1977).

Yet, while hegemony is diffused throughout society in a system of values, morals and attitudes, is not merely the powerful controlling the powerless; it is negotiated. Subordinate groups are always influencing hegemony through resistant practices and counter-hegemonic movements, which offer an alternative construction of reality. Williams went on to explain,

> A lived hegemony is a process... It does not passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own. (1977, pp. 112-113)

To maintain power in the face of such movements, Michael Apple (1998, 2006) suggested that hegemony seeks to co-opt or absorb oppositional ideas. In this way, the success of the hegemonic coalition is founded on the ongoing strategies of persuasion and negotiation
between groups in complex and shifting alliances. Hence, Apple (2006) called into question the notion of a small group of elites imposing their ideas, values and cultural practices on passive masses while simultaneously quashing all dissent and opposition. Because theories of hegemony call attention to the constant interplay between dominant and subordinate groups they are useful for understanding the dynamics of public schooling, the focus of this research project, which involves such complex negotiations, and shifting alliances. They remind us that while modes of thinking and cultural practices are crucial to both the maintenance and resistance of power hierarchies, domination is not total and unquestioned.

Within the framework of hegemony, we can see that education is awash with politics; it is never socially or politically neutral. Policies are formed and imposed on teachers. Knowledge is selected and presented to students, and that knowledge is positioned within a framework of beliefs and understandings; a framework that likely reflects the values and beliefs of the dominant groups in society. Progressive reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Clarence Beeby and Peter Fraser, sought to make New Zealand schools democratising social institutions that equalised rich and poor. Yet school systems continued to operate in ways that accommodated the needs of an industrial society and ensure the status quo – so children came to occupy the same socio-economic position that their parents occupied.

Critical studies of education in New Zealand have also recognised the relationship between public schools and the reproduction of dominant values and power hierarchies (Fergusson, Lloyd, & Horwood, 1991; Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Harker & Nash, 1996; Hughes & Lauder, 1991; Hughes & Pierce, 2003; Lauder & Hughes, 1990, 1999; Nash, 1993, 2001; Nash & Harker, 1992, 1997; Strathdee & Hughes, 2001; Thrupp, 1995, 1999). The role of class in New Zealand educational achievement, for instance, has been examined in several studies through the period of the 1980s through to the present day. Hugh Lauder and David Hughes identified correlations between the socio-economic mix of schools, student achievement and participation in higher education (Lauder & Hughes, 1990, 1999). They found that students from schools in high socio-economic areas achieved at higher rates in school
qualifications and were more likely to continue on to university than students who attended schools in low socio-economic areas. The premise of their argument suggested that while quality teaching, school ethos, and student ability are important considerations, the socio-economic mix of the school makes a more significant impact on student achievement outcomes (Lauder & Hughes, 1990, 1999).

Roy Nash and Richard Harker also conducted research into school achievement and social class in examining the effect of ‘schooling’ on students’ progress and achievement in national qualifications (Harker & Nash, 1996; Nash & Harker, 1992, 1997). Their analysis moved beyond an explicit focus on socio-economic status, and they concluded that differences in achievement result from a complex interplay of contextual factors, including cultural practices and ethnicity, intelligence and ability, and socio-economic status. What was most interesting in their work was their suggestion that particular cultural practices of middle-class families better align with school practices than those of working-class families (Nash, 1993).

Martin Thrupp is also interested in New Zealand’s educational achievement outcomes and their relationship with the socio-economic mix within schools. In response to his critique of ‘School Effectiveness Research’ (Thrupp, 1995, 1999), which he viewed as denying the impact of wider contextual issues such as socio-economic factors in favour of school-based factors, Thrupp employed contextualised methods to examine the socio-economic mix of schools and the impact of this upon school processes, student learning, and engagement in lessons (Thrupp, 1999). In doing so, he revealed the advantages those students in middle-class schools enjoy, which stand in stark contrast with the cycle of underachievement experienced by those in working-class schools. In this way, both Nash and Harker (Harker & Nash, 1996; Nash, 1993; Nash & Harker, 1992, 1997) and Thrupp (1999) drew on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his notion of cultural capital.

Similar work has examined how students’ and families’ cultural practices differ from school values and practices, suggesting that some students are advantaged by entering school
already in possession of the cultural practices and values that the education system holds in high regard (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Jones, 1986, 1991; S. May, 1994).

Alison Jones’ (1986, 1991) study is significant because it brings together contextual issues and the negotiated nature of classroom interactions before considering their impact on teaching and learning processes. For one school year, Jones sat alongside high school students in academically streamed classes at a single sex high school in central Auckland. These two classes were also ethnically divided which Jones noted was a result of streaming. The ‘less academic’ class comprised high numbers of Pasifika students, while the ‘high ability’ class was predominantly Pakeha. In this way, Jones added a layer of complexity to notions of class, seeing it as intertwined with ethnicity and cultural practices. However, she did not examine the abstractions of cultural or ethnic diversity.

Jones was primarily concerned with the opportunities for, and actions of, the Pasifika girls at this school, following their progress and transition from school over the following two years. By experiencing and examining student life from within the school context, and also drawing on the ideas of Bourdieu, Jones was effectively able to describe the tensions between sociological class analyses and the cultural realities of school. In her view, the students were separated because they had different cultural values as a result of their class differences, and their separation worked to continually deny them access to the forms of capital that would help to end this cycle. In the end she concluded that the classroom is a powerful site of reproduction with regards to the societal trends associated with ethnicity and class, such as low socio-economic status. Her story illustrated the ways in which daily classroom life ensured that the two groups of girls did not derive the same benefits from schooling.

Stephen May’s (1994) work presented an ethnography of an urban primary school in Auckland, focussing closely on the school’s efforts to bridge the gap between the reality and promises of multicultural education. May’s descriptive account of the demographics and history of the school noted that the majority of students came from cultural minority or non-dominant groups in New Zealand society.
May concentrated on the impact of the central player – the former school principal – whose leadership inspired the pedagogical innovations at the centre of the study. These initiatives reflected the philosophy of an informing theory of education and the recognition of power relations in multiculturalism. As such, the school began to place distinct emphasis on cultural pluralism, cultural maintenance and access to power. Structural diversity at the school level was seen as one way of furthering that emphasis. Hence, the most fundamental changes that were initiated at the school were structural ones, such as Rōpū, the schools’ family grouping structures that placed students of various ages together in differing kinds of bilingual education, and the development, support, and intensive programmes of staff development that helped to embed the changes.

Throughout May’s account, he provided evidence of practice with theoretical underpinnings and theory with practical applications. May acknowledged the difficulties involved in combining theory and practice, but argued strongly in favour of praxis – that is, the practice of theory – focusing on the practical applications of critical theories in a school setting. Also of significance was May’s recognition of several areas where more research was needed: characteristics associated with successful innovators, strategies for principals to achieve change, and providing accounts of minority schooling that recognise existing power relations. Yet there still remains a dearth of research responding to May’s suggestions.

More recently, Katie Fitzpatrick (2013) explored the place of health and physical education in the lives of youth in the culturally diverse setting of Otara, Auckland. Based on a yearlong critical ethnography of a multiethnic secondary school, Fitzpatrick explored how the students in her study engaged with and responded to the school subjects of health and physical education. She also discussed broader issues in their lives, including the social geographies within which they resided, and how they understood their bodies, sexuality, health, gender, and physicalities.

Two significant points from Fitzpatrick’s study are very relevant to my research. Firstly, she pointed out that while policy documents established in the last ten years offer the possibility of social and critical approaches to teaching health and physical education, the
traditional conception of this subject area is difficult to shake. Secondly, Fitzpatrick’s ethnography presented the storied accounts of how one teacher enacted a critical and ‘culturally connected’ pedagogy of health and physical education with the students in his classes. However, what is missing from the narratives of this teacher are explanations of why he developed a critical pedagogy in the first place, the tensions that he faced in doing so, and how he negotiated such tensions while staying true to his desire to teach critically. It is in addressing such concerns that I see my own contribution to the field of educational sociology.

Much of the work discussed here belongs in the camp of ‘conflict theory’. Conflict theorists argue that the school operates on behalf of dominant groups to ensure that they maintain their dominance and locates the source of the problem in social inequality itself, rather than in schools. Though conflict theorists are right in calling attention to societal inequality, they have often overlooked the struggle over hegemony, constructing power as operating top down only. Teachers (and other social actors) are acted upon and resist little.

Like conflict theorists, I too assume that unequal schooling outcomes reflect inequality in society far more than the failure of particular schools. However, I also hope that educators can disrupt the unquestioned understandings of the causes of inequality through their actions in the school. This hope does not imply that effective practices are possible in any school irrespective of contextual issues, such as the socio-economic composition of the student intake. In light of the previous research, this would not be realistic. Rather, I believe that both structural and poststructural theories and analyses are required in order to develop an adequate critical understanding of educational realities. It is where these traditions rub against each other that progress can be made (Apple & Whitty, 1999). In applying both lenses to the study of education and teaching, I believe that research can reveal how teachers are able to challenge the neo-liberal discourse that suggests educational inequality is the result of school- and teacher-based practices as opposed to wider socio-economic issues, and that what is needed is a certain ‘type’ of ‘effective’ teacher to take account of differential education outcomes; a discourse that Martin Thrupp labels ‘The politics of blame’ (1999).
The New Hegemony: A Politics of Blame

While the evidence strongly suggests that the neoliberal turn is a technology for returning power to the economic elites, transformations of this scope do not occur by accident. For neoliberalism to take hold as the dominant mode of thought, a conceptual apparatus has to be proffered that appeals to our principles and values, to our inclinations and gut feelings, as well as to the possibilities that are organic to the social world we exist in. If this conceptual apparatus triumphs, it becomes so embedded in common sense as to be taken for granted and unquestioned. As Ley states, it results in the “sedimentation of these values and interests in everyday practices and institutional arrangements” (2000, p. 333).

This is especially true in the New Zealand experience, where neoliberal approaches to regulating and managing educational policies and practices have taken hold as the common sense remedy to social problems. It has included, amongst other reconfigurations, the radical change from education by educationalists to education by neoliberal management, and has affected living and working conditions for all, including teachers, through acts of surveillance, intensification of all types of educational work, and the general demand to follow market practices. Dahlstrom has recently suggested that the present neoliberal processes in education follow an enduring penetration and “management of our minds… and behaviours through a kind of doublespeak that we often do not detect” (2008, p. 4). It is through this process of neoliberal doublespeak that understandings of human rights and social justice that stemmed from the welfare state are transformed and reduced to individualism, competition and consumerism within a state managed by expectations. As Dahlstrom (2008) noted, the human right to education is transformed to school choice, and social justice is transformed to ensuring everyone has the opportunity, means and responsibility to participate in the consumerist culture. Under these conditions, voices of open and critical debate are increasingly silenced by the hegemonic neoliberal doublespeak, which is part and parcel of the creation of the neoliberal human being.

Martin Thrupp’s notion of ‘The politics of blame’ refers to the way that student and school underachievement has been constructed as the clear responsibility of schools and teachers. It involves,
an uncompromising stance on schools and student performance in which the quality of
student achievement is seen as the result of school-based factors and any reference to
broader socio-economic factors is ruled out as an excuse for poor performance. (Thrupp,
2008, p. 2; also Thrupp, 2010b)

Thrupp’s writings on the politics of blame stem from his critique of a body of research called
School Effectiveness Research (SER), which he recognises as directing government
educational initiatives in New Zealand since the 1990s (Thrupp, 1999, 2007, 2008, 2010a,
2010b; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006; Thrupp, Mansell, Hawksworth, & Harold, 2003). His critique
of SER revealed many of its pitfalls, including its reliance on a partial and erroneous account
of the history of educational research, the small body of theory on which it drew, and its
ease of co-option to neoliberal school reform. He also noted that SER ignored the findings
and theory of the previously mentioned work within the sociology of education, which
recognised the powerful relationship between family background and student achievement.
The failure of SER to question underlying social inequality and the nature of policy that
impacts on it resulted in the overemphasis on school based solutions, rather than broader
social structures, particularly the power of teaching (Thrupp, 2001, 2010b).

Hegemony has allowed the values of the dominant coalition to infiltrate public schooling
and education, directing policy and practice, and dictating what is valid and prioritised.
Under the politics of blame, this has entailed dismissing wider social influences on student
achievement in favour of emphasising particular forms of ‘effective’ or ‘quality’ teaching, as
seen in directives from the Ministry of Education,

The strongest and most direct influence within the education system on the learning of
children/students in both school and early childhood education is the effectiveness of
teaching. (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 31)

A comprehensive body of research clearly indicates that effective teachers are the main
factor in raising the achievement and fostering the ongoing engagement of students... As
such, the teaching profession needs to focus on enhancing the learning for all students
regardless of their backgrounds and circumstances. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 8)

While this can be read as validating the work of teachers, the flipside is that teachers are
often blamed for problems that are beyond their control. Wider causes of
underachievement, such as poverty, are ignored with the argument centring on teachers
making the difference and being held responsible for student achievement irrespective of
said causes. Thrupp (2008) understood this as making teachers the whipping boy for societal problems that those in power are unwilling to tackle,

While I think the Government and some researchers and Maori commentators would love [teachers] to accept the responsibility – and therefore the blame – for student underachievement, I really don’t think its plausible to assert that teachers have so much power to make the difference. I think teachers can do a lot, but not as much as they are being asked to, in fact I think overemphasising the power of quality teaching has the effect of scapegoating teachers for wider problems. (Thrupp, 2008, p. 2)

Success in school, for both students and teachers, implies an acceptance of hegemonic understandings of the world. But there are problems with aggrandising the power of quality teaching. As Thrupp (2008, 2010b) suggested, it fails to recognise teacher struggles, it distracts from addressing child poverty and other societal issues, and it distracts from a contextualisation agenda that offers more than the quality teaching agenda. He went on to state that there are also new accountabilities that are raising the stakes around quality teaching. If the power of quality teaching is over-emphasised, and policymakers become frustrated that teachers are not delivering, this risks paving the way for discourses of (false) salvation. For instance, if teachers are seen as having failed to address underachievement, it becomes easier to mount arguments for more accountabilities, performance pay, and bringing in the private sector, even if what is being asked of teachers is not realistic (Thrupp, 2010b). All this suggests we need to be sure that teachers are not being asked to address issues better addressed by wider government policy.

Bronwyn Davies (2005) suggested that critical scholars must refuse neoliberal conditions by trying to reveal the fractures in the neoliberal discourses and replacing these spaces with new discourses and new positions, for their own survival. The same can be said for secondary school teachers. At the same time, Davies addressed the dangers of posing critical questions while being the embodied person through which neoliberal shifts are played out, because everyone is subjected to a regime that tells us that our survival depends on acceptance of the terms under which we find ourselves as an act of being conditioned to a social and mental matrix “that has entered our world by stealth, and has eroded our values” (Davies, 2005, p. 5). This powerful discourse,
silences those who ask questions, it whips up a small-minded moralism that rewards the attack of each small powerless person on the other, and it shuts down creativity. It draws on and exacerbates a fear of difference and rewards a rampant, consumerist, competitive individualism. It makes emotion, humour... a passion for a life of the intellect unthinkable. (Davies, 2005, p. 7)

These worries are related to the possibilities of teachers analysing their own positions, actions, and languages through which they too manifest the neoliberal discourse, or rather the politics of blame; the discourse that they are working to reveal and change at the same time as they are locked into its surveillance technologies and common sense. In examining how hegemony is reproduced at Winstone Grammar School, this study first analyses how teachers are caught in this hegemonic matrix-like system. Then, remembering Gramsci’s notion that hegemonies are not for ever but are created by people and eventually changed by people, seeks to locate sites where teachers are able to disrupt it.

Towards this end, this study focuses on teachers, the constraints they face, their negotiations of competing discourses and their actions of possibility.

The Centrality of Teachers

Secondary school education in New Zealand is embroiled in an ongoing shift of a conceptual nature, whereby the collective habitus of teachers is changing in response to the changing contexts within which education is located. This study expands the scholarly discussion presented above, by examining how a group of subaltern teachers (Apple & Buras, 2006) responded to their subordination and placement within the highly stratified society that de-valued their professional views and commitments to social justice. In fact, this study does not examine official education policy, but rather looks to the cultural interactions through which it was mobilised and resisted.

Like all words, ‘subaltern’ has a history. Kristen Buras and Michael Apple (2006) explained that in late-medieval English, subaltern referred to vassals and peasants, but by 1700 it had come to signify lower ranking officers in the military. Antonio Gramsci used the term in the Prison Notebooks as a code-word for oppressed groups, allowing him to avoid the prison censors. In this thesis, I use the term ‘subordinate’ to refer to people who are positioned
lower in the social hierarchy, or who are under the control or authority of another within an organisation, or in society more generally. I use the term ‘subaltern’ with reference to the participants more specifically. While dominant figures tended to view them as less significant, they also held positions of authority, including House Dean and Head of Department. In this sense, their positioning in the social space of the school resembles the use of ‘subaltern’ in the military: the lowest ranking officer.

While many influences are implicated in the actualisation of discourse within the field of education, Clandinin and Connelly (1992, 1995) suggested that it is teachers who animate the work of schools, rather than curricula or policies. Yet, very little is known about secondary school teachers’ views of the cultural and discursive changes of recent times and how such changes are entangled in their professional practices. There is much rhetoric regarding the current state of New Zealand education (for instance, Alton-Lee, 2003; Alton-Lee, 2005; Education and Science Select Committee, 2008; Education Review Office, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2013; Hattie, 2003, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2007a), but there is little research regarding teachers’ responses to these discourses.

Despite the fact that neoliberal functionalist (Weil, 2001) accounts of schooling and the politics of blame (Thrupp, 1999) remain dominant within New Zealand education, the participants’ examples of curricula, pedagogic and policy critique and resistance in this research support an organic rather than a deterministic view. Their examples provide a resolution to the challenges of conflicting discourses as they reveal that teachers from varied social and curricula backgrounds were able to carve out a space within the professional landscape where they could enact their professional commitments.

The teachers’ capacity to grapple with ideas, their opinions and skills as well as their confusion and questioning form the basis of this research. I claim that individuals who did not come from a tradition of philosophical critique were capable of raising questions about dominant cultural assumptions. They did so in ordinary language, and they often suffered from the blindness that unself-conscious language creates. Following the writings of Michael Polanyi (1967), this type of knowledge – knowledge of the subalterns – is sometimes
characterised as ‘silent or ‘tacit’ knowledge. In the Freirean tradition it is also understood as ‘silenced’ knowledge, meaning that it was not recognised by powerful social groups, and which led Dahlstrom to suggest that, “below all kinds of academic knowledge you will find the knowledge of educational practitioners like teachers, who are looked upon as subaltern consumers and not creators of knowledge that counts” (2006, p. 58). Likewise, Elbaz used the term ‘voice’ against the backdrop of a previous silence when she suggested that,

Having ‘voice’ implies that one has a language in which to give expression to one’s authentic concerns, that one is able to recognise those concerns, and further that there is an audience of significant others who will listen. (Elbaz, 1990, p. 17)

Positioning teachers’ experiences as central to this research acknowledges that teachers’ voices have for too long been silenced amid the unruly polemic regarding contemporary schooling. According to Day, Pope, and Denicolo (1990) educational research and reform agendas have tended to prioritise the isolation of specific teaching behaviours in their search to define and develop ‘effective’ and ‘quality’ teaching, at the expense of understanding the subjective experiences of teachers in schools. These resolute efforts to distil standards for teaching and learning, performance indicators, and accountability measures have shifted our focus away from people and their communities and on to unified and mandated management structures; away from observing and listening to being scrutinised and told. Furthermore, Day, Pope, and Denicolo (1990) believed that this short-sightedness has led to blaming teachers for deficits in technical expertise, subject knowledge and personal qualities. Positioning teachers in restricted and fatalistic ways works to silence diverse voices and alienate those who have genuine concerns. Perhaps their knowledge is deemed less definitive, their ideas too complex, confronting, and too challenging to deal with. But at the heart of this research is the question of what we might learn from earnestly listening to those voices. How can we bring “authentic concerns” to the surface, as Elbaz (1990, p. 17) asks, in ways that are meaningful, without reducing complex experiences to simplistic deductions?

In a climate that places value on performance standards, measurable outcomes and accountability in schools, the spaces for expression are limited, particularly if those voices are heretical, subjective, and problematic in nature. Yet, a small but significant body of
Educational researchers have been more interested in teachers’ thinking and practice and in representing teachers’ lives and experiences in authentic ways (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 2004; Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Elbaz, 1990; Giroux, 1988; Goodson, 1992; Hargreaves, 1998, 2001; Smyth, 2010, 2012; Smyth & McInerney, 2007). Such approaches to research redress an imbalance in order to hear the authentic voices of those who live their lives in schools by searching for language to effectively capture their thinking and giving those voices serious attention. For example, more than any other contemporary writer Henry Giroux (1988) has advocated the rethinking of teachers’ work to view teachers as intellectuals and to view what teachers do as a form of intellectual labour.

In this study, the participants dealt with theory in a vernacular mode. Their vernacular theories served as powerful frameworks that directed their work in schools. In fact, each teacher possessed multiple perspectives that were shaped by the various social and professional worlds in which they interacted. Yet these perspectives were not fixed. They were dynamic. As Bourdieu (1990b) noted, since these perspectives can be learned, they can also be modified and transformed in interaction. And while their vernacular theories did not completely transcend ideologies, they managed in spite of their complicity to ask fundamental questions about power and culture.

Likewise, the appropriation of school spaces and the hidden practices that took place there allowed for considerable adaptation and re-contextualisation of the dominant discourses of education and schooling. The participants in this study did not overthrow the dominant hegemony; their actions were much more modest. But as social actors embedded in a professional landscape they did actively shape the world around them.

**Significant Theories**

A number of theories have helped me to clarify the questions and purpose of this study, and underpin my analysis. Theories of hegemony, Bourdieu’s theories of multiple economies and James C. Scott’s work on infrapolitical resistance initially helped me to frame the key questions of the study and then to begin to read the data that I obtained during the fieldwork. They warrant some discussion here.
As I have noted, the first important theory is the concept of hegemony. Hegemony calls attention to the ways subordinate people consent to the values and interpretation of reality favourable to the ruling class. Through the work of cultural institutions, like the school, alternative interpretations of reality are silenced and the overwhelming logic of hegemony prevails as ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1971).

The work of Pierre Bourdieu and James C. Scott are particularly useful in explaining the ways hegemony is negotiated and asserted, as they recognise the complexities and nuances of social reproduction and the ability of subordinate groups to challenge it. In recognising the multiple economies of economic, cultural and symbolic capital, Bourdieu broadened Marxist understandings of social action. Symbolic capital proved to be particularly salient to understanding the professional landscape at Winstone Grammar, as many of the practices there were related to its circulation. Teachers subscribed, often unwittingly, to established status systems and often rejected the cultural and symbolic capital of others, such as those ‘working against the grain’, in favour of increasing their symbolic capital amongst their colleagues. Additionally, Bourdieu explained that subordinate groups distinguish themselves from the powerful and create their own sets of values. As I will illustrate, the examples in this thesis reveal that cultural capital in one setting, or among one group of teachers, did not necessarily translate into symbolic capital in another.

Scott’s (1990) concepts of “infrapolitics” and “hidden transcripts” are also important in my interpretation of the rituals of resistance. Just like infrared rays, infrapolitics are “beyond the visible end of the spectrum” (Scott, 1990, p. 183). Scott used this image to describe the actions of subordinate people who were not in a position to openly resist, who were not necessarily members of an organised movement, but who were also aware of their positioning. Historian Robin Kelley (1994) utilised Scott’s concept of infrapolitics vividly, in his book Race Rebels: Culture, politics, and the black working class, where he examined working-class African American resistance to segregation in the 1930s and 1940s. Although the formal civil rights movement was weak at this point in time, African Americans resisted segregation in relatively spontaneous, unorganised ways, which were often invisible to those against whom the acts were aimed. Foot dragging, sabotage, telling jokes behind the
boss’ back, pilfering, and talking back were not historically visible, but they were political acts and often carried consequences. Kelley (1994) noted that long before Rosa Parks, African Americans refused to give up their seats, but without a movement ready to protest on their behalf and call public attention to such outrages, they were simply arrested, or beaten on the spot. Such acts, which did not get recorded and left no distinct mark on history, still required courage and indicate that even without a powerful movement, people resist and are conscious of their political circumstances (Scott, 1990).

In chapters six and seven I reveal how teachers at Winstone Grammar School engaged in infrapolitics in their daily work. Where teachers are often constructed as troublesome and even lazy under the politics of blame, Scott’s work alerts us to the fact that their actions may be forms of infrapolitical resistance. Case in point is the recent issue of implementing National Standards policy in New Zealand primary schools. With the help of New Zealand’s mainstream media, politicians worked to paint teachers as rebellious and indolent in their often-negative response to the policy directive. In accordance with Gramsci’s depiction of hegemony, their intentions were to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the voting public, in order to push through their proposed changes to education and schooling. However, Martin Thrupp and Ann Easter’s (2012) work in the Research, Analysis, and Insight into National Standards (RAINS) Project, presented a different story. They incorporated a contextual element into their analysis of school responses to the newly formed policy, in order to understand the differing responses from a range of schools. While some schools responded unquestioningly, other schools were less conforming. The modes of contestation of these schools, including delaying implementation, ignoring particularly negative categories of the imposed standards (i.e., ‘well below’), using school derived standards in preference to the imposed standards, and not referring to the National Standards during discussions with parents are in line with Scott’s infrapolitics.

Scott’s (1990) ‘hidden and public transcripts’ also proved particularly useful here. Based on his work of Malay villagers, Scott recognised that subordinate people tended to act a role, or wear a mask of servility during their interactions with dominant people. According to Scott, this reassured the powerful that their subordinates accepted their subordination.
Behind their backs, however, the powerless often expressed their contempt with one another. Thus, the public transcript, “the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” (Scott, 1990, p. 2) may suggest that the oppressed supported their own subordination, as “the theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear” (Scott, 1990, p. 4).

Continuing this metaphor of performance, if public transcripts are what is said on stage or performed for the powerful hidden transcripts, according to Scott, are the “discourse that takes place ‘offstage’, beyond direct observation by power holders” (1990, p. 4). Importantly though, Scott cautioned against the easy distinction that what is said in front of the powerful is false and that what is said backstage is true. Rather “the hidden transcript is produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power than the public transcript” (Scott, 1990, p. 5).

These theories provided the lenses through which I interpreted what I saw and heard. They sharpened my awareness of the processes I had seen at work and helped me define the core questions I discussed above. Because I was interested in understanding the nature of resistance and contestation over the dominant hegemonic forces, as well as the meanings teachers gave to those practices, I chose to use an ethnographic methodology.

**Methodology**

As a researcher concerned with disrupting exploitation and promoting social justice I was troubled by the ethical dilemmas of studying a community I cared about, potentially objectifying people I had developed relationships with, for my own gain. Given my questions about how teachers understand their experiences, I planned to draw on qualitative research methods like participant observation and interviewing. These approaches allowed me to learn about experience and to complete an ethnographic study, but raised many issues as well.
The texts that served as my models, ethnographies of schools, had involved a separation of the researcher from the actual work of teaching and learning, while my commitment to critical pedagogy and social justice insisted that knowledge about the community be produced with the community, not in isolation from it. For instance, Fordham (1996), Fine (1991), Grant and Sleeter (1996), Jones (1986, 1991), May (1994), Willis (1977), and McLaren (1999) all offer ethnographic examples of entering schools as observers and outsiders. But I felt ambivalent about ‘using’ the Winstone community for my own purposes and then abandoning it. How could I create a project that did not objectify what I saw? What would the teachers gain from this study, and were their interests all the same? What obligations did I have to the school community? Was I subjecting them to criticism, misrepresentation, or dehumanisation? For whom was this study undertaken, whose interests would it serve and for what ends?

Such concerns about the ethics of studying the lives of other people, the exploitation involved in such studies and the relationship of the researcher to the community have also troubled critical scholars, who have challenged the ways traditional science has objectified subjects and diminished lived experience. These scholars have articulated a critical ethnography, which critiques traditional ethnographic and social science research and suggests more meaningful and less exploitative alternatives. My efforts to conduct ethical, ethnographic research are part of this project of critical scholarship.

The critical ethnography I outline in chapter two challenges traditional social science on a number of fronts. It rejects the traditional relationship between the subject and the researcher, questioning the ethics of disengagement with the subjects of our studies. As I have already noted, I reject the polarisation of objectivity and subjectivity and recognise that the two are entwined – that experience and reflection go hand in hand. The guise of objectivity and outsider status allows scholars to study inequality while freeing them from any responsibility for altering it. Scholars concerned with disrupting oppression have questioned the ethics and morality of such a stance. Is such a position of disinterested objectivity truly possible or even desirable?
Though this approach to qualitative research was once considered unorthodox by traditional scientific standards, in contemporary times it offers renewed significance to academic work. On the one hand, it challenges the apolitical nature of traditional science and reminds us that seeming neutrality is a political stance in support of the status quo. Educators like Paulo Freire have taught us that nothing is neutral and everything must be questioned. Critical methods push us to question the systems of oppression embedded within our methods and our disciplines and also push us to pursue socially meaningful research agendas. On the other hand these critical methods also push us to question the ethics of the work we do and the way we do it.

In order to establish the types of relationships that lend themselves to the closeness of ethnographic field work, and as a means of understanding the school context, I volunteered to work as a teacher-aide in the school for three days a week, over a 12 week period. Throughout this period, my time in classrooms was dedicated to developing trusting and lasting relationships, with both teachers and students, based on openness and collaboration. While I wanted to conduct my research and complete the writing of my thesis, I also wanted to be a good teacher-aide, and enact a socially meaningful pedagogy. Yet these two desires were often in conflict. Working as a teacher-aide for me was a total activity that consumed most of my waking hours and invaded my sleep. It required that I be deeply involved with the classroom, the students and the teachers. But scholarship seemed to demand that I be less involved with the school and more involved with my research agenda. This ongoing tension is explored further in chapter two.

In addition to participating in the project to develop methods of studying people without dehumanising them, my research seeks to break down barriers between teachers and theorists. Within the field of education I sense a disturbing divide between universities (the theorists) and educators who teach in schools. Much of the influential research about public schooling and educational practice is produced by academics. This makes a lot of the work in education sociology and critical theory intellectually invigorating, but it also lends it a tendency to become disconnected from and insufficiently informed by the complex and mundane everyday realities of ordinary schools and their teachers. Because teachers often
perceive theory as irrelevant to their classrooms, they ignore much of this production. The
privileging of the outsider, common in much social science, devalues the knowledge of
classroom teachers, who in turn tend to privilege the knowledge of the insider. I hope that
this study is useful to the Winstone community, but also hope that it encourages other
teachers to consider their own professional landscapes.

Having said this however, I admit that there are limitations to my being a contextualised
insider/outsider rather than purely an outsider. My defined presence in the school allowed
participants to know me on a personal level, which may have shaped their responses to me.
At times, colleagues and participants were clearly performing for me in that they were
saying things they thought I wanted to hear.

Though the reader must read this study aware of the limitations of my vantage point, they
must also be aware of the strengths. Many teachers volunteered quickly for the study
because they wanted to help me based on our ongoing relationships. Because of these
relationships, I was able to ask more pointed follow up questions about their experiences
and their beliefs. In some conversations we were able to discuss an event we had both
witnessed and I was able to understand how teachers interpreted specific incidents at
school. Had I not developed such strong mutual relationships, I would not have been able to
challenge participants’ representations of themselves to me, or to examine events in the
school that had stood out to me. In a number of conversations, my asking specific follow up
questions pushed the dialogue to a more candid level as participants broke their veneer
with expressions like, “you know how it is... you’re a teacher,”, “that’s why its good having
you here... its good to bounce these ideas around” and “us teachers have to make a change”.
My location in the school community certainly may have cut off some perspectives, but it
also opened up many other possibilities.

Structure of the thesis

spoke of the ‘third moment’ in the history of qualitative research as being characterised by
‘blurred genres’, and the present work can be seen as one way in which this moment
continues to be played out in contemporary qualitative research. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994, 2011) images of qualitative research as a work of *bricolage* and of the researcher as *bricoleur* strongly influenced the way that this research project was conducted. It has taken on the character of a *bricolage*; that is “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). In this sense, this thesis is a pieced-together narrative intended to represent certain research experiences and understandings. As Denzin and Lincoln earlier noted,

> The product of the *bricoleur’s* labour is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis. This bricolage will... connect the parts to the whole, stressing the meaningful relationships that operate in the situations and social worlds studied. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3)

What this means here and now is that I offer my understanding of social life in this school as a structured narrative. The participants spoke and I recorded and selectively re-presented their voices. As Wexler stated, “to pretend that this study is simply a dialogical construction of the facts of the case would be arrogant, exploitative, and deceptive” (1992, p. 2).

The questions raised in this study address the relationship of hegemonic reproduction and social justice, focusing on three sites of struggle: common sense and vernacular theory, appropriated space, and hidden practices. The thesis is divided into three sections to address the major questions it raises. The first section places my study in a specific, observable context. In this section I outline the specific methodology I enlisted. The following chapter explores the history of the school and its community, which were central to the forces that ran through the school. In considering this context, I also examine the theoretical, scholarly and historical debates that are actively shaping the professional landscape in which the school is located and where the participants work.

The second section of this thesis is concerned with the participants’ conceived ideas and theories as projections into the empirical world of the school. Their experiences unveil how cultural traditions and political priorities can be contested within the framework of struggles with and for hegemony. By providing new insights into theories of hegemony, I highlight how ideas, attitudes, and cultural practices that legitimate unequal power relationships
came to be accepted as ‘common sense’. These projections into a key site of societal reproduction – a public school – show how, despite its democratic efforts, the school reproduces hierarchies of power and legitimates them as just. But my readings of hegemony suggest that it is not merely the powerful controlling the powerless; it is negotiated. Subordinate groups are always influencing hegemony through thoughts and actions that offer an alternative construction of reality. Thus, I use the participants’ conceptions of education, schooling and teaching to show how they were able to create their own powerful understandings, what I have termed *vernacular theories*. These theories were powerful, directive forces that guided their actions and allowed them to create spaces for their own commitments that worked against the grain of orthodox conceptions of teaching.

The third section begins with a focus on the use of space, particularly the tensions between officially sanctioned spatial practices and the appropriation of school spaces for more critical use. These two spatial regimes competed for teacher allegiance and highlight how teachers perceived multiple perspectives competing for status in the school. However, neither spatial domain, nor its accompanying logic of practice, enabled teachers to fully develop discourses that resolved the tension between seemingly incompatible ideas held simultaneously. In public spaces, the common sense rhetoric of neoliberal discourses was pervasive and normalised. Many teachers acknowledged that they were responsible for students’ educational success and life chances, as is common within the politics of blame. But in more hidden spaces, an alternative economy existed that rejected the neoliberal values promoted in dominant contemporary educational discourses, particularly around success, individualism, and the view of students as ‘educational outputs’. These differences meant that ‘good teaching’ in one space did not often translate into ‘good teaching’ in the alternative space. However the economies of alternative capital in the hidden spaces were gradually encroaching on the public spaces, albeit with different levels of visibility.
Learning a Frog: Critical ethnography and a reflexive methodology

What is the best way to learn a frog? Not by reading. Not by seeing a picture or even by holding one in your hand. To learn a frog in a full and lasting manner, you must find one where it lives in nature, watch it, listen to it if it is calling. Study its habitat... The concept of frog will be with you forever if you follow this kind of education. You can pick up additional information from science and literature and myth, and all those things you have at school, but you will be wiser for being rooted in the full reality of frog. You will care about frog, too, like nobody else.

—E. O. Wilson, Anthill

Critical Ethnography

Jim Thomas described critical ethnography as “a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge, and action”, where researchers “describe, analyse, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain” (1993, pp. 2-3). In other words, critical ethnography is a qualitative approach concerned with inequalities in power between individuals, groups, and the socio-political framework. In its general sense, ethnography involves researchers becoming part of the community of people involved in the research, living alongside them in the hope that a better understanding of their lives will result (Denzin, 1997; Tedlock, 2011).

The adjective ‘critical’ in critical ethnography refers to its intellectual stance, historically derived from and informed by the epistemic orientation of critical theory. As I explained in chapter one, this intellectual canon originated in the Marx and Frankfurt schools of thought, and was subsequently institutionalized within its unique historical, political, socio-cultural, and ideological contexts. The term ‘ethnography’ represents its roots in the research tradition of anthropology, where it draws multiple methods of data generation, analysis, and representation (Carspecken, 1996). Hence, critical ethnography embodies both a critical research paradigm as well as an ethnographic method.

In this chapter I describe the ethnographic fieldwork carried out for my research over the period of a year. I begin by re-articulating the research question, before considering the rationale for choosing a critical ethnographic research approach. I also attend to my role as
the researcher, including issues of identity and reflexivity in shaping the data, the notion of field as spatiality, the ethics of doing ethnography, the processes and methods of data generation and analysis, the identification of research participants, and achieving trustworthiness in research.

The choice of the research methodology depends upon the nature of the research question(s) that it seeks to explore. In this regard, my ethnographic research set out to explore the question:

*In what ways are secondary school teachers negotiating the complex relationship between their own commitments to social justice and the priorities associated with neoliberalism in their work in schools?*

Investigating teachers’ understandings, experiences, and practices as they relate to competing discourses and priorities requires an analysis of the process of cultural production. In particular, in this study I attended to the production of educative spaces and possibilities – spaces where teacher agency was situated and responded to the discourses of schooling. In doing so, I engaged with notions of power, as people’s experiences are never power-neutral. Thus, I utilised a methodological approach that provided analytical and methodological tools to interrogate and expose relations of power in high schools. A critical ethnographic approach seemed to be an appropriate choice for my research.

Grounded in the post-positivist qualitative research tradition (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995), critical ethnography represents an orientation to research that stems from dissatisfaction with the social sciences in general and anthropological ethnographic research traditions in particular (Masemann, 1982). Masemann (2003) explained that this is due to social science research being traditionally limited to observing structures and their influence on social realms and actions, ignoring the role of social agency within that; while anthropological research, steeped in the post-modernist epistemic tradition, being primarily concerned with the particular, and ignoring the structures which shape them. Accordingly, in sociological and anthropological research a gap remained unfilled in the analysis of the relation between
structure and agency, micro and macro. Against this backdrop, critical ethnography developed as one response to the structure/agency debates (Carspecken, 2002).

From the perspective of theoretical knowledge, critical ethnography borrows from Marxist thought, yet does not remain wedded to the Marxist research tradition per se. It also extracts some influence from post-modernism, yet distances itself from being a-political. This concurrent concern with issues of structure and engagement with contextual factors illuminates the criticality of critical ethnographic research. Furthermore, the work of post-colonial and post-structuralist scholars has, in recent times, added a new rigour to critical ethnography. In this regard, my research methodology benefits from both structuralist and post-structuralist research discourse on selected aspects; especially with reference to paying attention to the historicity of locality and the analysis of structures and processes of national education that bear a legacy of social inequalities. By historicising here, my intention is not only to provide a background explanation of the context or situation, but also to explicate the limits of its existential conditions, which result from processes of historical politics. Hence, such a methodological approach recognises the complexities of the local as a context that has been constituted historically, politically, and socio-culturally, and takes this complexity into account while analysing the micro-macro dynamic (Rizvi, 2005).

In this regard, there is an emancipatory intent embedded in this approach to research, which acts as a catalyst to free human beings from the constraints of nature and society (Habermas, 1971). In the realm of the social, this interest strives to uncover and explain the power position through exposing the way ideology and hegemony are forces that connect the micro-dynamics of everyday with the macro-dynamics of social structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The aim is to bring about social justice and emancipation that would eventually lead to a rigorous form of democracy. Thus, there is a value orientation to critical ethnography that ascribes to a certain political and teleological stance; it is inspired by the notion that knowledge is not only to understand the society but also to transform it. As Lather noted, “critical ethnography has attachments to local knowledge and to illuminating the exercise of power in culturally specific yet socially reproductive processes” (2001, p.
In the context of asymmetric power between competing educational priorities, my research contributes to shedding some critical light on the way neoliberalism and social justice interface and impact on local culture and education.

**Reflexivity and the Researcher Identity**

Clifford Geertz stated that, “to see ourselves as others see us can be eye opening” (Geertz, 1993, p. 16). This quote rings so true when considering the way research participants view the ethnographer. The process of knowledge production in ethnographic studies is affected significantly by the role(s) that a researcher takes on in the field, as different roles provide different vantage points and access to the phenomena under observation. Through these adopted roles, the researcher enters into certain types of relationships with the participants, and this too influences the type of knowledge that is produced. In the case of my research, I was reflexively aware that by no means could I achieve a purely objective stance in relation to the phenomena or the participants. To this effect, “the author as tape recorder and grand interpreter is replaced by the author as a living, contradictory, vulnerable, evolving multiple self who speaks in a partial, subjective, culture-bound voice” (Foley, 2002, p. 145).

With this in mind, it is worth noting that traditional ethnography has been marked by a dichotomous relationship between researchers and those they research (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Okley, 1996). As the research subjects live their lives, the ethnographer watches, interprets and passes judgment. The construction of this model privileges the perspective of the researcher and reproduces social and colonialist hierarchies that value the perspective of the dominant over the subordinate – ‘the civilized’ learning about ‘the primitive’. This division also privileges the watcher as objective, and therefore ‘scientific’ and ‘disinterested’, and de-values the watched as subjective and therefore ‘unscientific’.

Separate, yet related, critiques have also called attention to the way writing in anthropology and traditional ethnography has favoured objective and overly masculine styles over narrative and subjective approaches. The work of narrative writers, in which they sought to delve inside a culture rather than remain outside it, was marginalized as non-academic as
they were seen to lose their ability to make scientific judgments. For instance, the work of feminist anthropologists such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ruth Benedict, and Ruth Landes was devalued because these scholars experimented with narrative and questioned the limits of the objective-subjective polarity (Behar, 1995; Okley, 1996; Visweswaran, 1994). This similar dichotomy not only has its roots in hierarchical divisions between ‘the civilized’ and ‘the primitive’, but also in Eurocentric divisions between the west and non-western societies, and patriarchal divisions that define men as objective and reasonable and women as subjective and irrational. Critical ethnography aims to break down these dichotomies that separate the researcher from the research community.

While undertaking the fieldwork component of this study, my intention was to take up a role that would help me to learn about the participants’ experiences, particularly with regards to their experiences of conflicting discourses in their roles as teachers. Hence, I adopted a role similar to that of participant-observer. I will return to this role shortly.

As a learned-foreigner (Bourdieu, 2008), I possessed facets of both an insider and an outsider to the field. Being a teacher, having experience in similar schools in Auckland, and having experienced the same competing discourses in my own practice, meant that I brought some qualities of an insider to my role. However, I was an outsider in more than one sense, and to some extent that is how I was initially seen in the field. I was an outsider as I was seen as a researcher undertaking a PhD, and being from a university setting was often perceived as being an alien to the school. As I sat down to lunch one day early in my fieldwork, for example, a teacher commented that I would be observing and making notes on what everyone was eating for lunch (Field notes, March 2011). While his comment was offered as a humorous way of breaking the ice, and indeed it did bring a few laughs from the group I was joining, it reminded me that I was viewed in a different manner to others in the school community. I had anticipated this, and in the following section I outline how I sought to make a contribution to the school by way of volunteering as a teacher-aide. This role helped to cement my position as an insider with many of the teachers, but with some teachers it actually served to exacerbate my outsider-ness. The hierarchy between teachers and support staff (such as teacher-aides and other paraprofessionals) ran strong through
the social space of the school, and at times my association with other teacher-aides marked me as being different.

On another occasion, while I was observing a classroom lesson, the teacher remarked to the students: “You have to be on your best behaviour today.” Then, pointing to me, she said, “Stuart is here to observe you...” (Field notes, April 2011). This comment was an eye-opener for me, as it revealed to me some cracks within my assumed role of participant-observer. These incidents helped me to readjust and re-clarify my role and purpose of being there in the school and classroom and reproject my identity accordingly.

**Living up to the ethics of critical ethnography**

My purpose in discussing ethics upfront is to symbolise the value that I put on research ethics as an ethnographer. I believe that in research, knowledge and ethics go together. In the context of a critical inquiry, focus is not only on producing knowledge about the other. The ethics of the knowledge-making process also needs to be brought into the focus of the inquiry (Brown, 2004). Knowledge and ethics, for me, are closely related as through ethnography ‘an other’ is engaged and portrayed. Hence, research becomes both an intellectual as well as an ethical act. Moreover, I do not see the ethics and politics of ethnography as divisible (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). While conducting ethnography, a particular cultural group is placed under the critical lens of the researcher, entailing an encounter between the values of the researcher and the participants. Indeed, research subjects can sometimes experience a sense of vulnerability and a feeling that their world is being invaded, due to the very difference in the positions of the researcher and the participants. Shulamit Reinhartz (1992) is one scholar who raised questions about the exploitation and objectification involved in academic research. She criticized the nature of traditional qualitative studies where researchers pay a lot of attention to a community for a little while, before moving on to other projects once they have satisfied the needs of their study. Reinhartz (1992) raised more questions about the nature of some research to ask probing and personal questions of participants, without ensuring their emotional safety. She also explained how she, and other researchers, felt compromised by studies that did not
allow them to give participants important information, so as to not interfere with the outcome of the study. In making it appear as though the subjects’ participation in the research in no way affected their lives, the needs of the study were placed ahead of the needs of the human beings who participated in them. In this way, social scientific research runs the risk of objectifying subjects and robbing them of their humanity by reducing them to mere data.

Prior to commencing my fieldwork, I applied to the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee for approval to undertake the research. Permission was granted on the 15th of March 2011, for three years (Reference Number 2010/607). In this application, I had thoroughly planned the measures I would take to minimise the ethical risks of my research. Yet, as I observed spaces and practices within the school I was aware that some of the teachers involved in the study occasionally felt those feelings of vulnerability that I had tried to minimise. My awareness of these instances further helped me to become sensitive in approaching and conducting my fieldwork, and in response to these ethical issues I evaluated and readjusted the measures I took to reduce the risks for my participants.

In essence, my research practice was guided by the following set of principles: non-maleficence – that there should be no harm to the research participants; beneficence – that research should be beneficial to participants and society at large; autonomy – that the value orientation and decisions of research participants should be respected; and justice – that participants should be treated equally (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001).

Fine (1994), Fine and Weis (2003), and Madison (2005) argued that human relationships are the key to addressing equity. Building equitable and mutually respectful relationships is therefore integral to the cause and purpose of critical ethnography. In this research, my relationships with the research participants was not only an ethical consideration, but they made for better, more human, research. As well as working to build strong relationships with teachers (and students), I maintained an on-going awareness of their feelings and attitudes to the research and, specifically, the classroom interactions. While the teachers
were the participants in this study, there were several occasions when I sensed that students were becoming weary with my presence in their lessons. In response, I modified my observation schedule to focus on other classes for a while to allow them to have a break. When I returned to their lessons at a later time, the frustration had passed and I could continue with my observations in a productive and respectful manner.

Accommodating a researcher can be a difficult burden for any school. As a form of reciprocity, I contributed to the school by volunteering as a teacher-aide for one school term of twelve weeks. I also worked with several teachers who requested help with pedagogical and curricula concerns during my time at the school. It is important to note that as a researcher there was some benefit in contributing to the school in this way. The collaborative and openness that came from assisting teachers and students in their day-to-day work and learning, helped me in establishing productive and mutually respectful relationships with potential research participants.

In conducting ethnographic fieldwork, Madison (2005) suggested researchers take an approach that aims to address processes of unfairness or injustice. Therefore, if issues were to arise that posed some kind of harm to people in the field my plan was to help where I could, while remaining committed to my role as a researcher in the school. Lack of action in these situations (such as violence or bullying in the school grounds) would have resulted in harm, and was therefore considered unethical. One such incident arose several weeks into my fieldwork when a student had a tonic-clonic epileptic seizure while I was working with them. My immediate response was to ensure their safety by moving the furniture around them, before sending another student to the school nurse for assistance. As we waited for the nurse, I placed the student in the recovery position and comforted them with reassurance. This was a particularly emotional incident for me. While it was difficult to process my emotional response at the time, in the long run it served to strengthen the bond that I had formed with this particular student and the other teachers who also witnessed the event.
At the beginning of each research conversation, I negotiated guidelines with the research participants. These guidelines centred on issues of respect, cultural values, disclosure, personal choice about participation, the right to withdraw, to not answer, and confidentiality. This process served as a way of including the participants in decisions that guided my actions as the researcher. The conversations were carefully facilitated to ensure that the participants were heard and a respectful and an open environment was maintained.

I took care to emphasise the participants’ perceptions and the wider importance of the research from a critical and political viewpoint, rather than focusing on specific school processes. The school and students’ identities were also kept as anonymous as possible. After transcribing the individual research conversations, the participants were invited to read through the transcripts of their own discussion. Likewise, a summary of my on-going findings was provided to participants throughout the research process, and during the analysis phase I shared the products of my research, especially my representations of them (as indicated under the discussion of trustworthiness). Here I see the issue of trustworthiness as not only an intellectual/epistemological issue, but also an ethical aspect of my research. By sharing my notes and findings in the form of a ‘member check’ (Carspecken, 1996), the participants were able to see if they agreed with my record, and modify their meanings if they wished.

Information collected during the research was not able to be strictly confidential because I intended to report on it in this thesis and subsequently publish particular aspects of it in academic outlets. However, I made every effort to ensure that the information the participants provided was only used in such a way that did not identify a particular individual as its source, through the use of pseudonyms and by ensuring identifying material was stored separately from coded data. The research conversations were not discussed with anyone outside of those present, other than my supervisors.

In this regard, confidentiality from one layer of the school to another layer was maintained. For example, when school authorities, out of curiosity, asked me my impressions of the
school, I was quite firm about what to share and what not to, and refrained from making any evaluative judgments.

The participants were informed in their Participant Information Sheets that I would not be able to guarantee their anonymity. Although the privacy of the participants was protected as much as reasonably possible, I explained that there could still be a chance that they could be identified in publications resulting from the study because of the small number of potentially identifiable participants. I also assured them that they would be assigned pseudonyms, as would the school, but there would remain the possibility that some readers would be able to identify the school by its description.7

Living up to the expectations of multiple stakeholders, and remaining ethically true to what I had promised to the research participants, and to myself as a researcher, was not always easy. For example, one evening I received an email from a teacher asking me to share my research observations in a disciplinary hearing she was facing. Now this was a tricky situation for me, and although I knew straight away what to do, it was a challenge to handle the situation while maintaining the trust and respect of those involved. It took many explanations and apologies to avoid doing what was asked. I had to describe how it would contradict and complicate my pronounced role, and that I was not there to judge or evaluate teachers, as this might be seen as an inspection and could lead to unwarranted and undesirable stress for other teachers.

The key principles I tried to uphold throughout my research and post-research were those of respect, honesty and transparency with my participants, my readers, and also myself. With this in mind, I lived in the field and generated data, the discussion and analysis of which is presented throughout this thesis.

Informed by the above value orientation, I embarked upon generating data for my research; the discussion of this is presented in the following sections.

7 For this reason, references to the school community and other neighbouring suburbs that may identify the school and/or participants have been assigned pseudonyms, as have the names of prominent roads.
The Research Field: From Place to Spatiality

Winstone Grammar School was recommended as a place that might be open to my research project, if I could show that it would be useful for educators thinking about issues of social justice and schooling. It was a large, vibrant, multicultural, co-educational school for students in Years 9 (12/13 years of age) to 13 (17/18 years of age). The school-roll at the time of the study was 2160 students, with boys (53%) slightly outnumbering girls (47%). Students from more than seventy nationalities attended the school and the ethnic composition of the school included: Indian (30%), Pacific (24%), Chinese (16%), NZ European/Pakeha (10%), other Asian (10%), Maori (5%), and other ethnic groups making up the final 5 percent. The school’s decile four rating indicated its socio-economic status, where decile one schools draw their students from low socioeconomic communities and, at the other end of the range, decile ten schools draw their students from high socioeconomic communities. The extensive school campus includes a primary and an intermediate school, but the focus of this study is solely on the secondary school.

Understanding the notion of field was crucial for conceiving and designing my critical ethnographic work. One of the central concerns of doing ethnography is to understand the very notion of the local on which ethnography rests. This is especially so given the increasing influence of globalization and the making of a de-territorialised world (Burawoy, 2001). The role and nature of the local was further problematised by Appadurai (1996) when he questioned the place of the local in doing anthropological research in a de-territorialised world where the local itself has lost its original moorings.

The phenomenon of globalisation that is giving rise to processes of de-territorialisation has led to culture being unshackled from its geographic situated-ness (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). Hence, the cultural field is no more limited to a bounded geographic place as it was usually conceived in traditional ethnographic research (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). As a result of de-territorialisation, culture is re-inscribed in a new spatiality whereby

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8 Deciles are used to provide funding to state and state integrated schools. The lower the school’s decile rating the more funding it receives. This is in no way linked to the quality of education it provides, despite public misconception.
the global and the local interpenetrate each other. Therefore, the understanding of the notion of field needs to be shifted from being considered as a geographic locale to a notion of spatiality and scales, and as being multilayered. From this perspective, the field becomes a multi-locational context (Abu-Lughood, 2000; Bourdieu, 1990b), which is inscribed with power (Soja, 1971, 1989).

Hence, in my critical ethnographic study, the concept of the research field is approached as space where the dialectic of the real and the imagined is socially and culturally produced. As a result, the field is non-neutral space and is, rather, a representational site where asymmetric discourses of knowledge and power are taking place. This concept expands my unit of analysis from the school as a physical site only, to other intervening spaces, especially the politics and socio-cultural history of teaching and education, and the ideas and histories of the participants, which are spaces where ideas and understandings are produced and locally interacted. In this sense, the field is re-conceptualised as a multi-sited (Marcus, 1998), multi-locational context (Abu-Lughood, 2000), anchored in a particular locale, but not limited to that locale as it is connected with extra-locales and power relationships. This conception informed my research design.

Similarly, the notion of social field as articulated by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) also informs the conceptualisation of my research. According to this view, the social field “is made up of individuals who are positioned objectively in a set of social relations – who possess varying resources and struggle for prestige, wealth and power” (Seidman, 2004, p. 149). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) explained that different fields value different forms of capital. For example, in the context of schooling, particular forms of cultural and social capital – that is knowledge, values, practices and social ties – are valued, which helps the individuals who possess them to exercise authority and power. The notion of field became useful in helping me to see the school as a social field, where various social actors derived (or were denied) authority and power based on their cultural, social, and symbolic capitals.
A further theoretical importance of the notion of social field is that it highlights the role of culture to be central in social organization and domination. Hence, I was able to question whose culture was reproduced in the professional landscape and who was being dominated.

These emergent notions of field helped inform both the data generation and the analysis of my critical ethnography.

**Accessing the Field**

Field-access negotiation is an on-going process in ethnographic work. The researcher negotiates access at several levels, with several actors, for different purposes, each involving its own nuances. In the case of my research, I started field-access negotiations in March 2011.

Gaining access to the school proved difficult initially. I had anticipated particular sensitivities due to my intended focus on a combination of classroom practice and teachers’ experiences at a time when matters of teacher- and school-accountability and effectiveness had a high public profile. I was also aware that my research would be taking place amidst a wider context of assessment and curricula amendments as well as market competition, which would raise their own specific sensitivities and pressures. The difficulty of access, however, proved to stem from a more basic cause: the principal’s personal assistant.

After receiving approval to commence my research from the university’s Ethics Committee, I contacted the school by mail, including a covering letter, an information sheet, and a consent form for the principal to sign if he approved my request. After two weeks, I followed this letter with a phone call and reached the principal’s personal assistant, who informed me that the principal was “very busy” and felt that “the principal would not be inclined to consider my request” (Field notes, March 2011). Nevertheless, she confirmed that she would pass on my letter to the principal.

After another period of silence and dead-end phone calls, a friend offered to contact the principal on my behalf, based on her existing relationship with the principal as a former colleague. After doing so, the principal sent me an email in which he informed me that he
had not received my initial letter or any of my follow-up messages. Following this email, we spoke on the phone and made a time to meet.

Against this backdrop, I made a formal visit to the school to explain my work and discuss the potential involvement of the school. Subsequently, gaining consent turned out to be relatively straightforward in comparison to the gate-keeping practices of the personal assistant. Our brief conversation illustrated his deep commitment and knowledge of the school and its broader community. The principal accepted my proposal with optimism and enthusiasm. But there was also caution. The explicit message was that he would not welcome research that was “fishing for problems”, looking to “paint the school in a bad light”, or detracting from teachers’ day-to-day work expectations (Field notes, March 2011).

Before granting me final authorization and signing the consent form, the principal arranged for me to meet with Sean, the Head of the Learning Extension Department. He felt that Sean had a good understanding of the issues I was interested in examining, and trusted that he would be well positioned to judge the efficacies of my proposal.

After meeting with Sean, it seemed that we were interested in the same kinds of questions. As our conversation continued, he explained that the vital challenge facing the school was to connect with the wider community, particularly owing to Winstone’s increasing multiculturalism and the competing claims to equitable education. The result of this conversation was that I was granted official approval to conduct my fieldwork at Winstone Grammar, commencing the following day. I was also given a desk to base myself at when I was not attending lessons, a set of keys to access the Learning Extension Department, a network login and photocopy card; a rather fortunate arrangement considering other school ethnographies.

But, as Sara Delamont (2002) noted, official permission to undertake research in schools is only the first step in gaining access; access has to be negotiated many times over. For instance, on my first day at the school I was introduced to the staff during the morning briefing. But as is common in the life of schools the briefing was frenetic as teachers tried to fit in breakfast, messages, sports results, administrative announcements, and birthday
wishes. The result was that many staff members did not apprehend who I was or what I was doing at their school. In the days that followed, I worked to explain my role when opportunities arose, but weeks into my fieldwork I was still seen by some as a student-teacher, a counsellor, a social worker, an administrator, and a librarian (Field notes, March/April 2011).

As part of my proposal to the school, I volunteered my services as a teacher-aide for a period of twelve weeks. I considered this my humble reciprocation for their support, while also being clear that it would help me to gain a good understanding of the complexities of the research field. This role helped me to form powerful and productive relationships with the teachers I was assigned to work with. Yet I sensed that it resulted in my remaining anonymous in some circles. While those with whom I worked accepted me, I was ‘other-ed’ by some teachers who subscribed to the social hierarchy of teachers over teacher-aides.

The above situations emphasise the disconnect that is sometimes felt between teachers and researchers (and teachers and teacher-aides). In response to this awareness, I made every attempt to build positive relationships with teachers at the school, and found the fact that I was a secondary school teacher helped to build my credibility, especially when teachers realised that I was still practicing. I also attended several social occasions, which helped to break through the typecast view of the researcher.

Upon establishing myself in the field, I set about generating the data for my research using the framework outlined below.

**Methods**

Critical ethnography differs from interpretive ethnography in its “political purpose” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4), connecting the micro-dynamics of the everyday with the macro-dynamics of social structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). This is an important point, as critical ethnographers realize the complexities of the local as a context that has been historically, politically, and socio-culturally constituted (Rizvi, 2005). However, there is some convergence between critical and interpretive methods within contemporary ethnography.
These methods include participant observation and interactions with participants (Dewalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 1998), life histories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) and narrative analysis (Cortazzi, 2001), photography, audio or video recordings (Nastasi, 1999), written documents (Brewer, 2000), data documenting historical trends, and questionnaires and surveys (Salzman, 2001). The key difference is the way these methods are used, with critical ethnographers delving beneath surface appearances to examine the power relations and influences affecting phenomena. That is, they use the lived experiences of their participants to expose the political, social, and material disempowerment of individuals and groups. As Madison noted, “the critical ethnographer... disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (2005, p. 5). To this end, critical ethnographic fieldwork involves both deduction (from theory) as well as induction (from data), whereby the fieldwork progresses through a continuous dialogue between the two (Sarangapani, 2003).

**Constructing an Ethnographic Record**

The data for this study were generated over one school year at Winstone Grammar School. This time frame allowed me sufficient opportunity to position myself in the field and establish meaningful and reciprocal relationships while still attending to the requirements of academic study. That is, the constraints of meeting deadlines, working through different phases of the project, and turning my field experiences into a written report.

Having positioned myself in the school, I embarked upon generating data while keeping the focus of my research forefront in my mind. In this respect, I drew substantially on the work of Carspecken (1996), especially in relation to the suggested interrelated methodological stages: building a primary record; reconstructive analysis; dialogic data generation; and system analysis.

**Building a Primary Record**

The foundational stage of my ethnography entailed me making sense of the situation and the school context as a whole while making an effort to understand what was going on there. Constructing the Primary Record (Carspecken, 1996) helped me to understand the
school as a complex arena created by the interplay of educational, cultural, and biographical factors, which ranged from micro interactions in the classroom and other school spaces, to macro societal factors.

When I first visited Winstone Grammar School, I was struck by the complexity of the interactions taking place. Many things were happening all at once. Some of these things appeared more subtle than others, such as body posturing and eye movements, which occurred to me that they would be difficult to record. I also realised that what was taking place in one space could only be understood through observing many other spaces and phenomena, like different classrooms, the administrative and staffroom spaces, the playing fields and the neighbourhoods.

To help me with this, as I have mentioned, I volunteered as a teacher-aide, assisting both teachers and students. Throughout this period, my time in classrooms was dedicated to developing trusting and lasting relationships, with both teachers and students, based on openness and collaboration. This role differed slightly to the method of participant observation suggested by DeWalt et al. (1998). That is, I used this role to assist in forming relationships with the teachers, students, and management in the school as well as gaining experiential and observational access to the participant’s world of meaning. While offering my services as a teacher-aide allowed me to enter the classroom and begin to make sense of the setting and its contextualised issues, the role also allowed me to return something back to the school. So, in that sense, I felt that this role was both strategic as well as ethically responsible.

Like Madison (2005), Thomas (1993) and Carspecken (1996), I also realized that an ethnographer’s initial encounter with the field can be most informing and refreshing, as the researcher is anthropologically strange to the context; and this strangeness can be an advantage as it facilitates fresh sensing and grasping of the field. From my past research experience, I was also aware of the power of informal conversations to yield valuable information. During my initial contact, I continued to develop a very good rapport with Sean. He became my guide, and introduced me to several teachers whom he thought might
be of interest in my study. Through Sean, I developed close relationships with many teachers, and they became familiar with what I was doing. They were also quite open to informing me about events and issues in the school which they thought would benefit my research, as well as making me part of the whole school experience. All of this helped me to become a part of the school culture.

In keeping with my ethical responsibilities, I ensured that teachers, and students, understood what I was doing in their school. Mutual sharing and respect characterized discussions with teachers in the staffroom and students in the school grounds. Such conversations allowed me to glean valuable information about the school, the teachers’ responsibilities, and the curricular and co-curricular make-up of the school. Coupled with observations around the school grounds, these conversations shaped my understanding of the local context and enabled me to develop the required base for my future analysis and representation.

At this stage, I consciously avoided carrying any field journal or recording device with me, as I wanted to appear less obtrusive. Having said that, I remained conscious that despite my best efforts, the researcher remains an intruder into the insider’s world. I would wait until down time between lessons, or after school to record notes and memos to myself in my field journal.

Alongside the informal chats, a basic analysis of the material culture helped me to understand the background of the school as an institution. The contextual and historical dimensions (Glesne, 1998) that this contributed to my observations assisted me in gaining an insight of the situatedness of the school and its community (Mertens, 1998). Public artefacts such as school magazines and newspapers, websites, and the symbols and signs depicted in noticeboards, buildings, and newsletters served as sources of data that presented information about past, present, and future activities of the school. Such artefacts were signifiers of cultural meanings that were conveyed through the material environment of the school and formed the physical and concrete context that teachers and students inhabited. Additionally, Glesne (1998) suggested that document analysis provides
historical and contextual dimensions to observations and interviews. Therefore, using this tool for collecting data helped me to triangulate the data that I collected through the use of other tools.

The construction of the primary record was chronicled using ‘thick’ and ‘not-so-thick’ description (Geertz, 1973). By thick description, I mean detailed notes that tell the story of the events I observed, complimented by a not-so-thick sketch to provide a backdrop to make sense of what was happening. Thus, the thick description is not just a description or explanation of the human behaviour that I witnessed, but also of the context in which it occurred, such that the behaviour can be meaningful to an outsider. The characteristics of thick description are a detailed record of speech acts, body movements, and body postures (Carspecken, 1996).

For this purpose, once I had transitioned from my role as a teacher-aide, I maintained a series of field journals to record my field observations and notes. Usually ethnographers use different notebooks to record their observations and their own reflections, ideas, and points to follow up (Carspecken, 1996). I used two separate notebooks that I took with me each day. One notebook was dedicated to the thick descriptions of classroom interaction and the other was used to record things seen and heard during my visits to the staffroom, the corridors, the playing fields, and other spaces in the school and the wider community. Carspecken (1996) distinguished between these two types of notebooks, with the former being the ‘primary record’ and the latter a ‘field journal’. His use of the term ‘primary record’ refers to the nature of the analysis being primarily focused on the thick notes, which serve as a ‘data anchor’ for the less intensive notes compiled in the journal.

My entries into the field journal were often made after the events took place. At the conclusion of each day, I would enrich my notes and expand upon them with my fresh memory of that particular day in the field. In addition, I wrote separate analytic reflections of my experiences before moving forward in my research. The notebook for my primary record, however, was used during the observation period so that a lot of detail could be captured. I referred to these episodes as Classroom Interactions.
Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis

In ethnographic research methods, fieldwork, data generation, and analysis are undertaken concurrently. Each interpretive act informs the subsequent data inquiry step, the researcher’s actions, and their responses. I analysed and interpreted data at the conclusion of each day in the field, as well as after transcription of research conversations. This practice not only helped me to see in which directions my research was heading, but also informed me as to what further information was needed, what aspects were missing, and above all, helped me to get a feel for the emergent themes of my research.

Reconstructive analysis was a preliminary meaning making stage of my research as it involved me making sense of the participants’ speech acts (Carspecken, 1996), behaviour, and social power relationship patterns that surfaced from the initial raw data generated in the primary record. It was reconstructive because “it ‘reconstructs’, into explicit discourse, cultural and subjective factors that are largely tacit in nature” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 93). Using inductive-thematic analysis\(^9\), I began to make speculations about the meanings of interactions evident in the field.

But meaning making is seldom a spontaneous act. In everyday life, making sense of the meaning of various social interactions, conversations, and relationships more often than not needs to be extracted from a series of similar or different experiences, reflections, and inferences. In this sense, making meaning involved the development of understanding, moving towards a more explicit mode of meaning (Carspecken, 1996). This process enabled me to tease out issues, relationships and themes related to the participants’ actions and reactions, and built a theoretical platform to launch the next phase of data collection. As my ethnography moved from raw-data to refined ethnographic product I further interrogated the developing conceptions by discontinuing my role as a teacher-aide and commencing Classroom Interactions with specific research participants.

While the participant-observer role in the primary record phase served a more general role, specific teachers were invited to participate in the research in a more formal manner at this

\(^9\) Inductive-thematic analysis is further explained in the Data Analysis section (p. 58).
point. In keeping with the guiding principles of critical ethnography, these teachers were individuals with whom I had established a good rapport and who were interested in being a part of my project. The participants will be introduced shortly, but for now it is suffice to say that I used purposive sampling (Bernard, 2002; O’Reilly, 2009) to identify potential participants, based on their expressed understandings of the social and political context in which they worked. Understandings of social justice – as an ideology as well as an approach to teaching – are widely variable. However, one commonality in much of the literature is the sense that education and teaching are civic responsibilities, bringing with them the obligation to care about the circumstances of others, and the means to work towards changing the structural and ideological forces that benefit particular groups of people at the expense of others. Imbued in this sense of education were the participants’ commitments to consider the roots of injustice and act on behalf of their conception of the greater public good. I wanted to find out how they thought about their work, what strategies they used to negotiate competing priorities, and what enablers and constraints they experienced in the process.

Classroom Interactions involved me spending time in the participants’ classrooms, interacting with their students, with the lesson, and observing the teacher in practice. These interactions allowed me to experience classroom environments, contextualise teachers’ ideas, and also provided reference points for later conversations. Rather than being objective observations, classroom interactions rescind the ‘distance’ that was once thought to be required when observing others. While in no way did I intend to disrupt lessons, like Jones I understood that my presence would affect classroom dynamics, as “what is ‘going on’ [cannot] be captured by the researcher simply watching and taking notes from a corner of the room” (Jones, 1991, p. 23). Carspecken (1996) referred to the ‘Hawthorn Effect’ in explaining the effect a researcher has on the events they wish to study. In a study on the Hawthorn Electric Factory in the 1920s, the mere presence of observers greatly affected the way in which their subjects behaved. This particular study was designed to measure the effect of certain ‘variables’ on work performance, but the impact of the researchers’ presence impacted heavily on the validity of the study. However, my study was not
designed to measure the effect of independent variables on dependent variables. According to the methodological, social, and philosophical theory informing qualitative studies, the concept of variable is not appropriate (Carspecken, 1996), as action is conditioned as opposed to determined. Thus, analysis must focus on action and their conditions, rather than variables. Hence, the Classroom Interactions allowed me to not only observe but to also participate by experiencing activities and recording my own perceptions (Dewalt et al., 1998), without fear of the damaging impact of the Hawthorn Effect. Alterations in behaviour due to my presence did not correspond to alterations in the cultural milieu, or the norms, values and beliefs of the people being studied.

My experiences and interactions with teachers and students generated the data of this phase. My attention was mainly focused on listening to and making notes on teachers’ dealings with issues that related to the topics of this ethnography. Of equal interest was the apparent hierarchy of subjects and teachers. Again, the use of thick description was used to chronicle my observations and experiences. Furthermore, these initial meaning-making analyses were ascribed lower-level codes (Carspecken, 1996) as I started to tie down loose abstract patterns that developed due to interpretation and analysis. This stage was very helpful in reconstructing how neoliberal discourses were articulated, accommodated and resisted, how ideas of social justice were defined in official knowledge and pedagogy, and the meaning that teachers attached to and detached from these constructions.

Dialogic Data Generation

Dialogical data are the distinctive type of data that are produced through interviews and researcher-facilitated group discussions. In such situations, participants often talk in ways they seldom do in everyday life. Carspecken (1996) believed that this is because people are not often listened to as intently as when a researcher listens to them, nor are they taken as seriously as a researcher takes them, or supported in the exploration of their feelings, opinions, and life as much as a skilled researcher can support them.

Conquergood (1991) also stated that the aim of dialogue is to bring the researcher and the researched together so they may question, debate, and challenge each other. However,
interviews (as one of the more common forms of dialogue in qualitative methods) have the potential to be problematic, particularly with regards to interviewer power (Oakley, 1981) and the creation of a false atmosphere of formality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While many researchers undertake interviews as an efficient tool for collecting information from their participants, the question-answer arrangement can lead to discomfort for participants due to the implied interrogation and surveillance (Fine, 2003). Such an arrangement maintains the hierarchy between the interviewer and the interviewee; an apparent justification of inequity where what is good for the interviewer is not necessarily good for the interviewee (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Oakley, 1981).

Fine and Weis (2003) proposed that ‘extraordinary conversations’ offer an alternative to the false formality of structured and semi-structured interviews. This approach allows participants to consider their responses in a more natural state of conversation, and suggest that they hold the potential for opening spaces previously silenced, especially if such conversations attend to issues usually censored or suppressed. This is in fitting with one of the central purposes of the dialogical data generation stage: to democratize the research process (Carspecken, 1996).

Accordingly, rather than using interviews in their traditional sense, I drew on Freire’s (1996) notion of dialogue to construct the type of research conversations that Fine and Weis (2003) suggested. This approach was dependent on building strong relationships and having open conversations where individuals were listened to and respected, while still allowing space for opinions and ideas to be debated in a safe way. The interaction between the participants and I was characterized by collaboration, reciprocity and reflexivity.

Carspecken (1996) advised delaying the stage of dialogical data generation because, as soon as facilitated dialogue is introduced to the research process, “the routine activities you are interested in may well change” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 154). For this reason, I initiated the research conversations once I had started to generate a thick description of the classroom interactions. However, I am wary of presenting a linear process of data collection that detracts from the natural state of affairs, which was central to my ethnographic fieldwork.
The Classroom Interactions that preceded each Research Conversation also served to inform them. The Research Conversations then served to guide my observations during future Classroom Interactions.

Each participant took part in three Research Conversations during the course of my fieldwork. During these sessions, the discussion centred on the participants’ ideas and I used some stimulus materials to prompt their ideas. These materials included specific events from Classroom Interactions, more general ideas from wider observations, ideas that were raised during informal discussions, and current school initiatives and commitments. Participants were encouraged to offer their own ideas and responses to these stimulus materials as well as contribute their own experiences to the conversations. The different focus of each Research Conversation was negotiated with the participants in advance, negating Fine’s (2003) concern about the discomfort that can be caused when participants are not given sufficient time to consider their responses in traditional interviews.

System Analysis

In the preceding stages, the focus was on the specific school and classroom culture – the social space – and the understandings, experiences, and actions of the teacher participants – the cultural group. The goal of system analysis is to discover system relationships between the site and/or the group, and other sites and/or groups (Carspecken, 1996).

During this phase, I integrated systems by examining the participants’ personal and professional histories, which Anthony Giddens suggested are “sites separated in space and time” (1979, p. 74). These ‘sites’, by nature of their influence, played some role in shaping the participants’ knowledge and dispositions. For instance, Fernandez-Balboa (2009) suggested that teachers’ present endeavours in their work have solid links to prior periods of their lives. He raised the question of whether teachers are fully aware of how their experiences, feelings, relationships, and lessons of their childhood may be affecting their current work. While Fernandez-Balboa was specifically referring to teacher educators in physical education, there is relevance here for all teachers in high schools. Without an awareness of how teachers’ prior experiences affect their present work, we may not be
completely conscious of how powerful historic forces play out in today’s classrooms.

Fernandez-Balboa (2009) proposed a method of self-analysis in physical education teacher education, which I adapted to use with the participants of my study. Fernandez-Balboa’s method challenges and empowers teachers to thoughtfully and honestly look back and examine their past in diverse contexts (particularly home and school) with a threefold intent: “(a) to gain awareness about whence and from whom stems what [they] believe and do concerning pedagogy... (b) to use such awareness to judge, from an ethical standpoint, these two aspects of [their] professional work; and (c) based on that judgement, to correct [their] course as they deem appropriate” (Fernández-Balboa, 2009, pp. 154-155). I followed Fernandez-Balboa’s suggested steps, cognisant of his point that this is only one possible way that this process could be done.

I began by asking participants to make a list of some relevant experiences from their childhood, paying particular attention to such aspects as lessons received, significant adults, types of relationships with those adults, discourses heard, orders received, routines followed, and contexts lived in. Once these experiences were identified, the participants were asked to summon up the feelings associated with each experience, bringing them to life. Centring on the associated feelings, participants then made a value judgement about each of the experiences. Fernandez-Balboa (2009) drew on the work of Rogers (1969), Noddings (1984, 2002), Miller (1990), Fromm (1993), and Larson and Silverman (2005) to explain that feelings such as fear, anger, dismay, confusion and the like might indicate wrong doing and abuse; whereas feelings of joy, confidence, security and similar feelings likely point to life-enhancing and caring relationships and pedagogies.

I then asked the participants to consider how many of the lessons, feelings, actions, types of relationships, and routines they willingly (or unwillingly) reproduce in their work and/or other settings. As they did so, I encouraged them to think about who they might be emulating, and what reasons they may have for reproducing these aspects.

This biographical analysis helped to reveal the roots of the participant’s beliefs and actions, and shed some light on the ethical underpinnings of their pedagogy.
Following this process, I considered the findings in relation to general theories of society, both to help explain what had been discovered up to date, and to “alter, challenge, and/or refine macrosociological theories themselves” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 172). The idea was to establish and explain the relationship between the participants’ meanings and experiences and the broader macro-sociological structures and forces that shape us. Carspecken explained that when searching for a macro-sociological theory that fits the findings, a ‘good fit’ means that certain cultural themes have been well traced to environmental conditions and that these conditions, in turn, have been explained economically and politically. (1996, p. 203)

This culminating stage involved analysis of the power that circulated through the school, between structure and agency, and between agents themselves. Yet it is important to note that findings do not speak for themselves but require intelligent interpretation.

**Participants**

Given the scope and focus of my research, I used purposive sampling to select six participants for my study, based on their expressed understandings of the social and political context in which they worked. Part of this decision was based on my sensing some possible opportunities for data generation based on participant observation. This opportune circumstance emerged when I was attending a staff meeting. Staff meetings at Winstone Grammar were regular gatherings of management and teachers to discuss current issues and initiatives, administration and operations. In this particular meeting, a discussion had attracted my attention as it pertained to two issues central to my research; namely, the comparison of data between schools, and teachers’ responsibilities in raising achievement.

The following day, I approached several of these teachers individually and I informally shared my interest in aspects of their discussion. According to my ethical agreement, I then formally invited them to take part, by way of an official letter, information sheet and consent form. I restricted my pool of participants to six teachers for the purposes of manageability and depth of engagement. Each of these teachers agreed, and we worked together for 10 months, during which time I observed their practices, spent time with them in the school grounds, the staffroom and their office space, accompanied them on field
trips, and socialised with them away from the school. Hence, they became my key research participants.

These teachers had widely heterogeneous locations in social and geographical space and access to vastly different culturally imbued, gendered and classed resources.

**Participant Introductions**

*Sean*

After first meeting Sean during my initial contact with the school, I came to see the valuable insights he had to offer my study. Sean was the Head of the Learning Extension Department. This department provided a range of academic and practical support to students with mild to moderate learning difficulties. Sean also arranged in-class support via teacher-aides, working with classroom teachers, and administering a range of initiatives to support the learning of all students at the school.

Sean had attended Winstone Grammar as a student in the 1970s, and had been teaching at Winstone for sixteen years at the time of my fieldwork. But he had not been initially accepted into Teachers’ College when he first applied upon completing his university degree. He told me how his initial interview had not gone well, and despite his heavy involvement with the Maori and Pasifika community of Winstone throughout his youth, the interview panel dismissed this, even though they had asked how he would relate to Maori and Pasifika students. After a year of travelling and volunteer tutoring for Somalian refugees, he reapplied to Teacher’s College armed with letters of support from community members attesting to his civic duties.

As it turned out, he became my guide to the subaltern underground at Winstone Grammar.

*Rebecca*

Rebecca had started teaching art at Winstone Grammar in 1996, after returning from the United Kingdom, where she had also been teaching. She spoke of professional isolation in teaching art in conservative departments, of working with difficult students in under-
resourced settings, and of the affirming experience of working with students who had gone on to gain recognition in the wider art community.

Rebecca had grown up in a small, rural town in the Wairarapa. She noted that the physical landscape of the area had been influential in her artistic endeavours, but had felt the conservative nature of the town had been oppressive. As a teenager, art had been her escape. Likewise, moving to the city to pursue tertiary study had provided her with a sense of freedom.

**Joseph**

Joseph had been teaching health and physical education at Winstone Grammar for five years. He had been acting as the Assistant Head of Department for a year prior to my fieldwork. Joseph was born in Tonga, and his family moved to Auckland in the late 1980s, so his father could attend Bible College. Joseph was five years old at the time. He recalled the transition being difficult, owing to the challenges of learning a new language, and the social difficulties related to his childhood stutter, which he attributed to his language difficulties. Once he settled in, however, he found the Te Atatu community to be supportive and formative to his growing identity, especially throughout his teens. During this time, his parents worked long hours in numerous jobs to help support their family. His father worked different cleaning jobs in the city, while his mother worked in a pharmacy in their local community. Joseph spoke of their work ethic having rubbed off on to him, but also recalled that they were often unable to attend school events such as parent-teacher interviews due to their shift work. As a result, other parents in the community would look out for him and his siblings, and report back to his parents.

Joseph had continued to find school difficult, but had excelled in sporting endeavours, especially rugby league. It was not until his final year at school had suggested that he should think about tertiary studies that he considered the possibility of attending university.
**Laura**

Laura had been teaching social studies and classical studies at Winstone Grammar for eleven years. She had previously attended the school as a student during the 1980s and 90s. Laura gave birth to her daughter soon after leaving high school, and it was not long after this that she began to identify as gay. She spoke of her difficult time ‘coming out’ to her parents, and how she had concealed her identity from them for several years, despite being quite open about her sexuality in other aspects of her life. She described her time at university as “educationally awakening” but “socially toxic”, and it was not until she had completed her Master’s degree (in Greek language) and began to consider teaching as a career that she felt that she began to “settle down”.

Two years prior to my study, Laura had been appointed to the Assistant Head of Department for the Social Sciences Department, and had just commenced a new role as Associate House Dean as I was beginning my fieldwork.

**Peter**

Peter began working at Winstone Grammar School in 1990, although not initially in a teaching position. Prior to this he had been in the New Zealand Police Force, and served in the Winstone area. During this time he had been coaching rugby teams at Winstone Grammar, which he saw as serving his old school, as he had attended Winstone as a student in the 1970s. His first position at the school had been in the capacity of a social worker, focusing on the engagement of Maori and Pasifika students. Eventually he was asked to start teaching some classes, and was often given groups of students that were considered ‘difficult’ to teach.

Peter had continued to coach rugby at the school, and had had success with teams at different grades. At the time of my fieldwork, he was coaching an Under-15 team of boys. He helped to establish a charitable trust to help students and their families, which I refer to in chapter seven. Peter and his wife had five children of their own, and over the years they had also cared for numerous foster children. Some of these foster children had become
“part of the family”, while others had gone on to commit quite serious crimes. Nevertheless, Peter spoke of how he continually tried to support each of them, despite their wrongdoings.

**Margaret**

Margaret had been teaching at Winstone Grammar for six years. Prior to this she had taught at a school in West Auckland. She fondly recalled her time at that school. Margaret had had a variety of roles at Winstone, including teaching English studies, alternative education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), early childhood education, and social studies. She had come to teaching later in life, after her own children had grown up and become independent.

Compared to the other participants, Margaret was somewhat of an anomaly. She had a different way of seeing the world and expressing her views, which often came across as combative. Margaret was conscious of this fact, and attributed it to her upbringing, where her mother had taught her to believe that she was better than her peers. This put her offside with many of her colleagues and some of her students, but her experiences proved relevant to a particular concept I refer to in chapter seven: the moment when the hidden became public. In this sense, while I have introduced Margaret here, I only refer to her experiences in chapter seven.

**Analysis**

The collection of qualitative methods that I used generated a large amount of data. To adequately manage this data, I layered the analysis and interpretation of understandings, experiences, and accounts across three levels. The first level incorporated the authentic voice of the participants through an inductive thematic analysis. The second layer provided a multi-thematic interpretation by way of a theoretical or deductive thematic analysis. And finally, a narrative analysis provided a format to abstractly scrutinize and consider particular features of the study, while also providing a written voice to communicate the ideas that were generated by way of the analysis.
Thematic Analysis

The ways in which participants constructed their experiences were initially considered through thematic analysis, which is a “way of seeing... a process for encoding qualitative information... and... a way of making sense of seemingly unrelated material” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Braun and Clarke suggested that thematic analysis may “potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (2006, p. 78) that speaks through a range of moments from within participant experiences. The role of the researcher is to then organise and detail data that relate to specific ideas or themes; a theme meaning data that “represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

The flexibility that thematic analysis permits, allows a researcher to determine themes in a number of ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I took an active role, which rejected the stance that themes simply ‘emerge’ from the data. Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul’s (1997) criticism of the notion of ‘emerging themes’ denies that themes reside in the data, and that if we just look hard enough they will emerge. They instead suggested that if themes reside anywhere, they reside within us. They evolve from our thinking about our data and the links that we create between different data items and their extracts.

By involving myself directly in the first phase of transcription, I was able to hear and see what the data mean from the perspective of those telling the story. While I was directly involved in the research conversations as they took place, transcribing the recordings enabled a re-familiarization with the conversation. Riessman (1993) noted that this is a rich process, and allows one to hear the participant’s tone of voice, their inflections and pauses – features that do not readily present themselves in text. Due to the time commitment involved in this process, an external transcriber transcribed subsequent Research Conversations. Upon receiving the transcripts of these conversations, I read through the scripts several times while listening to the recordings, amending some errors and re-interpreting some sections that had been inaudible to the transcriber. While the process of transcribing the initial conversations myself was valuable, I do not believe that using an external transcriber detracted from my analysis. The cyclical process of listening and
reading, amending, and re-listening/reading compensated for this.

The First Layer: Inductive thematic analysis

The undistorted voices of the participants were prominent during the initial stage of the data analysis. This was achieved by making use of an inductive thematic analysis, which evolved from the raw data. This level of analysis was concerned with the surface meanings of the data (Frith & Gleeson, 2004), and at this stage I was not looking for anything beyond what I had recorded or a participant had said. My intention was to provide a rich thematic description of the entire data set, before applying further scrutiny throughout the second and third layers of analysis. This initial approach ensured that my own prior experiences and theoretical interests in the topic did not prevent the discovery of any new data or identification of unanticipated themes (Joffe & Yardley, 2004).

However, it is important to note that researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments. Recalling Ely et al’s (1997) position that themes reside within us, rather than waiting to be discovered, I could not expect to code my data from within an epistemological vacuum. For that reason, a deductive thematic analysis constituted the second layer of analysis.

The second layer: Deductive thematic analysis

A deductive thematic analysis affords a more detailed and nuanced account of particular aspects of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) believed that latent thematic analysis enables the researcher to go beyond the description of events, which are presented in the raw data, to theorize the significance of patterns and their broader meanings and implications in relation to previous literature. In particular, my analysis delved beneath the semantic surface of the data to examine the underlying ideas and assumptions – the latent ideologies – that shaped and informed the semantic content of the data.

The thematic categories that I had started to develop during the Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis (see p. 46) were used as organising headings in both the Inductive and Deductive stages of analysis, and additional thematic categories were added as they developed during
the analysis. I cyclically assigned text to each of these thematic categories, before printing, rereading, recoding and reassigning again. And I used these scripts to help illustrate the main themes.

Conducting the second layer of analysis by drawing on ideas derived from the theory also allowed me to validate existing beliefs regarding issues of social justice and neoliberalism in education, while at other times I was able to challenge and refute those same beliefs. Joffe and Yardley noted that this approach to analysis draws “from existing theoretical ideas that the researcher brings to the data” (2004, p. 57). However, it is important to reiterate that I was working with real people in this research, and that I needed to be mindful that real people do not necessarily conform to largely abstract themes. For that reason, coupled with my desire to evoke the complex and emotional experiences of the participants, a narrative representation was applied as the final layer of analysis.

*The third layer: Narrative representation*

The use of narrative has become more common in qualitative research as academic procedures have started to become more inline with traditions of storytelling (Denison & Markula, 2003). Their use has revealed that reflecting on experiences can result in multiple learnings (Ellis & Bochner, 1999). This work creates an emotional bond between the reader and the writer in order to express part of the inner life of the storyteller and their experiences in the field (Bruner, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Duncan, 1998; Sparkes, 1996, 1999). Narratives not only have the “potential to challenge disembodied ways of knowing” (Sparkes, 1999, p. 25) but they can also incite readers to critically reflect on the discourses that have helped shape their own sense of self and relations of power. The use of narrative inquiry can therefore aid our understanding of the multiple relationships that exist within contemporary society, and the manner in which they are constructed and reconstructed over time.

Following Sparkes (1996), I utilised narrative as a research tool to represent the rich dynamics of subjectivity. I represented the findings of the previous layers of analysis as realist tales, and used these stories as part of the member checks. These stories did not
pose as fact. Instead, they provided an account that was a conscious reconstruction of events, in a readable format. They stood as frameworks through which I viewed and made sense of the experiences that I encountered. The advantage of such an approach was that it allowed the participants to gain a sense of the context as I had experienced it whilst providing a framework for them to reflect on their own experiences in relation to my interpretations.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of data in ethnographic research depends on the level of trust that is developed between the researcher and the researched. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2011) believed that maintaining a prolonged engagement with the field of inquiry is one of the key factors in establishing the trustworthiness of the data. I remained in the field for a full year, which helped me to spend more time observing, and more importantly, more time with my participants developing mutual relationships based on trust and reciprocity, which ultimately contributed to the trustworthiness of the data. Moreover, I employed multiple modes of data generation, which enabled me to triangulate the data. This entailed testing for misinformation that could have been introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and confirming and improving the clarity and precision of the research findings (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Triangulation also assisted me “in correcting biases that occur when the ethnographer is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation” (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003, p. 48). For example, the data generated through the Classroom Interactions were further clarified and validated through the informal discussions and the Research Conversations, whereby my own understanding and interpretations were further deepened. Such a combination of data collection methods allowed me to supplement the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another and to study the phenomenon from multiple complementary angles. In this way my research achieved a higher degree of credibility.
Furthermore, throughout the analysis phase, I undertook member-checks by sharing the transcripts of the Research Conversation with participants to verify whether they reflected what they had said, and whether there was anything more they wished to add or modify.

I returned to the field towards the end of the final analysis phase, to meet with each of the participants. During these meetings I shared my narrative accounts and preliminary findings. This provided a further platform where we were able to mutually exchange our views regarding my representation of the school and their experiences as the phenomena under investigation. For example, one of my participants did not fully agree with my interpretation and representation of one of their teaching practices regarding children’s picture books. They used this opportunity to correct my interpretation, and subsequently I amended my accounts of this practice.

These exchanges helped to bring to the fore the polyvocality (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Brown, 2004), or multiple and at times contradictory voices, of my research participants, and hence provides authenticity to this research. Marcus suggested that,

> having the critique come from the subject rather than the author as critique can be seen as a move to shift the responsibility of criticism to those who are represented as social actors and in so doing to find a new and powerful authenticity for works of cultural criticism. (G. Marcus, 1986, p. 180)

Having discussed the research methodology, in the following chapter I provide an account of the socio-political and temporal space of the research field. I examine contemporary educational discourses that are prevalent at the school, and consider how these are manifested in the worlds of the research participants.
Where It All Took Place

One of the most extraordinary rewards of the craft of sociology is the possibility it affords to enter the life of others, to experience all human experiences.

—Pierre Bourdieu, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology

The socio-political space of Winstone Grammar School

Winstone begins halfway down Sovereign Street. Its northern boundary lies just past the Victoria shops, and arcs out to encompass Cannon Hill to the east and Kingston to the west before being curtailed by the two-million-year-old Manukau Harbour. While the bus-bound may be acquainted with the Sovereign Street passageway, many people know the area solely through arterial Victoria Avenue. Travelling from the city centre, they pass through the hourly-more-expensive city-fringe suburbs, up to the Akarana Rd lights and down into the immediately different Winstone.

The community spirit goes unseen if you simply drive along the roads. Instead, the suburb seems empty and there is an irrational feeling that no one is home behind the weathered fences and fading paint of the blank-faced houses. Elderly people amble along, usually alone and often in the distinctive attire of their homelands, but with no apparent destination. Somewhere distant there is a scrap of multi-ethnic shops, but there is no particular centre to the suburb. Just a down-scale shopping centre that passes for the heart of Winstone. But this one-dimensional view of Winstone misses the complexity and richness of a story that in many ways reflects New Zealand’s history.

Context is a complex construct. It can contain at least three dimensions of time (past, present and future), place (here and there) and personal and social concerns (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). In this chapter I provide some practical sense of the complex environment where my study took place in a number of dimensions. This practical sense serves as a variety of Schumpeter’s vision, defined as “a preanalytic cognitive act that supplies the raw material for analytic effort” (1996, p. 41). To understand the situation, I attend to what has
happened in the past and what is happening now. This reconstruction helps to contextualise the aspirations and actions of the teachers at Winstone Grammar.

To some extent then, I try to emulate what comes naturally to good journalists or foreign correspondents, especially when they enjoy sufficient space and editorial freedom. Correspondents rely on a practical knowledge fashioned in their experiences of reporting from unique regions for extended periods of time; knowledge they translate into images and metaphors to help readers at home understand the circumstances and happenings. Being a sociologist rather than a journalist, I rely on theoretical concepts drawn from contemporary social science and a professional knowledge of research methodologies.

I have concentrated on what I have called the school space: the aspects of the research context that pertain to the school where the research was conducted. But the school also sits within a community and a history of development. Therefore, the school space includes the social geography of education in the local context, and the manifestation of the political discourses that are actively shaping not just New Zealand schools, but public schools throughout the Western world. This distinct microcosm, imbued with its own regulations and conventions, is the subject of ongoing scrutiny throughout my dissertation. At this point however, I simply offer a framework to understand the context and its influence on happenings in the school.

What follows is a detailed representation of the context in its various dimensions. The contextual description accounts for the notion of transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) by providing sufficient information for other researchers and teachers to compare this context with their own. Such a process, along with verisimilitude (Denzin, 1997, 2009), allows for qualitative research to be judged on quality, utility and authenticity. But that is not the only reason for providing this representation. It simply makes the research report a more compelling tale by providing enough rich detail that the context – and later, the commitments and struggles of the teacher – become real and urgent for readers.
The School Space

The school context needs to be understood, at least in part, in terms of temporal and spatial conceptions of the neighbourhood in which it sits. Towards this end, it is important to investigate the character of the social geography of education in its local context. The historical development of schools in relation to their neighbourhoods comprise an important dimension of such research, in order to determine when, how and why specific understandings of education and inequalities have arisen in particular instances. For instance, Marsden’s (1987) study of spatial and ecological factors in relation to schooling in nineteenth century England revealed that the increasing disparities in educational opportunity arose from the dissolution of towns and cities into distinctive social areas. He noted that, “Residential segregation became a potent influence on attitudes towards education and on the nature of the provision of educational facilities” (Marsden, 1987, p. 50).

Time and space represent fundamental aspects of social life, the importance of which is evident in a number of diverse theoretical perspectives. For example, Harvey (1990) and Lefebvre (1991) have shown that social change often occurs and is frequently contested in the arenas of spatial and temporal organisation. Time and space are also at the core of Giddens (1984) social theory of structuration, where he argued that they are essential to understanding how social reality is constituted as a relationship between human agency and social structure. In this view of the duality of structure, the structural (objective) dimensions of space cannot be detached from the actions of people (agency).

Harvey (1990) also employed an analysis of time and space to connect the material aspects of culture with issues of political economy. For example, in The conditions of postmodernity, he equated the rise of modernity with a new organisation of time based on the work day and the time-clock. In this analysis, he demonstrated that to a great extent class struggle within the processes of capital accumulation coincided with the societal re-ordering of time.

While these analyses shed light on the importance of temporal and spatial organisation in periods of capitalism and societal level change, others have demonstrated the importance
of time and space in the organisation and practice of everyday life. For instance, in *The practice of everyday life*, de Certeau (1984) illustrated how spatial organisation is affected by the choices that people make. De Certeau asserted that dominant social patterns exist in the city, generated by the strategies of governments, corporations, and other institutional bodies who determine such things as the location of streets and footpaths, and produce documents like maps that describe the city as a unified whole. Yet individuals contribute to the spatial structure of the city by making choices to adhere to known routes or making their own shortcuts, in spite of the strategic grid layout of streets. Such choices challenge familiar social patterns by using the existing rules and products in a manner that is influenced, but never wholly determined, by those rules and products.

In *Outline of a theory of practice*, Bourdieu (1977) revealed how the various spheres of social life form distinct microcosms endowed with their own rules, regularities, and forms of authority. Bourdieu referred to these spheres as fields; a structured space of positions that imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it. But a field is also an arena of struggle. Within the field, agents and institutions seek to preserve or contest the existing distribution of capital. With regards to the unique regulation of Kabyle society along temporal and spatial lines, Bourdieu stated,

> The reason why submission to the collective rhythms is so rigorously demanded is that the temporal forms of the spatial structures structure not only the group’s representation of the world but the group itself, which orders itself in accordance with this representation. (1977, p. 163)

In what follows, I draw attention to the character of the catchment area of the school and how this has developed over time. However, I want to be clear that while I chronicle particular episodes of the region’s past, this is not an historical analysis. My intention is to provide a framework within which the interaction between the social structure, people’s attitudes and behaviours, and the educational system can be investigated.

**Winstone: A Sphere of Influence**

The Winstone of today was first populated in the baby-boom post-war years amid an acute housing shortage in Auckland (Firth, 1949). In 1948 the Winstone Borough Council was
formed, under the motto ‘People and Progress’. Griffen (1957) noted that ‘progressive people’ were sought for the suburb and opening up real estate opportunities for ultimate home owning ‘highly respected citizens’ was at the heart of the borough’s development. It is worth emphasising here that Auckland’s capital, and cultural, formation has been dramatically influenced by suburban real estate. Home ownership and development has offered many families an opportunity to gain asset-based financial security and this has been the primary form of savings and investment for many Aucklanders10 (Craig, 2004).

The time lag between the construction of housing and the arrival of community facilities had an important impact on the developing community. Winstone was established on the outskirts of the city, far from shops, halls and other services. Tenants had to draw on their own resources to get basic community amenities (Reidy, 2007). Under the reign of Winstone’s longest serving mayor (1953-1974), the Winstone Borough Council actively put off paying for social amenities until ‘other priorities’ were sorted (Reidy, 2007). People put up their own fences and garages, poured concrete driveways and then banded together to build churches. The churches became the focal point of the community, with the mayor stating that,

churches are the heart of the community. If the borough council becomes the heart we are travelling backwards. We must do nothing to stand in the way of the establishment of churches in our borough. (Auckland Star, 1962)

By 1988 the borough had 26 churches for its 35,000 residents, the highest number of churches per head of population in New Zealand. The Christian vision of suburban life was well established and Winstone became fixed in the minds of Aucklanders as the ‘bible belt’ (Reidy, 2007).

Much of Winstone, however, had a quite different genesis, albeit one that also linked “a vision of homogeneous family life to three-bedroom housing development” (Craig, 2004, p. 170). Beginning in 1938, Winstone was the prime Auckland site for state housing estates that continued well into the 1950s. A decline in construction during the depression had

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10 Notwithstanding rising price barriers to market entry, citizens of Auckland and New Zealand had some of the highest rates of home ownership in the world for many years. The eventual post-war housing boom raised home ownership rates in New Zealand to a world high of 73.7 % in 1986 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012).
created a housing shortage in Auckland and this was only exacerbated during World War II (Firth, 1949). In the immediate post-war period of Labour Government to 1949, some very large state housing subdivisions were created. Thousands of state houses rose from the damp valleys on either side of Sovereign Street, like the carpets of mushrooms and strawberries they replaced. Built at the end of the tram lines on relatively cheap land, Winstone’s early state houses were nonetheless built to a standard which deliberately set them apart from conventional mass produced ‘worker’s dwellings’ (Firth, 1949). In line with the high-principled socialism of the First Labour Government (1935-1949), the houses were built of quality materials on extensive sections and with aspirations to variations in design, which is not always apparent looking at them today. The preference was for stand-alone houses on fully serviced sections, and many houses and most subdivisions were built and developed by the ministry itself. These developments were initially quite successful, providing quality and avoiding stigma (Craig, 2004). Their proximity to one another and habitation by young families created a sense of unity and community, and they gave working-class people a standard of secure housing that many of Winstone’s original state housing tenants enjoyed into old age (Reidy, 2007).

Subsequent developments, however, undermined this socialist utopia, especially in later, more peripheral, mass state housing developments. Following the conviction that private home ownership provided greater personal freedom than state welfare, the National government introduced legislation in 1950 that encouraged state tenants to purchase their homes. The government offered purchasers very generous terms: a 5 percent deposit, a 3 percent mortgage rate, with a maximum purchase period of 40 years (Schrader, 2005).

The construction and sale of state homes has seen significant fluctuations since the 1950s, depending on which of the major political parties has been in power. In general, Labour governments have tried to conserve state-housing stocks for those in need, while National governments have encouraged tenants to purchase their homes (Schrader, 2005). The results on the ground in Winstone were evident by the mid-1960s. Expanses of cheaper housing that had been constructed subsequent to the initial developments verged on the edge of ghettoisation, while around them, often in sharp contrast, the property developer’s
and the Borough Council’s vision of “a quarter-acre nirvana suburb of good home owning families” was well advanced (Craig, 2004, p. 172).

In the post-war era throughout New Zealand, particularly in the 1950s, a number of new secondary schools were developed in response to the rapidly growing population, continued suburbanisation, and the new factor of secondary education for all (Beeby, 1956). The official policy of the Education Department in Wellington was that all post-primary schools should become ‘multi-lateral’ and equal to each other in status and function, yet the assumptions and criteria established in the earlier part of the century remained potent (McCulloch, 1992)

**The Grammar School Tradition**

Under the Secondary Schools Act of 1903, state secondary education was limited to a relatively small proportion of the population, on the basis of academic selection. The structures and values of Auckland society in this time showed a strong tendency to imitate British, particularly English, antecedents and traditions (McCulloch, 1988). In transmitting such values and practices educational institutions and processes, and schools in particular, were central to the colonisation of New Zealand. In Auckland, secondary education developed in accordance to the model established by Auckland Grammar School, founded in 1869, and which sought to imitate the traits and ideals of ‘the great schools’ of England. They also interpreted and adapted these ideals in such a way “as to cultivate a distinctive ‘grammar school tradition’ in Auckland itself” (McCulloch, 1988, p. 257).

The Auckland Grammar School Board acted on behalf of the schools’ interests in dialogue with the Department of Education, and in negotiations with other local schools, to ensure that grammar school education remained distinctive (McCulloch, 1988). The academic curriculum of the grammar school was held as providing a route to university and middle-class professions. While alternative educational institutions were created to provide schooling that was relevant to the specific purposes of industry and trade, such as technical colleges, they were generally regarded as educationally and socially inferior.
The emergence of new secondary schools that followed the grammar school tradition reflected a growth in the number of potential secondary school pupils as urban Auckland became increasingly suburbanised. But they were soon found to be an inadequate response to these trends as they became increasingly crowded. Furthermore, they were attracting pupils from new suburbs that were located a significant distance from the schools themselves and this led to increasing problems in terms of daily travel and transport (Auckland Grammar School Board, 1921, 1924). In response, several conditions pertaining to the opening of new grammar schools developed throughout the 1920s. The conditions included criteria relating to population growth in particular areas and the cheaper cost of obtaining land in undeveloped areas. However, the likely character of the pupil intake was also a major consideration (McCulloch, 1992). The acquisition of a grammar school enhanced the social standing of a neighbourhood or suburb.

Representative groups from newly developed areas were often “anxious to have a grammar school established locally in order to foster a ‘respectable’ image for the locality” (McCulloch, 1988, p. 264). At the same time, working-class residential areas were seen as less suitable for secondary education than middle-class residential areas. McCulloch (1992) offered the example of discussions concerning the establishment of a grammar school site in the south-eastern suburbs in the late 1920s. While the Minister of Education (R. A. Wright) favoured a location in the developing area of Otahuhu, where new railway workshops would greatly increase the population in that district, the Grammar School Board regarded Ellerslie as being more preferable (Auckland Grammar School Board, 1927). While the Board’s reasons for this preference are not expressly clear, the Director of Education (T. B. Strong) supported their position, and was less restrained in his logic. He was of strong opinion “that a site should be selected in Otahuhu for a secondary school with an industrial bias, Otahuhu being almost entirely an industrial centre” (Director of Education, 1928a). Thus, the usually unspoken relationship between the social character of an area and the kind of education that it seeks to develop was made explicit: a working-class suburb should proffer education that is more suited for industry than the professions. In contrast, the site at Ellerslie was seen to be “eminently suitable both in nature and locality for secondary
school purposes” (Director of Education, 1928a). The Council of Education similarly adopted this stance on the matter, stating:

In Auckland the position is such that it is expected that a secondary school will be required in the Ellerslie district and also another secondary school somewhere on the heights overlooking St Heliers Bay, at no very distant date. Neither of these schools, when established, should probably serve the district about Otahuhu, which will probably be definitely industrial in character. For this reason a technical high school at Otahuhu, which could immediately take over some 200 pupils now attending the Auckland Technical School, would probably best meet the needs of the district, especially if a strong Agricultural course were developed. It appears probable that the provision of a reasonable area of ground for such a course could be made without undue cost not far from the Otahuhu Railway Station. (Council of Education, 1928)

Thus, as McCulloch (1992) noted, the schools at both Ellerslie\(^{11}\) and Otahuhu were to be allotted not only a railway station but also a station in life.

Negotiating for a new secondary school involved constructing a suitable local clientele, both in terms of numbers and in its social characteristics. While such calculations may have been seen to be pragmatic at the time, the result was that they locked schools into the existing structures and relationships of their local geography. The establishment and legitimation of these social distinctions reinforced the assumption that academic pupils were to be found in middle-class residential areas while working-class pupils, under the ideology of the grammar schools, were consigned to ‘inferior’ and ‘technical’ courses.

So when a new secondary school was planned for Winstone in the early 1950s, there was considerable pressure from the local citizens that it should be called a ‘grammar school’ rather than the more general titles of ‘post-primary school’ or ‘high school’. Moreover, the Auckland Grammar School Board regarded the title ‘post-primary school’ as meaningless, adding that by awarding the name of grammar school, “there would also be less difficulty in persuading parents to send their children to [Winstone], as they would be inclined to view with suspicion a name which conveys no meaning” (Auckland Grammar School Board, 1928b, 1929).

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\(^{11}\) The idea of an ‘Ellerslie Grammar School’ was shelved because of a general review of educational administration and then effectively abandoned because of the effects of the economic depression in the 1930s (Director of Education, 1928b, 1929).
The campaign was successful, and Winstone Grammar School opened in 1953\textsuperscript{12}. This new grammar school continued with the established dictate of seeking pupils from predominantly middle-class areas, as a way of distinguishing the area from other growing suburbs and confirming the upward social mobility and respectability of the area as a whole (McCulloch, 1992). The fast growing community of Winstone, according to the school’s first head, Victor C. Butler, was largely made up of “middle-bracket younger working folk with little or no monetary reserve behind them, the type of community into which the school can well reach out with mutual benefit” (Butler, 1954). The acquisition of a grammar school for Winstone therefore, was an investment intended to validate and reinforce the middle-class aspirations of the neighbourhood.

The Auckland Grammar Schools Board administered the new school in 1953 and 1954. In 1955 the independent Winstone Grammar School Board was established (Adams, 1978), and in a show of independence adopted a new badge, new colours and a new motto. The school was intended to serve the whole community, “boys and girls, the academic and the non-academic, the brightest and the slow” (Adams, 1978, p. 7). Nevertheless resentment and opposition were wide spread. Conservative factions berated educationalists for adopting a policy of egalitarianism, which they equated with mediocrity. They evoked ‘the grammar school tradition’ to resist the encroachment of progressive education that threatened to disturb the cultural continuity, and the criteria of merit and distinction that the grammar schools embodied (McCulloch, 1988). Their appeals conjured images of the established patterns of traditional and reputable boys’ schools taking pride in athletic and scholastic prowess, and like-minded girls’ schools similarly pursuing the highest standards in some sort of isolation, “free of the distractions of the opposite sex” (Adams, 1978, p. 7). However, no mention was made of the tendency to exclude Maori pupils (McCulloch, 1988), or the view that girls were not equipped for a grammar school education (Whitaker, 1873).

\textsuperscript{12} The grammar school initially occupied the buildings of the primary and intermediate schools until the construction of the school was completed. The grammar school was officially opened in November 1954. It was not until 1955 that the secondary school buildings were fully occupied, though they had come into partial use during 1954.
The assumptions of the pre-war grammar schools triumphed in the new context of the 1950s, as schools endeavoured to construct a student body of the type that would allow them to compete academically with other schools. Supposedly equal in approach, the notion of ‘the neighbourhood school’ encouraged inequalities at the same time as it appeared to foster a basic equality in the functioning of schools. The heads of the grammar schools continued to discriminate against the working-class by drawing a correlation between the nature of the locality and that of the schools, with one head stating,

The schools serving only a local area must take its character from that area. Schools in certain areas for example can muster only one or two in the sixth form because the neighbourhood generally does not believe in education beyond School Certificate. Some local districts require a predominantly technical bias to their education while others are more academic or are balanced between the two. (Auckland Girls Grammar School, 1960)

At the same time, the Auckland Regional Office of the Education Department was communicating very similar opinions:

Evidently each principal is naturally anxious to get a fair sample of bright pupils as well as dull ones and as far as possible to retain all the pupils in his area. Here this interest comes into conflict with the grammar schools, who have always regarded it as their privilege to cater for the more intelligent section of the population. (Education Department Auckland Regional Office, 1961)

The forms of injustice evident in the grammar schools up to this point had been predominantly class based. However, the suspicion of working class areas assumed a new racial dimension during the 1960s. The increasing industrialisation of Auckland, coupled with pro-immigration policies had lead to high rates of urban migration among Maori communities, and migration to New Zealand (especially Auckland) of Pasifika people. In 1965, the Auckland Grammar Schools Board (1965) stated that there was now a “sizeable group of pupils from the Central area, usually children of non-European birth” who had a “very poor standard in English.” They argued that “at present they are in no position to cope with ordinary secondary school work, and the Board feels that there is an obligation on the educational authorities to provide schooling for this group” (Auckland Grammar School Board, 1965). The schools became increasingly concerned with safeguarding their established character, implying a strong correlation between the growing population of Maori and Pasifika students and the decline in academic traditions.
By the 1980s, some of the grammar schools had begun to change their attitudes. The demands of multi-lateral, neighbourhood schooling had “melted the bonds uniting the grammar schools sufficiently to weaken the distinctive tradition and its hitherto formidable authority” (McCulloch, 1988, p. 266). While Auckland Grammar continued to uphold its traditions, others, particularly Mt Roskill, Auckland Girls, and Takapuna, came to embrace the opportunities offered by the notion of neighbourhood schooling, emphasising their responsibility to all students in their community. This involved constructing the community in a different way, asserting the ‘right’ of every student to attend the school closest to home instead of giving preferential treatment to students from further afield because of their presumed superior qualities (Auckland Girls Grammar School, 1987; McCulloch, 1992).

When Auckland Grammar School made the decision to continue along its own path in 1986, the Auckland Grammar School Board broke up.

The examples that I have drawn on here shed light on the beliefs that have often been held in the past; beliefs which tended to become self-fulfilling prophecies, particularly with respect to Auckland’s secondary schools and their local communities. The influence of these attitudes has certainly not disappeared. With schools themselves continuing to operate on assumptions of distinction and reputation, it is hardly surprising that parents made similar calculations. The deeply ingrained association between ‘academic’ schools and middle-class locations is vividly reflected in present day real estate trends.

Real Estate Politics and the Social Construction of School Quality

In part the preference for such schools reflects “the ideological assumption of a relationship between high social status and quality, but it also stems from the significance of middle class schooling as a means of social mobility and reproduction” (Thrupp, 2007, p. 80). Thrupp demonstrated how schools that largely consist of middle class students limit access to students of lower socio-economic standing, which assists parents wanting to give their children an advantage. While the incoming Labour government of 1999 reintroduced zoning as a response to expressed concerns of inequality between ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ schools, this policy failed to provide the same protection to lower SES schools as the 1989 policies. In
1989 Labour required over-subscribed schools to be allocated home zones, with out-of-zone enrolments considered through balloting. National dropped these policies in 1991 as it moved to increase market competition between schools. The significance of the reintroduced zoning in 1999 was that schools effectively created their own zones under the working definition that they be ‘reasonably convenient’ for its students. Pearce and Gordon (2006) show that in the absence of government control many schools draw their boundaries in convoluted ways to “by-pass more deprived but closer areas in favour of further but wealthier suburbs” (2006, p. 50). Moreover, Pearce and Gordon pointed out that zones now often overlap, making them less “the tidy product of the old system of regional planning… [and] far more reminiscent of the free market where businesses compete for customers and little or no cooperation exists” (Pearce & Gordon, 2006, p. 50)

So, while zoning may be in place there is flexibility, which allows “middle class schools and families to seek each other out and cut out areas of poorer housing” (Thrupp, 2007, p. 260). Low SES schools frequently lose students to more popular high SES schools as parents seek means to advantage their children’s future prospects relative to others. Likewise, poor families sometimes find themselves cut out of a school’s zone altogether. Living in-zone is the only guaranteed way for children to be enrolled in a popular school. As a result, pockets of low cost housing in the zones of popular schools have increased dramatically in price. Where these would have previously been suitable for poorer families, they are now unaffordable. In Auckland’s ‘Grammar zone’, which encompasses Auckland Grammar and Epsom Girls Grammar, houses on different sides of the same street can have a $100, 000 price difference depending on whether they are in-zone or not (Richardson, 2006). The intense pressure on places at Auckland Grammar has also seen it at the centre of debate on policing school zones. In 2006, 51 students had their enrolments cancelled after the school’s full-time enrolments registrar deemed them to be “zone cheats” (Trevett, 2006b). The families of these students had moved out of the school zone while their children were still attending the school. Similar incidents were reported in 2010 (Rushworth, 2010). A number of other high SES schools in Auckland rigorously police their enrolments by carrying out dawn-raids to flush out “zone cheats”, checking if families are actually living at the
addresses on their enrolment documents (Woulfe, 2006). In taking such overzealous actions, schools maintain a socially privileged intake by rigorously excluding those who cannot afford to live in-zone.

What is clear, according to Thrupp (2007, p. 81), is that “given half a chance, the middle classes will typically cluster together residentially, group their children together in predominantly middle class schools and give them a form of advantaged education by excluding the poor”.

In Winstone, real estate politics play a further role in disadvantaging the poor. Voters consistently return Labour Party candidates in national elections, while opting for conservative Communities and Residents (CR, formerly Citizens and Ratepayers) candidates in local body elections. This split mirrors the political division of labour (Durkheim, 1997): while many Winstone families depend on central government for social policy redistribution, locally the interests of home-owning citizens are in keeping rates low. With real estate politics controlling local government, the interests of the home-owning class are consistently upheld while the needs of the less wealthy are forgotten. Under the CR regime this has meant an increase in the ‘standard charges’ portion of the rates bill and reducing the rateable value calculated parts (Craig, 2004), a sleight of hand which shifts the costs of local government from the rich to the poor. And while “one kind of moral, utilitarian, pro-private-capital social engineering is clearly allowed by this kind of real estate politics” (Craig, 2004, p. 176), others are virtually precluded, with little money spent on social services or subsidised pensioner housing.

Another concern linking social geography, real estate politics and educational issues is the recurring themes of magazines like Metro, which play on common fears and social aspirations around school choice. The pressure for choice and the social construction of school quality has been fuelled by the publication of unofficial league tables of examination and assessment results. Following league tables that appear in sport pages and emulating the tables of UK and US high schools, Metro takes advantage of the requirement that the

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13 The Ministry of Education upheld the appeals of 20 students whose enrolments were annulled by Auckland Grammar, directing the school to reenrol them (Trevett, 2006a).
national qualifications authority (NZQA) publish students’ results, by ranking all schools in order of results obtained. In recent years these tables have expanded to become special editions, feature-articles and guides to “the best schools in Auckland, and the worst” (Metro (NZ), 2010, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Wilson & McGregor, 2010, 2011). Parents eagerly study these tables, which on raw school results tend to show the social class area of the school above all else. Also of interest in the 2011 edition of Metro’s “Best schools in Auckland” is an article about the turn-around of a “fractured, failing school” (Chisholm, 2011), with the pull quote, “After years of declining rolls and ‘white flight’, white kids are returning to Selwyn” (Chisholm, 2011, p. 60). The result is that parents are being encouraged to shop around for schools. The Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (ERO) are just as complicit in constructing this trend, by publishing reports for parents about “how to choose a good school” (Education Review Office, 2006, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2009).

The coupling of markets with the demand for and publication of performance indicators has meant that schools are increasingly seeking ways to attract ‘motivated’ parents with ‘able’ children. In this way, schools are able to enhance their relative position in local systems of competition (Apple, 2004a). This represents a crucial shift in emphasis, which Apple rendered as a shift from student needs to student performance, and “from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school” (2004a, p. 20).

These examples raise interesting concerns about how social justice discourse and the respect for diversity rub up against the lived experiences of students and teachers; concerns that are especially evident when considering the characteristics of today’s Winstone.

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14 In 2011, Metro used University Entrance as its measure of choice in an attempt to avoid privileging “upper-decile schools”, by promising “each school is ranked relative to the achievement of its peers” (Wilson & McGregor, 2011, p. 48). Wilson went on to suggest that “upper-decile schools are more likely to have a home background that brings educational advantage: more books in the house; children more likely to be read to, and to take part in vocabulary-building conversation on a daily basis, and be more exposed to the stimulation that can come with economic opportunity; parents with more time to devote to children or more money to pay others to do it... and most of all, a home life where educational achievement is actively supported” (Wilson & McGregor, 2011, p. 48). Yet there was no acknowledgement of the vast array of literature that suggests the school system and other sociological factors are also complicit in this privileging of students from high SES backgrounds.
The Changing Face of Winstone – A Collision of Fits and Misfits

While some of the stigma of 1960s suburbia is still attached to Winstone, there has been a substantial change in the demographics of the community. Many of the suburbs’ original settlers are still around, but in recent times Winstone is more recognised for its immigrant population. With its vicinity to the Mangere Refugee Centre, Winstone has become home to the largest refugee community of anywhere in the country (McCormack, Davies, Nakhid, & Shirley, 2003). This phenomenon has been perversely linked to the (Christian) community spirit of the place, with some believing that the government is simply abandoning refugees in a place where it knows a ‘caring community’ will get them on their feet for free (Field notes, June 2011).

Refugees experience some of the worst health outcomes in New Zealand society (Lawrence & Kearns, 2005). This is not only because of pre-existing physical and mental health issues and the trauma associated with being a refugee, but also due to the resettlement process itself (Kizito, 2001). In a report to the New Zealand Immigration Service, Zwart (2000) stated that while New Zealand ranks first in relation to the number of refugees accepted per capita, it ranks last in terms of refugee support and services when compared to the nine other countries which also have an annual quota for UN mandated refugees (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA).

The number of migrants is also rapidly increasing, particularly among Asian and Indian communities. Winstone and its adjacent suburbs have the highest concentration of Hindi and Gujarati speakers in New Zealand (Holt, 1999). Further diversity is evident in the fact that, even within a group such as the Gujaratis there are some who were born in India while others originate from Fiji. Rather than finding themselves in Winstone by circumstance, they seek out the community, particularly owing to its reputation for quality schools. As such, Winstone’s image as a bible belt has begun to change, and its religious affiliations now differ dramatically from the national averages. For instance, its population is 6.7% Muslim and 11.9% Hindu, while the national average for these religions are only 1.0 and 1.7% respectively ("[Winstone]: Electorate profile," 2009).
Migrants are also being recognised for their services to their communities. For instance, Winstone resident Mohammed Daud Azimullah was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to the Muslim community (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006). Many migrants volunteer as teacher aides in schools, on school boards of trustees, at the Citizens Advice Bureau, and at local Plunket centres. At the Winstone Community Centre and the Regional Migrant Service women’s groups meet to exchange ideas and celebrate each other’s craft skills (Reidy, 2007; Field notes, June, 2011). The annual International Cultural Festival, an event hosting upwards of 50,000 visitors over the course of the day, has moved to the local War Memorial Park. A midweek fleamarket provides an opportunity to socialise and sell crafts and food dishes from migrants’ homelands. Migrants now contest for seats on the local board of the city council, as well as national body parliamentary seats. They have brought skills and enthusiasm, which add value to the country’s economic and social base (Reidy, 2007), but integrated settlement strategies have lagged behind everyday reality.

The dreams and aspirations of adult refugees are often slow to realise in Winstone as they grapple with language barriers, low incomes, and the absence of family support for such considerations as free childcare. There have been periods when xenophobic and racist responses have been directed against refugees and migrants, especially those from Asia but also against other groups (Chile, 2002; Ip & Friesen, 2001). But employment remains the biggest hurdle (Strategic Social Policy Group, 2008). While many migrants struggle to find work that matches their qualifications (Pio, 2010), refugees have a hard time finding any employment at all. For example, sources confirm that 80% of adult refugees depend on financial assistance five years after their arrival, despite presenting a desire to work (Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy, 2007; Dunstan, Dibbley, & Shorland, 2004; Ministry of Social Development, 2005; Strategic Social Policy Group, 2008). Many skilled and willing workers are left to stack shelves in one of Winstone’s two supermarkets. When a new supermarket opened in Winstone in 2010 it created 150 new jobs, yet there was a queue of 2700 people stretching through the car park waiting to apply (Davies, 2010). In this intersection of free markets, flea markets and supermarkets we can see that Winstone
consists of a diversity of socio-economic conditions. While the remnants of Winstone’s original population enjoy relative comfort, there are areas of Winston that have “the highest New Zealand Index of Deprivation score in Auckland City: 9.5-10” (Salmond & Crampton, 2002; Salmond, Crampton, & Atkinson, 2007)\(^\text{15}\).

The demographic changes that are taking place in Winstone are not pleasing everyone. Black chadors and other hijab mix with gossamer fabrics of every colour in the shopping centres, symbolising a change in cultures, clothes, lifestyles, religions and food that many early residents are uncomfortable with (Field notes, July, August, October, 2012). Even the sports fields no longer mirror the yesteryears, with strong Nigerian footballers taking on their Somali and Ethiopian neighbours while young Pasifika players occupy the rugby fields.

The big houses that perch above the harbour are still primarily owned by the Christian evangelicals who have lived in Winstone since the 1970s and earlier, but the populations of other areas in Winstone are now two thirds Pasifika and Asian ("[Winstone]: Electorate profile," 2009). While many locals point to the influx of refugees and migrants in recent times as causing the largest influence on community change in Winstone (Field notes, October 2012), a report suggests that economic deprivation rather than ethnic diversity is having the biggest influence (Salmond & Crampton, 2002). However, indignation and resistance run strong in certain cliques of the community.

In 2010, when it was suggested that the name of the Winstone shops be changed to Puketapapa – the Maori name for Winstone, meaning ‘flat-topped hill’ (Hayward, 2011) – there was outrage within the community. In reporting the incident, Thompson (2010) quoted one resident as saying, “It’s come out of the blue. We as [Winstone] residents had no idea that it was in the wind. Puketapapa is a mouthful; I have to take my teeth out to say it!”

\(^{15}\) NZDep is a measure of the level of socioeconomic deprivation in small geographic areas of New Zealand (meshblocks). The index ranges from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating that people are living in the least deprived 10 percent (decile) of New Zealand and a score of 10 indicating that people are living in the most deprived 10 percent of New Zealand.
In an earlier incident, the banning of yoga classes from the community education programme at Winstone Grammar School was brought to the attention of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission ("News in Brief," 1994). Opponents claimed that Hinduism was being taught in what should have been secular classrooms. The teacher of the class believed the ban was brought on by discrimination from the same fundamentalists who insisted that school board meetings should begin with a Christian prayer (Rae, 1994).

Then again, east meets west in many favourable ways in Winstone. It is the home of the city’s primary Islamic mosque in Stoddard Road (on the site of a former Pacific Islands church), as well as the city’s best Eastern spice shops, sari shops, and ethnic restaurants. In 2005, eleven years after the yoga incident, the Human Rights Commission cited Winstone Grammar School as an example of how New Zealand schools have successfully managed increased diversity among their students (Human Rights Commission, 2005). Following a complaint to the Human Rights Commission, the school changed their uniform policy to allow both girls and boys to wear long trousers in conforming to Islamic dress. The commission noted that “Students are permitted a dispensation from the school’s uniform policy for religious or medical reasons. The wearing of headscarves is a very common practice and Muslim boys are allowed to have beards on application from their parents to the principal. Students are also allowed to wear long pants for religious reasons in order to play sport” (Human Rights Commission, 2005, pp. 3-4).

The Community Centre is perhaps the epitome of this meeting of cultures. Architect Eqo Leung took an analogy of understanding culture and how, when different cultures meet, it becomes a collision of fits and misfits (New Zealand Institute of Architects Incorporated, 2011). This collision of forms is expressed on the road-front of the building, whereas on the park-side there is a calmer, more homogenous feel.

**A Microcosm of Continuing Experiments**

From grants for returned servicemen, state housing, infill housing and immigration, Winstone continues to be a microcosm of social policy experiments. Energy is channelled

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16 Yoga classes have since been reinstated to the community education programme
through ugly and unwanted power-pylons and underground gas pipelines through the
suburb, and more recently the motorway network has been extended within its boundaries.
The government has essentially designated [Winstone] as an artery for the demands of an
ever-growing city. In fact, [Winstone] has been described, somewhat facetiously, as the
gateway to the world, “you see, you have to drive through it to get to the airport” (Tze Ming
Mok, 2004).

While long-planned, the extension of State Highway 20 is digging up the bones of the local
community (Reidy, 2007), shifting sports clubs and industries, and cutting into the base of
Puketapapa. The result is that Winstone remains in transition, and in more ways than one.
The self-deprecating humour of the young people of the suburb has seen Winstone
described as a dormitory suburb, a claim that accuses the area of having gone permanently
to sleep. What started as a place for labourers to get away to, has gradually become a place
to move away from. Essayist and online blogger Tze Ming Mok, who was born and raised in
Winstone, explained why people from Winstone once thought their suburb would never be
cool,

[Winstone] is definitely one of the most interesting, 21st century ethno-cultural melting pots
in the country. But there’s nothing much to do in [Winstone] except visit your parents. I
mean, that young 1.5er Korean guy who works for his folks at [Winstone] fisheries is pretty
hot, and there’s the Halal butcher if, if you need, like, meat – oh that café next to the Post
Office is secretly Malaysian, and there’s – um, United Video… (Tze Ming Mok, 2006)

She went on to say that something is changing in Winstone,

The people who grew up in those nothing places with nothing reputations have become
adults and learnt the ways of the outside world. In interpreting that world, we’ve come to
take pride in the places that we left. Maybe it’s because they defined our self-deprecating
humour, or because the people we left behind are so definitely stuck there that they’ll
always be there for us when we need to go back, or because the boredom and limitations of
living there made us exercise our imaginations and ambitions, and also perhaps because the
modesty of a [Winstone] mise-en-scene is the perfect humanist-scale backdrop for
evaluating your life in context, should you wish to do so… We never thought it would
happen, but it does appear that we do now in fact matter – that those demographics left to
ferment and foment down in the average lower-middling state-housey suburbs, have
actually turned out to be the centre of something… Increasingly, we, the dirt-coloured
children of migrants and white trash from [Winstone]… are the voice of Mainstream New
Zealand. (Tze Ming Mok, 2006)
The homogenous values once cherished by the residents of Winstone are rapidly being replaced by a lively ethnic diversity that is fast becoming the face of New Zealand. Winstone is a patchwork whose many-coloured tapestry goes on being stitched.

The Socio-Political Context

It is clear that the construction of the school community has been political in its character. Wider political, economic and social circumstances are reflected in the development of the school, just as they are in legislation and discourses that actively shape schools. They outline what education is and constrain what schooling can be.

In this sense, the ideas of what makes a good teacher have also shifted historically. Several scholars have highlighted the power relationship between the state and teachers by identifying the themes of ideology, social and cultural reproduction, and social control in education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, 1986; Grace, 1978; Harker, 1990; Pratte, 1977; Sharp & Green, 1975). Grace (1978) for example, described how the job of teaching was formalised and constructed in Victorian England to uphold and reflect the status quo and deflect potential radicalism into social responsibility. In order to control working class teachers, teachers were sold the idea that teaching was a vocation, a mission. To help them accept this unconditionally, teachers were given a sense of responsibility and professionalism; they were assigned an intermediate social position,

    to which would be attached aspirations and expectations both individually and collectively for increased respectability. These expectations might, of course, be very delayed in their realisations, but while they existed they would provide a powerful means of attachment to the existing order. (Grace, 1978, pp. 13-14)

This was far more preferable than either opposition to that order, or equality with it. The purpose of this socially assigned role was to control the politicisation of teachers and their potential to reform, to question, to take people beyond their social limits. Rather than being the radicals they had the potential to be, they were the agents of middle class social and cultural transmission and of symbolic control.

When colonial governments in New Zealand created a public-school system, as in Australia and other British colonies, pupil-teacher schemes and training schools focused on the
narrow set of pedagogical skills that were needed to maintain a tightly controlled school curriculum. But they also contained a strong moral agenda emphasising respectability and obedience (Cumming & Cumming, 1978; Gordon, 1992; Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Jones, Marshall, Morris-Matthews, Smith, & Smith, 1995; Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993; Sullivan, 1998).

A missionary ideology (Sullivan, 1998) meant that the idea of the teacher aligned with a Christian and humanitarian concern for amelioration and rescue, while teachers themselves were filled with notions of vocation and humility and relative unconcern for political, economic, and social status questions. As Arnold (1987) observed, there was also a strong tendency to depict women teachers in terms of family roles. The view of a good female teacher was liable to be blurred with the idea of a good mother, while for men an ideology of the academic professional was promoted.

The shared experience of grief and trauma resulting from World War I also served to shape the role of education and teaching in New Zealand, with historian James Belich stating,

> Sending 100, 000 men through the mincer of the Western Front, with no control of how they were minced, was arguably not the only way of helping Britain win World War One. (Belich, 2001)

The role that education played in ensuring New Zealanders supported the war efforts was significant. From 1916 calls were made to set aside political and class differences in the interests of unity, and education was seen as a crucial tool to help this happen. For instance, The School Journal stressed the need for sacrifice, with material selected to develop “an appreciation of the higher literature, both in prose and verse, an admiration of truth and goodness in daily life, and a high conception of patriotism and national service” (Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1920, p. 9). Furthermore, in 1917 many schools introduced weekly flag-saluting ceremonies, which were made compulsory in 1921; primary schools placed an increase on patriotism; school committees, aided by government subsidies, supported the construction of war memorials; and teachers were made to swear an oath of loyalty.
In the period between wars, a technical model of teaching was encouraged by the spread of intelligence and achievement testing (Beeby, 1986a, 1986b; Renwick, 1986). This was linked with an ideology of educational hierarchy, of natural differences in intelligence or educability, which had socially conservative overtones. As late as 1933, at the height of the Depression, a committee of the Wellington Chamber of Commerce produced a report opposing the raising of the school leaving age to 15, in which they stated,

The children of unenlightened parents would not gain benefit from a longer period at school and it is a matter for serious consideration whether, having passed the fourth standard, children of but moderate mental development should not be definitely prepared for the type of work for which their mental capacity and natural ability make them best suited. It might be that further education along general lines would not fit them for the modest role nature intended them to play in life... It is a matter for consideration whether the view should not be placed before boys that the unskilled labourer is not entitled under natural law or under the principles of justice to the luxuries of life, but to little more than the basic necessities. (Wellington Chamber of Commerce, 1933)

In the period immediately preceding the second world war, Teachers’ Colleges and the Minister of Education introduced ideas of New Education and the American psychology of learning in New Zealand teacher training. In July 1937, schools were closed for a week with the Minister of Education encouraging all teachers to attend a series of conferences consisting of a cohort of prominent international educators. Helen May (1992) noted that the New Education Fellowship (NEF) conference was a watershed in New Zealand educational history, as it not only gave official sanction to innovative and progressive ideas in education, but also brought together academics, government administrators and teachers in creating a more unified view of child-centred educational pedagogy and practice that was to be the hallmark of education post World War II. But the strong emphasis on social conformity and biological determinism was tenacious (Beeby, 1986b).

By the end of the Depression, Beeby (1986b) noted, the country as a whole felt differently and was experiencing a “healthy sense of guilt at what the Depression had done to the poor”, and especially to the young. For the first time, many people began to suspect an economic and social system that made this possible. The first Labour Government came to power in 1935, and one of Peter Fraser’s first acts as Minister of Education was to abolish the Proficiency examination, “the last official barrier to free secondary education for all”
(Beeby, 1986b). The government’s policy on education at this time is clearly seen in the following statement,

The government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every child, whatever his level of ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system. (Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1939, p. 2)

The right to attend secondary school was opened up to everyone, and resulted in a surge in working-class demand for education, the rapid growth of state high schools from the 1950s to the 1970s, and moves towards gender equality and the opening of universities, teachers colleges and colleges of education. Yet at the same time, changes in the social environment of schools undermined general education. Youth unemployment rose in the 1970s and remained obstinately high (Jackson, 1994; Ministry of Youth Development, 2012; Statistics New Zealand, 2013; United Nations, 2007), challenging the belief that schooling could be trusted to deliver economic security.

**Neoliberal Times**

Arguably the most significant development in socio-political discourses currently shaping the ground upon which teachers stand is the emergence of a new, very powerful, discursive imaginary. This imaginary has ridden in on the back of neoliberalism, which according to Santos (2004) is a doctrine that has secured hegemonic status. Neoliberalism is a theory of political and economic practice that proposes human’s well being is best advanced by liberating their individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Friedman, 1962).

Governments around the world embraced neoliberalism in the 1980s in response to the global crisis of capitalism that shocked world economies. They saw this as an alternative to ethical liberalism, or Keynesianism. And in cases were states were sceptical or unwilling, this ideology was imposed upon them largely as a result of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (Robertson et al., 2007). The social
fabric of societies around the globe underwent radical transformations, leading David Harvey to observe, “future historians may well look upon the years 1978-80 as a revolutionary turning point in the world’s social and economic history” (Harvey, 2005, p. 1).

The restructuring that resulted from neoliberalism entailed three central principles: deregulation, competitiveness, and privatisation (Cox, 1996). Deregulation involved the removal of the state from a substantive role in the economy, except as a guarantor of the free movement of capital and profits. Competitiveness referred to the rationale for dismantling existing political and economic structures and constructing new, more market-friendly ones (Robertson, 2010). The third principle of privatisation described the sale of government businesses, agencies, and services to private owners, where accountability for efficiency was passed to profit-oriented shareholders (Cox, 1996). Through prising open the growing fissures in the postwar class compromise and facilitating its demise, neoliberals and their allies ‘re-levelled’ and ‘re-bordered’ the playing field, putting into place a set of rules that directed the steady flow of class assets (cultural, economic, social) upward toward the ruling classes (Robertson et al., 2007).

In highlighting the general features of the political project, I am not intending to suggest that neoliberal projects, policies, and practices in different regions were implemented in the same way, at the same time, or with the same effect. However, the advance of neoliberal projects has dramatically altered the social fabric and social relations of many societies around the globe in similar fashion.

In New Zealand, neoliberalism was ushered in with the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984. To the surprise of many New Zealanders, this traditionally socialist party set in place economic and social reforms that all but swept away their most important cornerstone, the welfare state. In 1987, when the Government was elected to a second term, the Treasury presented it with a substantial two-volume report, entitled Government Management: Brief to the incoming government, 1987. The second volume of this report was devoted entirely to education. The education portfolio was given particular importance and was taken over by the Prime Minister, David Lange.
The Treasury was very critical of what it called the inefficiency of education and its failure to cater to the contemporary needs of the New Zealand economy. The report was also very critical of teachers. Gordon located the Treasury’s attack on teachers in three areas: that teachers and their unions were primarily self-interested; that teachers (as providers of education) had captured the benefits for themselves; and that “the salaries of teachers are too high, and that their working conditions are unrealistically good; that teaching is an easy job” (Gordon, 1993, p. 36). Treasury’s accusations were unsupported by any evidence and were ideologically at odds with all that teachers had stood for both in terms of their systems of belief and in their practice (Sullivan, 1998). Nonetheless, to a large extent, the accusations seem to have stuck.

In response, the Government initiated a taskforce to investigate educational administration, led by Brian Picot, a founding director of supermarket giants Progressive Enterprises. Their report, *Administering for Excellence* (Picot, Ramsay, Rosemergy, Wereta, & Wise, 1988), acknowledged teachers as professionals, but criticised educational administration for being over-centralised and inefficient. Taking up the Treasury’s theme, however, Picot criticised teacher unions for having too much influence, stating,

> Within this perspective, it is difficult for policy advisers to maintain a detached stance; there is a tendency for them to become significantly influenced by the interests of teachers and to lose sight of the interest of learners. (Picot et al., 1988, pp. 23-24)

The government response to *Administering for Excellence* came by way of *Tomorrow’s Schools* (Department of Education, 1988). This agenda supported nearly all of the taskforce’s recommendations, including breaking up the Department of Education and the regional and local boards and creating a much smaller, policy driven, Ministry of Education. Several other smaller agencies were established to work in conjunction with the new Ministry. The most significant of these other agencies were the Education Review Office (ERO), which was responsible for academic audit, and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), which was responsible for curriculum and assessment. In keeping with the neoliberal ideology, a key feature of these reforms was the requirement of formerly centrally funded practices, such as curriculum development and special education services, to become independent and generate their own incomes. Functions that were previously
carried out by local education boards, such as providing basic supplies and accounting services, were privatised and then had to be bought in from school-controlled budgets out of necessity.

In terms of the mandate for education, the economy was prioritised above all else. Education systems were required to develop efficient workers for a competitive national economy, while teachers were to demonstrate that they had taught their students ‘well’ through national and global systems of indicators, such as the National Education Monitoring Plan (NEMP) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Regarding capacity, there was an overall reduction in financing in the public sector more generally, and in education specifically. In general, most global regions experienced an overall decline in education expenditures as a percentage of GDP (International Labour Organization, 2004). Education providers were pressured to use funds more efficiently and encouraged to seek additional sources of funding from households and the business sector (Robertson et al., 2007).

In looking at the impact of neoliberalism on teachers’ workplaces and conditions of labouring, it is possible to detect effects on teachers’ work, status, and market situations. A major report by the OECD (2005), which examined teachers’ work in twenty-five countries, provides some insights into the effects. Half of the countries reported problems of teacher shortages, with evidence suggesting that deteriorating conditions of work, such as heavy workload, lack of resources and support, pupil behaviour, and ongoing government reforms creating a stressful work environment, were the main causes. These findings were echoed in my own research at Winstone Grammar School, where teacher shortages and the attrition rate were reasonably high. Several departments appeared to be in a continual state of change, and I had several conversations with teachers who expressed their desire for “a break”, “a chance to refresh”, and “a change in careers” (Field notes, April, July, December, 2011). There were also cases where unqualified teachers (teachers not having a degree in the area they were teaching) were required to teach particular subjects.
However, the OECD report of 2005 suggested that where salaries are high, there are few problems (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). Yet, these cases were few and far between. While teachers’ salaries in real terms increased in almost all of the OECD countries covered in the study, in comparison to other occupations teachers’ salaries have fallen further behind. In general, since the early 1990s, teachers feel they have low status and little public respect. As a result, Smyth suggested, teachers “have been treated in distrustful, demeaning and exceedingly disrespectful ways by governments that through neoliberal policies overwhelmingly construct the work of teachers to serve the economy” (2010, p. 187). Likewise, Robertson (2010) explained that earlier versions of human capital theory have been invigorated by new growth theorists who argue that it is not just more education that matters, but particular types of teaching, standards, and accountability measures for teachers. It is paradoxical then that while the neoliberal discourse now places ‘quality learning’ at the centre of policy makers’ agendas (Thrupp, 2008, 2010a, 2010b), one effect of nearly three decades of neoliberal policies and programmes in education has been to so seriously erode teachers’ working conditions that it has undermined teaching as a profession.

As neoliberalism gained strength in the 1980s, the direction of policy shifted to issues of efficiency and effectiveness of schools. Policymakers began to see de-contextualised business practices as holding the answers for education (Thrupp, 2008). And governments responded by setting targets for achievement with little attention to the reasons why a large proportion of students failed to meet them anyway. Today the politics of blame are a central tenet of the neoliberal agenda that still holds as hegemonic around the globe.

The Politics of Blame

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I referred to Martin Thrupp’s notion of the politics of blame, and how it constructed student and school underachievement as the clear responsibility of schools and teachers. The politics of blame, according to Thrupp (Thrupp, 1998, 2008, 2010b), involve an uncompromising stance on school performance in which the
quality of student achievement is seen as the result of school policies and practices and any reference to broader socio-political factors is ruled out as an excuse for poor performance.

The politics of blame are of central importance in understanding how neoliberal discourses are manifested at Winstone Grammar School.

At the end of the 20th century, Thrupp (1998) noted that schools and their principals were the focus of New Zealand’s version of the politics of blame. But in more recent writings, he has revealed that an important shift has taken place over the past decade, as “New Zealand’s politics of blame... [has] come to centre on assertions about the power of quality teaching” (Thrupp, 2010b, p. 124). For instance, he noted, a number of school effectiveness researchers brought renewed attention to the importance of teachers and teaching rather than the effectiveness of schools as a whole (Cuttance, 2000; P. Hill, 2001; Rowe, 2007). Likewise, the Ministry of Education followed this trend with new claims for the power of quality teaching, suggesting that it is teachers who “make the difference”:

> The strongest and most direct influence within the education system on the learning of children/students in both school and early childhood education is the effectiveness of teaching. (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 31)

A concern with teacher quality might suggest that the Government would be pouring vast resources into education and schooling to achieve their goal of improving education. That has not happened. Instead, what has happened is the creation of an imposing new apparatus of testing, accreditation, and surveillance, and the further erosion of teachers’ working conditions. For instance, in 2012 the Treasury and the Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, each proposed moves to increase class sizes, stating that ‘quality teaching’ mattered more than any other factor, including the environment children were learning in. The Treasury justified its suggestion by stating that governments had to make trade-offs, and this was to be one that would have minimal effect on student achievement (Makhlouf, 2012a, 2012b; The Treasury, 2012). Using much the same language, Parata announced that a standardised teacher-student ratio in Year 2 to Year 10 classes would free $43 million each year over the next four years to improve teacher quality, stating, “We are opting for quality, not quantity, better teaching, not more teachers” (Parata, 2012).
Each of these examples helps to reveal the downplaying of contextual factors, such as socio-economic class and poverty, in considering students’ educational experiences of students in New Zealand public schools.

The flip side to this renewed emphasis on the power of teaching, is that when students do not achieve, often due to the many social and economic issues that go unaddressed, teachers are held to blame for their failure. And when teachers raised concern about these changes, politicians and mainstream media sources painted them as lazy and troublesome.

This did not happen by accident. Michael Apple has demonstrated in *Educating the ‘Right’ Way* (Apple, 2006) and *Can Education Change Society?* (Apple, 2012a) how and why neoliberal, neoconservative, and new managerial reforms have increasingly gained power in education and society. He illustrated how they are part of a more extensive social and pedagogic project to change the very meaning of the key concepts we employ to think about and judge the ends and means of our fundamental institutions. Words such as ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, Apple suggested, are part of a contested terrain, and dominant groups have engaged creatively in a process that has had some very real success in altering common sense understandings of these terms. The result is that the ‘thin democracy’ of markets replaces more participatory ‘thick democratic’ models.

In its project of instituting thin forms, neoliberalism has had to destabilise the opposition to its project. One of the most effective strategies, according to Apple, has been a process of disarticulation and rearticulation. Emancipatory concepts such as ‘democracy’ and ‘justice’ have been taken from their origins in progressive movements, emptied of their previous meanings, and then filled with new meaning, all the while keeping the words themselves in circulation. Thus, through long-term and creative ideological work, thick meanings of democracy grounded in full collective participation are replaced by thin understandings where democracy is reduced to market choice and to constantly providing evidence that one has successfully made the right decisions.

As I have noted, Tomorrow’s Schools emerged from massive neo-liberal economic reforms of the 1980s, and largely overturned the welfare state that had existed in New Zealand for
50 years. In response to this legislation, numerous policies, initiatives, and strategies were put in place to address issues of thin democracy, especially in relation to education for Maori and Pasifika students, literacy and numeracy, and special education. There were also corresponding standards for which schools and teachers were to be held accountable.

For instance, the National Educational Guidelines (NEGs), as defined by the 1989 Education Act, include several strong statements relating to improving outcomes for all students. These guidelines include the National Educational Goals, the New Zealand Curriculum, and the National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs). For example, the NAGs, which provide direction to schools and are a basis for accountability reviews by the Education Review Office (ERO), decree in NAG 1:

Each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to: ...

a) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students:
   (i) who are not achieving;
   (ii) who are at risk of not achieving;
   (iii) who have special needs (including gifted and talented); and
   (iv) aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention

b) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (a) above;

c) in consultation with the school’s Maori community, develop and make known to the school’s community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Maori students;

(www.minedu.govt.nz)

This is a key imperative for teachers and schools in their strategic and curriculum planning, and impacts directly on teachers. Yet no acknowledgement is made of the wider sociological forces shaping educational achievement, particularly of those students identified in (a)
above. Instead, all responsibility for rectifying underachievement is placed on “teaching and learning strategies” and the teachers who develop and implement them.

The New Zealand Curriculum also acknowledges the rapid pace of social change that we have experienced as a nation, characterised by an increasingly diverse population which has led to more complex demands being placed on schools and teachers (Ministry of Education, 2007b). In response, it states that “the curriculum reflects New Zealand’s cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people” and that it is “non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory” by ensuring that “students’ identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed” (p. 9). Additionally, it asserts that students will be encouraged to value “diversity, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages; equity, through fairness and social justice; … and to respect themselves, others and human rights” (p. 10). These are strong statements conveying a message that as they plan and deliver courses in accordance with the national curriculum, schools and teachers bear some responsibility for taking account of the factors that have historically been responsible for producing social and cultural inequalities.

So, while these policies include a concern for what schools can do to improve the levels of educational attainment of students who are “not achieving” or “at risk of not achieving”, this discursive framing isolates the causes of inequality from wider economic, political and social structures. At the same time, the causes of under achievement are detached from the policies, structures, institutions and practices of education.

These are not simply linguistic transformations, although that is important. These new understandings are accompanied by major shifts in identity. Subjectivities are slowly but ultimately radically transformed (Apple, 2006, 2012a). What it means to be responsive and effective and the ways in which such things are evaluated are rationalised and used to (re)organise the state and to bring the norms of the private into the public.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated how the construction of the school community has been political in its character. This construction has involved calculating the impact of social class and ethnic differences upon the academic attributes and reputation of the school. It was inferred that a direct relationship connected the character of the school with the social characteristics of the community in which it was sited. As Auckland, and especially Winstone, developed throughout the twentieth century, secondary education was increasingly defined in relation to residential location. Middle-class residential areas were believed to have the most appropriate constituency for academic secondary schools. When the provision of post-primary education was extended to all students in the 1940s, the ‘best’ schools were equated with the most desirable neighbourhoods, based on an awareness of social gradations and class differences between different areas of the city, and sometimes between different streets of the same neighbourhood. Dimensions of ethnicity increasingly restructured these sensitivities from the 1960s onwards. So, it can be seen that wider political, economic and social circumstances of society are reflected in the legislation that actively shape schools. They outline what education is and constrain what schooling can be. The result is that schools have become places where these political, economic and social issues are present.

The advancement of neoliberal agendas in education systems continue to shape the ground upon which teachers stand, calling into question the very aims and purposes of education. These agendas reflect global trends to commodify education, but at the same time there are growing concerns about unequal educational outcomes for some students, and policies have shifted the responsibility for addressing these concerns onto teachers themselves. However, as much research has now shown, policies are not simply implemented by schools and teachers, and ways of thinking are not exported in any straightforward way. As they are enacted inside schools, policies and the understandings that circulate with them are variously refracted, resisted and rearticulated in ways that can make their impacts unpredictable and their effects sometimes unexpected (Ball, 1994, 2005).
In the next chapter I turn to the concept of hegemony as an analytical framework to help me question why teachers have come to accept, or at least to consent to, a system that is manifestly against their interests.
Creating Consent: Hegemony, habitus and the possibility of resistance

The most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power; and any practice of political emancipation thus involves that most difficult of all forms of liberation, freeing ourselves from ourselves.

—Terry Eagleton, Ideology

Introduction

As the preceding chapters have shown, the dominant groups in society have a vital interest in keeping up the appearances appropriate to their form of domination. Subordinates, for their part, ordinarily have good reasons to help sustain those appearances, or at least not openly contradict them. Taken together, these two social facts have important consequences for the analysis of power relations. Yet creating consent is never a simple act. It is rather the result of social structures and cultural patterns that dictate thoughts and practices. Traditional theories of political order that focus on the expression of power through means of direct rule fail to account for the importance of culture in maintaining systems of political domination. So why does a subordinate group seem to accept, or at least to consent to, a system that is manifestly against its interests when it is not obliged to by the direct application of coercion or the fear of its application? Why do they allow the historical structures of society to overtake their lives and not do anything about it? Why do they not resist?

Responding to these questions requires an understanding of how historical and social structures infiltrate the individual’s consciousness. The concept of hegemony is particularly well suited to this endeavour, as it seeks to explain the colonisation of the consciousness by dominant social forces. In addition, Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus extends this analysis through its inclusion of both the experience of historical-social life and the conceptual structures that suggest how that experience comes to bear on individuals. Coupling these concepts together helps me to explain how the habitus is developed, colonised by an outside force for the purposes of supporting a social order, and also how it can be brought to bear on the existing social order.
Hence, in this chapter, I engage with concepts of power that operate through culture and the possibility of social change. A comparative analysis of the works of Antonio Gramsci, James Scott and Pierre Bourdieu, and their specific conceptualisations of how social order is maintained, not only helps to formulate a critical perspective from which to view this debate, but also interrogates several of the central ideas of each theorist. This analysis focuses on the parallels and differences of each scholar’s conceptions of hegemony as a means of maintaining social inequalities. Emphasis is placed on the work of Bourdieu, as his work allows for a more nuanced view of how people become vested in particular roles that emerge out of specific sets of social relations, and which in turn shape, constitute, and form the basis of individual identities. While Gramsci initiated greater complexity in the Marxian notion of class structure in capitalist societies, I argue that he still fell short of explaining exactly how we know and understand the social order of society and reproduce it in our everyday lives. As Scott pointed out, conceptualising hegemony as a cultural order that is imposed upon people who have no recourse against it is a misreading of what actually happens ‘on the ground’. However, there must be some consideration of Gramsci’s analysis of the class struggle as a ‘war of position’, in which both sides tactically negotiate the terms of the conflict. Thus, the hegemonic order can be seen as a site of struggle, contestation and debate, even for people who have no obvious and overt power.

**Hegemony**

The concept of hegemony appears to be a ‘common sense’ concept, as it has been used in Marxist and post-Marxist scholarship since the late 19th century. While Gramsci, Scott and Bourdieu all provided variations on the basic concept, hegemony can be understood as the prevailing order within society. Such an understanding allows for the incorporation of the ruling bourgeois hegemony that Gramsci depicted in his work, as well as the possibility of formulating a proletarian hegemony, which he also noted. It also provided the basis for Scott’s analysis of the actual practices of hegemony and resistance to it, as well as for Bourdieu’s observations of what I will describe as a ‘buoyant hegemony’, through the process of distinction. Raymond Williams provided an appropriate definition of hegemony that covers all three of these scholar’s works:
Hegemony is a lived system of meanings and values, not simply an ideology, a sense of reality beyond which it is, for most people, difficult to move, a lived dominance and subordination internalized. (Williams, 1977, p. 108)

Thus, hegemony is diffused throughout society in a system of values, morals and attitudes.

The establishment of a hegemonic culture, however, requires more than a discursive promotion of particular values. Hegemony also entails the “sedimentation of these values and interests in everyday practices and institutional arrangements” (Ley, 2000, p. 333). To maintain the tacit social consensus that hegemony implies, everyday practices and institutional arrangements must be seen as relatively functional and effective, at least in comparison to conceivable alternatives. As the maintenance of the status quo becomes intimately tied to the mere functioning of everyday life, the ruling values take on a ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’ quality and become more difficult to challenge. This relationship of domination is rendered relatively secure through the application of intellectual and moral leadership. The ruling groups in society win the hearts and minds of the people, persuading them (without even seeming to do so) that the status quo is natural and inevitable, beneficial for all, and induce them to identify with it. Although the term hegemony is sometimes used to refer to domination in general, it is usually taken to refer to situations where this intellectual and moral element is in place. A group who has secured a relationship of hegemony has won the hearts and minds of the people. It exercises intellectual and moral leadership.

The necessity of intellectual and moral leadership accords with the more general emphasis upon ideology within Marxism. While some variants of Marxism, and especially structuralist variants, suggest that ideological domination emerges automatically and is secured as a ‘superstructural effect’ of the economic base, hegemony emphasises agency and open-endedness. Domination has to be won. Significantly, the cultural values and practices that form the core of any hegemonic project do not arise in isolation from the state. Stuart Hall (1988) provided a prime example in considering neoliberalism’s firm grasp on society in the British context of the 1980s. Why, he asked, was the hold of Margaret Thatcher’s
government so strong, even amongst the working class, when its new and radical policies were so obviously opposed to the interests of the working class? The British general public were not greatly interested in abstract political theory and ideology, or in gloomy economic analysis. The success of the Thatcher government, Hall (1988) argued, was because they took account of this. It connected with popular symbols (such as the Union Jack, the royal family and the church) and popular sentiments (for example, aspirations, ambitions, intolerance towards difference, and anxiety regarding the post-1960s ‘moral decline’). As such, it was able to give identity to the message that the government was like the people, expressing the ideas of the people, and calling on them for their support. Meanwhile, the left, in Hall’s mind, continued to espouse economic ideas that were foreign to most members of the public and which, therefore, they were less inclined to care about.

The problem of formulating a resistance to hegemony has been one that has plagued critical scholarship. It appears impossible to formulate a resistance to dominant modes of thought that, at best, do not have relevance to one’s lived experience and, at worst, foster much of the contradictory and fragmentary nature of the subordinated classes experiences. I now turn to Gramsci’s conception of hegemony and his argument for a counterhegemony that connects with ‘folklore’ as a way of staying in touch with one’s organic roots.

**Antonio Gramsci and the War of Position**

Antonio Gramsci’s experiences as a founding member of the Italian Communist Party, and its resistance against the national government brought a practical element to his theoretical work. It was impossible to distinguish theory from praxis for Gramsci, and this binding of the two inflected all of his thought. For this reason, Gramsci found it difficult to understand why the great mass of the Italian people, living in the conditions of poverty, alienated from the rest of Italy, and exploited at the hands of the state and corporations, did not rise up against the Italian government. He surmised that this lack of resistance was due to the implicit

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17 When Thatcher’s neoliberal government replaced the Labour government in 1979, they effectively broke with a paradigm of governance that had been in place since the end of the Second World War. Historians of 20th century British politics conventionally write of a ‘post-war consensus’ between 1945-1979, shared by all parties and centred upon the mixed economy and Keynesian methods of economic management (Morgan, 2001). In the late 1970s this paradigm effectively went into crisis and the Thatcher government came into power, ushering in a new philosophy of management and breaking with the consensus.
consent that the Italian people gave the ruling organisations; the ideas that the Italian people held were those promoted by their rulers. In other words, the prevailing ideology of the time – the hegemonic order – hindered the Italian people from working out the contradictions in the ruling ideology, which prevented them from rising up in resistance to the Italian state. Analysis of hegemony, then, becomes the conceptual way of identifying the condition in which prevailing modes of thought conflict with the lived experiences of individuals in the subaltern class.

Yet Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony started out with a much different focus. Originally, Gramsci meant hegemony to mean the system of alliances that the working class must create if they are to overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish a proletarian state (Gramsci, 1977). Such alliances included the banding together of the proletariat with the peasantry of the day, in order to have the means to establish a more just society. While Gramsci’s early conception of hegemony was much more crude than later understandings, it contained the roots of important aspects of the concept: the need of the proletariat to group together with other segments of the social order implies a concern for the practical, lived experiences of all those who are oppressed by the ruling class; and the need for these cross-class alliances seems to suggest that there is something at the level of thought of these groups that can be linked in order to throw off the chains of the bourgeoisie. In later formulations of hegemony, Gramsci elaborated on these two points. By insisting that the doing human cannot be separated from the thinking human Gramsci noted the importance of the binding of thought and praxis; the mind and body are not separate. Acting both knowingly and intelligently involves an embodied consciousness in which the mind and body function as a unit. So, we can extend this to argue that there is something fundamental at the level of thought that will help in the struggle against domination. As every individual carries out some form of intellectual activity, “he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it,” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 9). Gramsci referred to this conception of the world as “common sense”, which appears as “a response to certain
specific problems posed by reality,” most notably the problems posed by bourgeois oppression (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324).

However, the binding of thought and practice – or more particularly, that certain forms of consciousness result from their specific temporal, political, and practical settings – presented a further problem for Gramsci. If the actual situation of the subaltern classes was one in which they were oppressed, and they knew that they were being oppressed, then why was there not more widespread resistance to the bourgeoisie? Gramsci’s argument was that the lack of active resistance on the part of the subaltern classes was due to the hegemony of ideas on the part of the ruling classes. Thus, Marx’s statement that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (Marx, 1978, p. 172) became the foundation for a revised notion of hegemony. As the hegemony of ideas of the ruling class takes hold in the consciousness of the subalterns, it conflicts with their visceral understanding of the conditions of their existence, ultimately preventing their conceiving of a social order that is different from the one in which they currently exist. It is in this sense then, that hegemony exists at the level of consciousness. However, for the subaltern classes, it is always entwined with the practical actions of everyday life in a dialectical and contradictory fashion.

Gramsci argued that the state’s role in imparting a culture to a population ends up causing a division in the consciousness of those whose lived experiences, which provide the foundation for consciousness, do not match those of the dominant culture (Gramsci, 1971). This, in effect, causes a contradictory consciousness:

This contrast between thought and action, i.e. the co-existence of two conceptions of the world, one affirmed in words and the other displayed in effective action, is not simply a product of self-deception… In these cases the contrast between thought and action cannot be but the expression of profounder contrasts of a social historical order. It signifies that the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if it is only embryonic… But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group, and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in ‘normal times’ – that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 326-327)
In this sense then, Gramsci argued that subaltern classes follow a conception of the world that is imparted on them by others. The contradiction between this conception of the world and their everyday actions and experiences creates the mental obstacle that prevents the actions of the subaltern classes from becoming revolutionary. Gramsci offered two examples of this. Following the Risorgimento\textsuperscript{18}, a unified Italian language was imposed upon the country. This imposition served to make all spoken dialects socially inferior while simultaneously forcing members of the subaltern classes to speak a language within which they could not formulate a clear consciousness of their experiences (Gramsci, 1985). Gramsci’s second example concerns the subaltern classes’ preference for foreign novels over those produced by Italian intellectuals. This preference, Gramsci argued, points to the mismatch between the national intellectuals’ portrayals of experience and feeling, and the popular conceptions of the subaltern classes (Gramsci, 1985). As a result, the Italian people developed attachments not to their own domestic intellectuals, but to those whose lived experiences were even further removed from their own. In sum then, the culture of the Italian intellectuals failed to be the organising force that Gramsci argued was needed for liberation to occur. The intellectuals were more closely aligned with the state than with the people, and retreated from having anything to do with the lived realities of the people. The Italian people were subsequently left to undergo either the hegemony of the “national” culture or that of foreign writers, both of them equally foreign to the conditions of their own existence.

This hegemony of the ruling class ideas, then, comes into conflict with the set of ideas which are organic to the lived experiences, practices, and actions of the subaltern classes; experiences that Gramsci argued manifest in the forms of local linguistic dialects, folklore, and other forms of “common sense” – the “incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 323). These conceptions of the world, bound up with the social practices of the subaltern classes, provide a “morality of the people” (Gramsci, 1985); guidelines for living one’s life that are indigenous to that particular set of conditions of existence. These ideas are both self-contradictory and contradict those

\textsuperscript{18} The Risorgimento was the 19th century political and social movement for the unification and independence of Italy following the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the creation of the Italian State.
of the ruling hegemony: they are self-contradictory in that they are the accumulated conceptions of all previous experience (as folklore indicates), and are generally not theoretically and critically articulated; and, as I have said above, they contradict the hegemonic set of ideas that are imposed by the ruling class. To anticipate Scott’s argument, common sense is an articulation of the lived experiences of oppression among the subaltern classes, but is overpowered by the imposition of the ruling class set of ideas. It is here that Gramsci suggested subalterns could formulate their resistance to these foreign ideas in favour of their own lived experiences. He argued that political parties composed of intellectuals from the oppressed classes – organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) – need to critically articulate the ways in which common sense reflects the lived experiences of the oppressed classes. In doing so, these organic intellectuals assist the subaltern classes to gain a “critical understanding of self”, which takes place “through a struggle of opposing ‘hegemonies’” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). As Gramsci noted:

It is a matter therefore of starting with a philosophy which already enjoys, or could enjoy, a certain diffusion, because it is connected to and implicit in practical life, and elaborating it so that it becomes renewed, common sense possessing the coherence and the sinew of individual philosophies. But this can only happen if the demands of cultural contact with the ‘simple’ are continually felt. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 330)

It is through this theoretical articulation of the contradictions between the common sense consciousness (bound to the lived experiences of the subaltern classes) and the overpowering hegemonic ideas (that are foreign to the popular groups) that opposition and resistance can be formed.

It is important to note here that Gramsci always steeped the discussion of hegemony and counterhegemony in terms of culture, and most notably in the realm of language. He suggested that it is here where there is opportunity for a ‘war of position’. Resistance against the state is ordinarily hindered by the overwhelming military strength that could be used against the subaltern classes. Hence, Gramsci argued that theorising resistance must move beyond advancing a ‘war of manoeuvre’ to working out a ‘war of position’ (Gramsci, 1971). The war of manoeuvre, which involves a quick assault upon an ordinarily coercive state, is not appropriate for the subaltern classes due to its frontal nature. Instead, Gramsci argued, there must be a metaphoric war of position, where oppositional groups, adopting a
longer term strategy, operate on the terrain of culture and public institutions, learning what is important to people and building bridges with it. It is through this process that Gramsci suggested the subaltern classes are able to make small insurgences against the ruling hegemonic order. These strikes against hegemonic positions lead the state to reinforce all positions of its hegemony in order to protect against the possibility of internal disintegration. In doing so, they expose all of the contradictions in the hegemonic order. This provides, I would argue, the opportunity for the resistant order to show the inconsistencies in the hegemonic cultural order and to better integrate their cultural order with their lived experiences. However, all of this can only take place in the realm of civil society, where the hegemonic intellectual order reigns supreme. It is only here in which (a) any headway can be made against the ruling order of ideas, and (b) the distancing of ideas and existence – theory and practice – within the consciousness of the subaltern classes occurs, inhibiting the possibility of their resistance. In other words, because the consciousness of individuals within the subaltern classes is contradictory, it is in the social manifestation of this consciousness – the popular cultural order – that resistance must be worked out.

I want to reiterate, however, that the realm of ideas always has a dialectical relationship with the realm of praxis. In this sense, the contradictory nature of consciousness has an inhibiting effect on conceiving any sort of revolutionary practice. Hence, for Gramsci the failure to critically articulate the contradictions within the consciousness of the subaltern classes inhibits the practical realisation of revolutionary consciousness. It is only by engaging in a war of position, wherein the subaltern classes can begin to expose the contradictions within the ruling hegemony by critically organising their own oppositional consciousness, that resistance to the ruling classes can be affected.

**James Scott and the Hidden Transcript**

For James Scott, hegemony takes place not at the level of thought, as he argued with regard to Gramsci, but rather at the level of action. That is, instead of conceptualising the subaltern class-consciousness as self-contradictory, unaware of the conditions of their existence and
exploitation, Scott argued that members of the lower class know perfectly well the situation in which they exist. In fact, Scott (1985) argued that the revolutionary potential of their consciousness is well formed. For instance, the rice-farming peasants in Scott’s ethnography *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott, 1985) did not use academic terms of analysis to explain their understanding of the conditions of their existence, but their everyday awareness of what was taking place was still valid. In reality, Scott argued, their everyday awareness provided more richness to their understandings, as they were endemic to their own conditions of existence:

> Their own folk descriptions of what is happening – being made into coolies, the rich getting richer and the poor becoming poorer, and being ‘pushed aside’ – are adequate and, at the same time, far richer in emotive meaning than anything academic political economy could possibly provide. (Scott, 1985, p. 182)

This knowledge of the ways of the social world “on the ground” does have a cognitive effect, but it is not one that requires an individual or group to break the “symbolic miasma that blocks revolutionary thought” (Scott, 1985, p. 39)(Scott, 1985, p. 39). Instead, the cognitive effects of the knowledge of their conditions of existence have two outcomes for members of the subaltern classes: First, it creates a sort of “double-consciousness” (DuBois, 2007), in which the public realm shows almost a perfect acceptance of the rules and conditions of the hegemonic order, while the ‘hidden transcript’ shows a negation of that order; and second, it reveals that hegemony happens at the level of everyday action, and that resistance can only happen there if there is a discursive background for it (Scott, 1990). This discursive background comes by way of Scott’s ‘hidden transcript’ (1990).

Scott distinguished between the ‘public’ and the ‘hidden’ transcript. The former is the record of interactions between superordinates and subordinates in public arenas, indicating that there is nearly perfect acceptance of the ruling order of ideas and social structures, and therefore that there is explicit consent given to the hegemonic order. This is often portrayed in social science research when researchers do not endeavour to delve beneath this level. However, looking beyond this level, to the ‘backstage arenas’ – those social spaces that similarly oppressed individuals have cleared for the expression of their views of the conditions of existence in which they live – Scott located the hidden transcript. As Scott put
it, individuals clearly feel the effects of their everyday experiences, and “when the insult is but a variety of affronts suffered systematically by a whole race, class, or strata, then the fantasy can become a collective cultural product” (Scott, 1990, p. 9). This collective cultural product is the discursive realm in which the subaltern class’ view of what happens in the interactions between super- and subordinates comes out. The hidden transcript, when compared to the public transcript, or the “self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen” (Scott, 1990, p. 18), displays a second consciousness of the situation of power relations and existence. In this understanding the hegemonic situation is accorded public consent. Yet, in private, subalterns refuse “to accept the definition of the situation as seen from above and to condone their own social and ritual marginalization” (Scott, 1985, p. 240).

According to W. E. B. DuBois, this double-consciousness allows oppressed individuals to manipulate the system to their minimum disadvantage by ‘playing along’ with the oppressors in those realms in which the oppressors clearly have control. Within the realm of the hidden transcript however, subalterns construct negations of the hegemonic order, which allow them to lay the foundations for larger forms of resistance than backbiting or rumour-spreading:

Such a double life with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretense or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism. (DuBois, 2007, p. 122)

The latter terms of these conditions of existence – revolt and radicalism – have the hidden transcript as their foundation. Without the social space and the discursive apparatuses of the hidden transcript, Scott argued that there could be no resistance:

Resistance to ideological domination requires a counterideology – a negation – that will effectively provide a general normative form to the host of resistance practices invented in self-defence by any subordinate group. (Scott, 1990, p. 118)

Thus, it is the conditions of oppression that give rise to the hidden transcript, which forms the basis for any actions of resistance.

However, any actions of resistance that manifest themselves in the public sphere must be weighed against the everyday exercise of power. In other words, it is here at the level of the
everyday interactions between super- and subordinates that hegemony takes place, rather than at the level of consciousness. Scott argued that members of oppressed groups know exactly what would be needed in order to effect some sort of resistance that would be liberatory in whatever definition one chooses to give of it. This clearly contrasts with Gramsci’s argument that organic intellectuals are needed to organise cultural practices and education in order to show subordinate individuals how to achieve their liberation. In fact, Scott argued that “subordinate classes – especially the peasantry – are likely to be more radical at the level of ideology than at the level of behaviour, where they are more effectively constrained by the daily exercise of power” (Scott, 1985, p. 331).

In Scott’s mind, Gramsci made the assumption that members of subaltern classes are unable to see beyond the ruling ideology within their own thinking, and that this failing leads directly to activities that are not geared towards a revolutionary change, thereby supporting and perpetuating the ruling order. But Scott believed that this assumption constructs a view of hegemony that neglects what happens away from the public exercise of power. In other words, in Gramsci’s construction of hegemony, the issue of force – be it outright annihilation of resistance or the threat of loss of one’s lands – is completely neglected as being the possible site of hegemony. For Scott, this is precisely where it lies.

Scott offered an alternative view of hegemony. While he considered hegemony to operate through the daily exercise of power, which constrains the actions of members of the oppressed classes, there is also an aspect of hegemony within the public transcript. The social orders and practices that accompany ‘playing along’ with the superordinates delimit possible routes of action for members of the subaltern classes, at least within the realm of thought. As Scott suggested,

What ideological domination does accomplish, however, according to this version, is to define for subordinate groups what is realistic and what is not realistic and to drive certain aspirations and grievances into the realm of the impossible, of idle dreams. By persuading underclasses that their position, their life-chances, their tribulations are unalterable and inevitable, such a limited hegemony can produce the behavioural results of consent without necessarily changing people’s values. (1990, p. 74, my emphasis)
Scott did not view the effect of hegemony upon the possibilities of certain actions as being socially conditioned. Rather, he saw it as a product of the impossibility of seeing past the public transcript of the relations between the ruling class and subaltern. Scott argued that it is for the most part impossible for members of one class to penetrate into the hidden transcript of another class, and that it is necessary for other groups to make inferences about the situation of power and how to act within it from what is presented in the public transcript (Scott, 1990, p. 67). However, this means that (a) the ruling class will police the public transcript in order to maintain the portrait of the struggle in the way they wish to, and (b) that subaltern groups, reading this enforcement of the standard public transcript, will continue to act in a way that makes them appear as if they are just playing along. Taken together, this makes the public transcript appear as hegemony, as it is a combination of adaptive strategic behaviour and the dialogue implicit in most power relations [which] ensures that public action will provide a constant stream of evidence that appears to support an interpretation of ideological hegemony. (Scott, 1990, p. 70)

This, then, leads to the analytical assumption that subalterns give consent to the ruling order and believe it to be legitimate; that is, hegemony appears to be acting at the level of thought. But if we seriously consider Scott’s claim that resistance generally occurs in the hidden transcript, then the appearance of hegemony at the level of public action is just that – an appearance.

Scott’s analysis presumes, however, that what is intended to be resistance is resistance. He asked the question, “Does ‘resistance’ by subordinates that is purposely overlooked by elites or called by another name, qualify as resistance?” (Scott, 1990, p. 89). By relying on Ranajit Guha’s (1983) argument that resistance in the hidden transcript counts, “so long as the elite treat such assaults on their dignity as tantamount to open rebellion” (Scott, 1990, p. 196), Scott was led into the argument that resistance of the hegemonic classes is authentic resistance. In a sense, he pitted the resistance of the hidden transcript against the hegemony of the public transcript, placing both within the public sphere of activity. However, he claimed that resistance of this sort is covert, informal, and often takes place in the form of insinuations or nuances that underlie actions that support the public transcript (Scott, 1985). In other words, resistance here happens at the level of meaning and within
the symbolic realm, instead of in the arena of social change, but he qualified this by holding that “symbolic defiance and rebellion do amount to the same thing” (Scott, 1990, p. 196).

In this sense, then, Scott forces us to take into account the meaning which subalterns give their actions in relation to hegemonic groups within the public transcript, and ultimately inverted Gramsci’s conception of hegemony by claiming that it is the everyday exercise of power and force (tacit or explicit) which causes the doubled-consciousness of the subaltern and ends up forestalling resistance against superordinates.

In short, Scott understood conformity to be calculated, not unthinking, and beneath the surface of symbolic and ritual compliance there is an undercurrent of ideological resistance. Hence, Scott’s understanding called into question previous conceptualisations of hegemony, as well as the corresponding concepts of counterhegemony and resistance. This is a necessary step in the evolution of a critical theory of resistance, as it brings to light the subordinates’ awareness of the conditions of their existence. By understanding hegemony to operate at the level of action, he cast doubt on previous attempts to place hegemony at the level of thought. But simply relocating hegemony, counterhegemony and resistance to the level of interpersonal action and power does not necessarily improve conceptualisations of hegemony. Instead, I think it important to analyse Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus as a possible site of hegemony, as the habitus is conceptually the original site of both thought and action; and it is here that any formulation of a counterhegemony or resistance strategy must begin.

**Pierre Bourdieu and the Buoyant Hegemony**

Pierre Bourdieu implicitly commenced his thought on hegemony where Gramsci left off. While Gramsci focused his analysis of hegemony in the dialectic of the levels of consciousness and action, arguing that the distinction between the consciousness of and action within the subaltern classes’ conditions of existence made it possible for outside, non-indigenous cultural, intellectual, and linguistic orders to be imposed on them, Bourdieu stepped past this level of action. By analysing what he called ‘the habitus’, Bourdieu argued that the structuring of society directly affects class members’ conceptions of their places
within the social order. At the same time, he acknowledged that the structuring of society is
effected by the hegemonic social, cultural, economic, linguistic, and intellectual order.
Within the hegemonic order, which claims that there is advancement within society, lower
classes and class fractions, believing that they can elevate themselves out of their class
position, attempt to emulate the cultural and consumptive practices of members of higher
classes. By drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), we can see that
this forces higher-class members to maintain their difference and division from lower class
members, creating a buoyant hegemony of cultural and linguistic practices. Just as a buoy
always stays afloat on a rising sea level, in this conception lower-class members are virtually
always defeated in their attempt to elevate their class position. The result is that it is nearly
impossible to establish a counterhegemonic social order in the way that I have attributed to
Gramsci. Hence, a counterhegemonic order must be founded on terms other than those of
the prevailing social order. In doing so, it is necessary to heed Gramsci’s warning that “in
political activity, one should not ape the methods of the ruling classes, or one will fall into
easy ambushes” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 232).

For Bourdieu, who did not explicitly use the Gramscian terminology, hegemony appears in
the habitus – “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures
predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). The habitus
becomes a way of organising the world, relating to the social atmosphere, and results from
past practices, which guide though do not predetermine future ways of being. It embodies
the concept of history, both personal and collective, which is “internalised as a second
nature and so forgotten as history” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 56). This emphasis on history can
make habitus appear as the bearer of the weight of dead generations, a means of
straightforward reproduction, and indeed Bourdieu has suffered accusations of being overly
deterministic (Apple, 1986; Giroux, 1983b; Mehan, 1992). However, it is important to note
that habitus is not deterministic, but generative. Or, as Bourdieu responded to his critics:

Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the 'product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable, but not eternal! (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133)
Having said this, Bourdieu went on to add that there is a probability that one’s experiences will confirm habitus, as people are “statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133). What is central here is the *relationality* of habitus. It only makes sense in specific local contexts or “fields” – the “games” for which “the rules of the game” equip us.

In other words, the habitus became for Bourdieu the embodied locus of all of the linguistic, intellectual and cultural attitudes and actions that are appropriate to an individual’s position within a social and cultural field:

> Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference. This means that inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 172)

But habitus is also relational in another sense: habitus exist in relation to *each other*. As such, the habitus becomes the embodied indicator of the individual’s position within the social structure. It simultaneously reproduces and understands all social interactions within the terms of the social structure from which it comes. In this sense, the habitus becomes the site of the hegemonic social order and its manifestations in the cultural, linguistic, political and economic realms, leading the individual social actor to misrecognise the power relations that manifest themselves through interpersonal interactions as arbitrary, when in fact they are a direct result of the structuring of society.

This misrecognition of the social order as arbitrary instead of being a direct result of the powered structuring of society by the forces of production is a result of the structuring of the bodily *hexit*: that aspect of the social identity that provides a physical sense of one’s place in the social order. As Bourdieu noted, bodily hexit “is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking” (1990b, pp. 69-70). Hence the social sense is guided by a system of mutually reinforcing signs, which come to bear on the body. These
signs provide physical guides, manifested in language, cultural, and consumptive practices, which maintain and perpetuate the social structure (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b). By helping to perpetuate the status quo of the social order, this physical sense of one’s place in the social order, as well as the corresponding idea that certain cultural, linguistic, or political practices are not for ‘folks like us’, becomes the manifestation of the hegemonic social order. The result is that certain paths of action seem impossible or ‘out of the question’. Within this notion, there is a sense of the limits of an individual’s possible actions. At the same time, these limits are misrecognised as being arbitrary or natural (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b, 1991). This structuring of everyday life is rooted in hegemony; not so much in the foreign ideas regarding the dependency or inferiority of the lower classes, but in the internalisation of social inequality, beneath the level of subconscious dispositions, inscribed in the body, in the consciousness of what is possible and what is attainable.

This consciousness of what is possible given an individual’s social station and their corresponding symbolic capital, however, is conflated with the idea that one’s social position can be improved by getting an education and becoming something more than their ancestors were. By improving their symbolic capital an individual has the ability to elevate their social position, thereby gaining the profits that come from this increase in cultural capital. As members of lower-class fractions begin to elevate their social position, they take on the cultural, linguistic, and consumptive practices of the group they are elevated into, and thereby transcend the limits that they originally experienced as a result of their structured habitus. This is the first step in the process that Bourdieu called “distinction”; the attempts by subaltern classes and class fractions to improve their symbolic capital by entering into social institutions that will enable them to be recognised as being of higher social status than they originally were (Bourdieu, 1984). However, the symbolic capital of the dominant class is invariably controlled by the dominant class and therefore able to be changed to maintain the order of distinction.

The process of distinction more clearly reveals the limits that characterise the social order. Dominated class fractions, as I have said above, begin to emulate the cultural, linguistic and social practices of the class fraction directly above them, and attempt to increase their
symbolic capital so as to appear as a member of the dominant class fraction. Bourdieu argued that this is not the result of the conscious desire of the dominated agent to become a member of the higher-class fraction, as the structure of habitus always bears traces of one’s “true” social position (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b). Instead, the desire to amass symbolic capital leads individuals to take on the consumptive practices of the class fraction directly above them, as it is through these, as well as through linguistic and cultural practices that symbolic capital is accorded (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991). But, it is only through the recognition of symbolic capital by others who are authorised to grant this recognition – that is, members of the class or class fraction that are being emulated by members of lower class fractions – that symbolic capital is accorded (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b).

However, the profit that comes from amassing symbolic capital depends directly on the absolute number of people who engage in the cultural practices that are being contested. The members of those contested class fractions, who have the ability to grant symbolic capital to members of the lower classes, often prefer to remain unassociated with that class fraction. This yields the actual process of “distinction”; that is, distinction only exists “through the struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs which make ‘natural distinction’” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 250). To quote Bourdieu:

To distance themselves from common amusements, the privileged once again need only let themselves be guided by the horror of vulgar crowds which always leads them elsewhere, higher, further, to new experiences and virgin spaces, exclusively or firstly theirs, and also by the sense of the legitimacy of practices, which is a function of their distributional value, of course, but also of the degree to which they lend themselves to aestheticization, in practice or discourse. (Bourdieu, 1984)

Once the consumptive process – and the struggles over the symbolic worth of them, which indicate social position and therefore social worth – is taken into account, the process of distinction becomes one in which the class struggle manifests itself in terms of cultural practices. These practices may take a variety of forms including linguistic, aesthetic, or athletic, but it is how they are marked in terms of their profitability within the specific social field that is important. The individual participants in the class struggle thus internalise the worth that others accredit to their practices.
However, another process occurs simultaneously within this process of distinction. While it is true that those in marginal classes such as the lower-middle class – the petit-bourgeois – emulate the class fractions above, dominated classes tend to accept what they are given via the distribution of symbolic capital within the social order. Whereas marginal class fractions respond to the perceived threat on their class status by becoming more progressive in their cultural and consumptive practices and more conservative with regards to the advancing class fractions and their newly acquired practices (Bourdieu, 1984), dominated classes accept their subordinate position. Bourdieu believed that this acceptance results from their ability to resort to nothing other than borrowed cultural practices:

Dominated agents... tend to attribute to themselves what the distribution attributes to them, refusing what they are refused... Thus the conservation of the social order is decisively reinforced by what Durkheim called ‘logical conformity’. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471)

This results in what could be called the solidification of lower classes; that is, their cultural practices tend to remain ‘traditional’, leaving very little opportunity for social mobility, as their relative position in the social field becomes increasingly distanced from those who are engaged in the chase for symbolic capital. Hence, the lower classes are left further and further out of the process of distinction, thereby leaving them increasingly powerless within the social field and submersed beneath the buoyant hegemony.

While the process of solidification of the lower classes goes on, the other classes and class fractions that are engaged in the process of distinction end up, I argue, continually chasing symbolic capital\(^\text{19}\) within a buoyant hegemony. As noted above, the habitus includes a site of social practices and dispositions, which is structured by a hegemonic order and the individual’s position within it. This aspect of habitus provides a set of practices and attitudes about the way the world works, structuring and delimiting possible paths of action that the individual may follow. Yet there is also a hegemonic drive within the habitus, that floats “higher, further, to new experiences and virgin spaces, exclusively or firstly theirs” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 215). It is here that members of dominated class fractions, eager to

\(^{19}\) Bourdieu (1984) was careful to point out, though, that the pursuit of symbolic capital is not a conscious act. The chase results from the fetishisation of commodities, such as fashion, and the subsequent acceptance of them as markers of worth.
increase their symbolic capital, appropriate practices of the class fractions above them; practices which members of emulated class fractions discard as being ‘common’ in their eagerness to maintain their distinction from those who emulate them. As Bourdieu stated:

> At each level of the distribution, what is rare and constitutes luxury or an absurd fantasy for those at an earlier or lower level becomes banal and common, and is relegated to the order of the taken-for-granted by the appearance of new, rarer and more distinctive goods. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 247)

This process is a concrete cultural manifestation of the class struggle that occurs not at the level of the bourgeoisie/proletariat struggle, but rather at the margins of these classes, that simplified Marxist formulations neglect. For the classes involved at this level of the struggle, the goal is to secure the exclusive possession of cultural goods and practices. The outcome is a permanent revolution in tastes, which leads to dominant classes feeling forced to further distance themselves from lower class fractions. As this buoyant hegemony spirals ever higher, dominated classes, especially the lowest classes, fall further and further out of the picture. While Gramsci (1971, 1985) and Scott (1985, 1990) argued that members of the subaltern classes have spaces for their own discourses, Bourdieu stated that these classes are “at the mercy of the discourses that are presented to them” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 461):

> The dominant language discredits and destroys the spontaneous political discourse of the dominated. It leaves them only silence or a borrowed language, whose logic departs from that of popular usage but without becoming that of erudite usage, a deranged language, in which the ‘fine words’ are only there to mark the dignity of the expressive intention, and which, unable to express anything true, real or ‘flat,’ dispossesses the speaker of the very experience it is supposed to express. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 462)

Within this buoyant hegemony then, there is no place for the completely dominated classes; their spontaneous discourse and cultural practices, which stem from their lived experiences, are eliminated or silenced by the dominant language. They are left with no way in which to share their experience with the rest of the social field. Their position is internalised at the same time, via the refusal of everything that they are refused as a class. Ultimately, they are left completely out of the class struggle, as it comes to be constituted through the contestation of the symbolic meanings of cultural goods. The claim is not that subordinates enjoy their fated conditions, only that they are here to stay whether they like it or not. This minimal notion of ideological domination has become almost orthodoxy in the literature on
such issues. As Bourdieu put it, “every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). Anthony Giddens wrote of “the naturalization of the present” (1979, p. 195) in which capitalist economic structures come to be taken for granted. But it is Bourdieu’s claim that “the most successful ideological effects are those which have no need of words, and ask no more than complicitous silence” (1977, p. 188), thus creating a pervasive naturalism, that is most relevant to this project.

For instance, Paul Willis’ critical ethnography of schooling, Learning to Labour (1977), used Bourdieu’s conceptual tools to offer a prime example of how the working-class internalise their positions within the social field. Willis especially focused on the counter culture of a group of working-class boys, the “lads”, in 1970s England. The lads believed that they would never overcome their class status, and hence exerted non-conformist behaviour and resistance to school and societal norms. Willis (1977) noted that the capital in the field of education differed from the capital that the lads possessed and valued in their working-class subculture. They rejected the culture of education, as they perceived this to be part of the cultural practices of the middle-classes. In Willis’s view, the working-class reproduce themselves in the process of constituting themselves as political and social subjects, in the process of defining themselves as the others of bourgeois culture. They reproduce themselves in an antagonistic relation to the prevailing culture and ideological practices.

**Habitus and the Possibility of Resistance**

Within each of these conceptions of hegemony, there is some interplay between the level of thought and the level of practice. In Gramsci’s view, the contradictory consciousness imposed from elsewhere prevents revolutionary action. For Scott, the restrictions at the level of action do have some impact on subaltern’s consciousness as they are forced to move their resistance into realms where they have some control, but there is no effect upon their systems of belief. For Bourdieu though, hegemony simultaneously affects consciousness and action, and appears to lock one into a particular pattern of beliefs, cultural values, and practices due to one’s place in the social field. The educative process of
hegemony teaches that certain practices are available to members of a social field with certain amounts of cultural capital, while also shaping one’s intellectual and physical knowledge of their place in the social field. At the same time, hegemony constrains action, in that the hegemonic order of attempting to achieve the symbolic profit of distinction guides all paths of cultural and consumptive action, as well as marking the ways in which some practices are engaged, thus establishing a dialectical relationship between consciousness and action. Both of these levels converge at the site of the habitus; the set of principles that gives one a basis for the improvisation of actions within the limits of ‘proper ways of acting’, as perceived through their habitus.

So, how do we conceive of an order of resistance in which the struggle does not take place at the level of contestation over cultural or economic goods? Bourdieu argued that any conception of a counterhegemony must take place outside the rules of the hegemonic game, since resisting symbolic domination on its own terms presupposes, and in fact demonstrates, complicity with the dominating system (Bourdieu, 1991). Here, this complicity with the dominating system is exacerbated by two separate factors. Firstly, the contestation of the social- and symbolic-worth of markers of distinction takes place completely within another hegemonic order: the capitalist economic system. This requires, in a Catch-22 manner, that individuals have capital in order to gain capital, be it economic, educational, or cultural. So, individuals who come from lower classes, which by definition do not have capital of any of these sorts, are automatically left out of the game. Secondly, and much more insidiously, individuals from the dominated classes accept being left out of the game. More particularly, they reject the game that they are in actuality rejected by, as was the case for Willis’s lads (1977). Any conception of an order of resistance that might lead to liberatory change must, therefore, take place outside of these two parameters. Problematically, though, these parameters are those that constitute the habitus; thus they govern our relations with the social world. So, any formation of a resistant order must necessarily start with the reconstruction of the habitus in a way that does not perpetuate the hegemonic game; in other words, “to change the world, one has to change the ways of making the world, that is the vision of the world and the practical operations by which
groups are produced and reproduced” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 137). This, given the buoyant hegemony of distinction that I have referred to above, as well as the rejection by subaltern classes of the social order that rejects them, proved to be a difficult obstacle in this project.

So, how can the habitus be restructured to more adequately effect emancipatory change? Within Bourdieu’s conception of the habitus, there appear to be two places at which a Gramscian ‘war of position’ could be waged so as to reformulate the habitus in a revolutionary fashion: the structuring principles of thought, and the structuring principles of action. Firstly, these structuring principles of thought, which provide structured principles of action, can be engaged in a critical sense, in a similar fashion to identifying the ‘good sense’ amongst the ‘common sense’, which Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971) suggested, to become a critical philosophy of praxis. This can be brought about through rigorous critical reflection on existing forms of thought and their relation to the actual world that produced them. By engaging in this sort of critical reflection with the habitus, social actors can generate a critical capacity. That is, the individual can come to understand how their experiences, within the conditions of their existence, come to shape the ways in which they experience and act in the world. What’s more, identifying the arbitrary character of social distinctions, and understanding that what counts as ‘tasteful’ or ‘acceptable’ is an effect of social relations within the buoyant hegemony (as opposed to intrinsic properties of the property or practice), provides an avenue to challenge the taken-for-granted. This is especially pressing in the case of the politics of blame, since heterogeneous conceptions of teaching are largely silenced, reduced instead to an emphasis on the ‘efficiency’ and ‘efficacy’ of ‘responsible’ teachers. Radicalising these tacit conceptions and dispositions can help to reveal the true nature of the socio-political system which locks individuals into structural places while convincing them that they are able to advance out of these stations. As Rose put it, such instances may introduce “awkwardness” into what is normally experienced as “timeless, natural, unquestionable... interrupting the fluency of the narratives that encode that experience and making them stutter” (1999, p. 20).

At the same time, the structured principles of action also need to be engaged critically. For instance, breaking class taboos on cultural practices would help to expose the structured
dimension of cultural practices within a hierarchical socio-political system. As Scott noted, it is the intention of the agent that must be considered here. If members of the dominant ruling classes take subordinate appropriation of their cultural practices to be a serious affront, thus accounting for the intentionality of the actor, then perhaps the work of resistance has been successful, as it begins to expose the extent to which dominant groups have imposed their definition of the world upon subordinates, and marks the beginning of attacks on that imposed image (Scott, 1985, 1990).

There are significant risks involved in this conception of resisting hegemony. The most obvious risk concerns the grave repercussions that the subordinate classes face from their superiors (Scott, 1990). But also of importance, is that radicalising the habitus in the manner of exerting power ‘from below’ continues to adhere to the rules of the hegemonic game, even if the intention is to overthrow or undermine them (Scott, 1990). The risk here is in reinforcing the hegemonic order and legitimising its power.

But even within this bind, forms of counter-hegemonic struggle are still possible from below. Hegemonic systems can never fully incorporate subalterns’ practices of resistance, nor do they fully determine them. It is here, in the distance between the two, that spaces for resistance exist. In other words, resistant practices of the subaltern must take hold of the exposed contradictions in the hegemonic order and use them as sites upon which to effect fundamental social change.

**Conclusion**

At the start of this chapter I asked the question as to why subordinates do not resist. Gramsci, Scott and Bourdieu each offered alternative suggestions as to how social order is maintained. In the work of each of these scholars, it is apparent that there are structural factors at work that prevent resistant practices from flourishing. Further, Bourdieu at times characterised the working class as embracing a “love of one’s fate” (1990b, p. 56), and suggested that this is one means through which domination continues. But this pessimism of the intellect can function as the catalyst for change. It demands that we pay attention to inequalities and injustices and rests on the belief that things do not have to be the way they
are. Indeed the current situation will not improve without intervention. Optimism of the will rests on the hope that things could be changed – though not without effort. Bourdieu’s work is important in reminding us that pessimism is not the same as determinism; that resistance takes many forms; and, that change is very difficult to effect, no matter how much subordinates resist. This is what it means to be dominated.

In the following chapter I turn to the experiences of the participants and their forms of intellectual engagement. To my mind, there were compelling reasons for the participants in making their decisions to engage themselves in public affairs, reasons that need more detailed examination. Their engagement took different shapes, and occurred at different levels of visibility. It took place amidst the institutional and structural issues and risks that seemed to prevent the development of teachers as public intellectuals, yet they appeared, they took chances, and in some small measure, their efforts had some kind of efficacy.
Vernacular Theory

Introduction

In the lead up to this chapter, I have illustrated some of the ways in which teachers in New Zealand’s public schools, have been under siege. When these methods are taken collectively, they form a hegemonic bloc that is difficult to overcome. John Smyth put this eloquently when he described an “evil and devastating ensemble of tendencies that strike at the heart of that for which schools exist” (2010, p. 187). These forces are pervasive and persistent. But in this chapter, I engage with a more optimistic possibility that lies in the teacher-participants’ own understandings of education and schooling, and the conditions of their existence.

The argument of this chapter takes up Smyth’s notion that teachers can “speak back” (2010, p. 188). Indeed, the teacher-participants in this study exercised their own agency through unveiling and unmasking how power works, and puncturing the aura of orthodox practices, which stemmed from the neoliberal ideology of schooling and the politics of blame. Their experiences point to the possibility of an ideology losing its authoritative and hegemonic power to define the purpose of schooling and the role of teachers.

In exploring this alternative imaginary, I first shift the focus to consider how teachers are influenced by ideology and hegemony at Winstone Grammar, and how they contribute to it in both complicit and resistant modes. Rather than scapegoating teachers as perpetrators of an unjust ideology however, I consider the ways in which teachers have been subjected to narrow conceptions of teaching and how these politics shape what is deemed acceptable and appropriate. This was partly the result of the

   systematic denigration and humbling of publicly provided services and public sector workers as bureaucratized, slow to adapt, resistant to change, expensive, and putting their own interests above that of the service and of the ‘consumers’ of those services. (D. Hill, 2010)

It also took place through conservative control of the curriculum and pedagogy, which, as Hill suggested, “seeks to silence or discredit or marginalize counter-hegemonic ideologies” (2010, p. 130).
By then turning my focus to the experiences of the participants, I explore their understandings, which ask questions about the nature of teaching and learning and whose interests are being served or denied. This critical dimension of their thinking allows me to view the participants as social theorists and political actors, albeit in an unorthodox fashion with regards to traditional “intellectuals”. Nevertheless, their experiences and considerations of the practice, meaning, and intent of teaching and schooling, illustrate how teaching might be construed so as to reclaim a democracy of social and ethical responsibility.

At another level, this chapter begins my response to the criticism that Bourdieuan approaches are overly deterministic and allow too little space for individual agency. It goes beyond the idea that political subjects are passive ‘docile bodies’ produced through the technologies of disciplinary power. Instead, I continue to employ the work of Bourdieu and Scott throughout the remainder of this thesis, and the interplay between structure and agency to propose that the participants, in the formation of their own identities, did not adopt external constructions of teaching and schooling unquestionably. Governments, educational bureaucracies, and dominant social groups may try to use policy, ideology and measures of accountability to impose their ordering principles upon those they seek to govern, but reflexive teachers are sometimes able to ‘speak back’.

At the same time however, I began to see that there was a general discourse at Winstone Grammar, regarding the means and ends of education and schooling, and the role of the teacher within this conception. What was apparent was that many teachers relied on a discourse that was presented to them. Because of the numbers of students that teachers had to manage simultaneously, and because of the individuality of student learning, and the amount of work teachers had to get through just to keep afloat, they inevitably relied on routines and practices, ideas and identities that they were told were good for their students, and denoted good teaching. Hence, my starting point is Gramsci’s notion of ‘common sense’: the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world.
Common Sense

Ideology depends on a solid, coherent philosophical elaboration. At the same time, it must become embedded in the everyday, practical and lived experiences of the population if it is to enter into and influence the directions of social interactions. The goal is to have a particular way of thinking about one aspect of life move from activities of the state (for instance) and eventually enter other domains and become a diffused and prevalent way of thinking in everyday life. For this to happen ideology must, through the processes of hegemony, appear as natural, spontaneous and taken-for-granted common sense. Furthermore, it needs to be fitting with an individuals’ experiences and understanding of the world so that it appears as “the traditional wisdom of the ages” rather than revealing its true nature as “deeply a product of history” (Hall, 1996, p. 431).

In this way, hegemony works to manipulate public opinion into embracing an idea of a common language, a common way of doing things, and a common set of beliefs that necessarily exclude from the debate all ‘uncommon languages’. This construction of commonality-as-exclusion finds its justification in the discourse of common sense. According to Gramsci, common sense is “the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed” (1971, p. 419). It is the terrain on which the lived consciousness of the masses is formed, and as such it is the terrain upon which all political and social ideologies must compete (Hall, 1996).

In Gramsci’s view common sense is closely linked to the fragmentation and stratification of philosophical, scientific, and political ideas through history, and it contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic orders. But common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It evolves and changes in each historical, social, cultural and geographical locus.

Discourses are necessarily historical, as they are constructed and shaped in different spatio-temporal contexts. Given that every society creates its own regime of truth, there are specific types of discourse that function as true in different spatio-temporal instances.
These discourses, in turn, function as the norm for assessing truth or falsehood, since they are not imprinted in people’s consciousness as ‘natural’ or ‘true’. One of the reasons why the language of common sense appears to be so natural is because it has been dehistoricized. The language of common sense thus excludes any means for expressing beliefs or values contrary to those provided by the hegemonic order of society. For instance, the current debate regarding educational underachievement in New Zealand schools, and the widening gap between those who enjoy success and those who do not, conveniently leaves out the inextricable relation between schooling and wider contextual issues. As a result, it erases a long history of colonisation, immigration, linguistic oppression, race-class-and sex-ism and reduces the issue simply to teaching all students equally, in an effective and quality-controlled manner (Schleicher, 2011a, 2011b). While this discourse closes down the discussion and analysis vital to the continued existence of any democracy, it also robs people of any opportunity to shed light on their personal civic role to such a degree that they embrace it with the utmost faithfulness and respect, as an absolute fact of nature.

Common sense is the assimilation of the dominant ideology to the degree that it seems natural and is accepted uncritically. So it follows that the discourse of common sense is a form of social practice used by the dominant order to neutralize language and therefore the ensuing practices, institutions, assumptions and presuppositions. All this is shaped through historical, social, cultural, and ideological practices that, in the case of common sense, are either erased or made invisible. The outcome is that the discourse of common sense becomes a powerful tool to justify policies, political decisions, and practices that are largely designated to block dissent. So, the people not only embrace this commonsensical discourse; they create, recreate and redefine it.

In the context of this study, the promotion of a specific discourse of accepted conceptions of teaching and pedagogical practices did not allow any possibility for interrogation. The possibility of debate was closed down. In other words, instead of viewing the increasing diversity of New Zealand schools, and the challenges this poses to education, as holding any reason for addressing wider contextual factors that impact on the widening achievement gap, conservative scholars and policy-makers recoil into a fixed space of ‘individualism’. The
existence of any conceptions of teaching, other than the orthodox, is seen as a permanent threat to standard schooling.

Since my purpose in this chapter is a sociological analysis of knowledge that guides conduct in everyday life, I must begin with a clarification of that reality, as it is presented to, and through, the common sense of the ordinary members of the school. This is a task that, although theoretical in character, is geared to the understanding of a reality that forms the subject matter of the empirical world of everyday life.

Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by individuals and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. Their world not only consists of “a structural reality built on political and economic processes”, as Leistyna argued, but also relies on “symbolic systems to shape the kinds of meaning, identity, desire, and subjectivity that can work to ensure the maintenance of... the hegemony of ‘common sense’” (2008, p. 705). Hence, the world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these.

**The Discourse of Common Sense at Winstone Grammar**

Common sense understandings were at first difficult to discern at Winstone Grammar. While I was familiar with school settings, the lived reality I encountered at Winstone was somewhat foreign. But as the first few weeks passed, my new acquaintances taught me much about the facets of life at Winstone that many of them deemed to be “what everyone should know” (Field notes, March, 2011). As it happens, these aspects had become so taken-for-granted by the school officials and staff, they were often expressed as “how things are done around here”, but were also contained in the logic of “what’s best” or “what works”.

For instance, in the early stages of my fieldwork Sean gave me a tour of the school. While helping me to gain a sense of the layout and the location of particular departments, he also gave me some insight into who particular teachers were and their relationship with the Learning Extension Department. Many of these teachers were introduced to me before they
engaged with brief conversations with Sean about particular students and classes, or about the type of support that Sean’s team could help to provide throughout the coming term. These conversations helped to give me some insight to the common conceptions of teaching and learning across different departments. Furthermore, after leaving their presence, Sean would often provide me with some background about each of the teachers we met, which helped me to contextualise these initial insights.

At the conclusion of our tour, Sean asked another teacher-aide to take me to the appropriate administrative staff who required me to complete some documents before providing me with a set of keys, an access card to the photocopier, and login credentials to access the school computer network. As Catherine guided me through the administrative labyrinth, she informed me as to who were the key people to “be on the good side of”, and who would “fix any problems, just to make you happy” (Field notes, March 2011). As we passed numerous teachers, she whispered as to whether they were “good sorts” or “raving lunatics”. But most importantly, she began to provide me with insight into the social hierarchy of the school, as perceived by a member of the least powerful group. Nowhere was this more clear, than when we entered the staffroom just prior to morning interval to have a cup of tea. As Catherine brewed the tea, I went to sit at one of the closest tables. But Catherine called out, wet tea bag in hand, “Not there, that’s the science teachers table.” As I moved to the next table, she again stopped me. “No, that’s maths. Up there,” she motioned. As I moved in the direction she had pointed me towards, this scenario was repeated, somewhat comically, several times until I reached the smallest table, in the furthest corner of the room.

Not long after this incident, the annual “Best Schools in Auckland” edition of Metro magazine was published, with a feature article on Winstone Grammar. The impact of this publication, proudly displayed on the walls of the staffroom, offers another example of the taken-for-granted at work at Winstone Grammar. As I read the article I understood it as a reflection of the demands of a school culture, through the projected image of the school, which built pressure for perfection and performance, often in forms that were impossible to sustain. I considered the impact to be essentially placing the moral obligation on individual
teachers and students to uphold the reputation of the school in the wider community, particularly with regards to academic “success”. When I spoke with teachers about the article, the standard reply was built around “usual practice” at Winstone, and the expected work of a teacher in general. While this can be interpreted in a very positive light, it also held the potential to reinforce the politics of blame that I referred to in chapter three: in the celebration of the school’s success, teachers were deemed responsible for student achievement regardless of other considerations such as the school context. There was also, therefore, a tendency to blame teachers if students were not achieving according to specified norms and expectations.

The discourses that surround schooling as serving the economy, teachers as a-political, and student achievement based on individualism and meritocracy were deeply entrenched at Winstone, such that they appeared to be taken as common sense. Throughout the school, teachers used similar language to talk about teaching and learning. Many of the teachers I spoke with believed that they could make a difference in the lives of their students, through raising student achievement and improving their life chances. And they stated that they tried to address diversity among their students. How these discourses were enacted in the school was largely determined by the ‘institutional habitus’.

The institutional habitus can be understood as “the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation” and so consists of a “complex amalgam of agency and structure” (Reay, David, & Ball, 2001, np) The discourses contributing to the institutional habitus of Winstone Grammar were collective in nature, and at times pre-dated current staff members. They were often contrived outside of the classroom, reflected the rhetoric of formal policy discourses, and were imposed top-down by policy makers, school management, or more senior or more vocal staff members. The common understanding of the underlying, and unconscious, rules of practice allowed the Winstone faculty to function as a collective. The common sense rules of practice formed a practical consciousness, and became embodied within individuals in much the same manner as Bourdieu’s habitus. The effect of objective institutionalisation, according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990a, 1990b), is the generation of a sense of permanency and opacity of
practices, enabling them to exist and operate beyond the reach of individual consciousness and power. As such, the enduring nature of collective social practice was difficult to change.

The interrelated issues of ‘streaming’ and ‘cultural inclusion’ serve as a good illustration here. The practice of streaming had a strong presence at Winstone Grammar. Students in years 9 and 10 were grouped by ability, according to their results in e-asTTle, an online assessment tool, developed to assess students’ achievement and progress in reading, mathematics, writing. Three streams, or bands, ran at each year level and were referred to as A-Band, the students with the highest levels of achievement, B-Band, and C-Band. In years 11, 12 and 13, students were not streamed according to such summative assessment results, but most subjects ran different “pathways” (Strategic Plan, 2008-2012), which were often referred to as “academic pathways” and “practical” or “non-academic pathways”. Entry to these pathways was usually determined at the end of the previous year, when students would select which subjects they would like to take, and teachers would sort students into the stream they deemed most suited to individuals. Often, individual’s assessment records would be scrutinised before a decision was made. However, as my discussions with teachers revealed, decisions were just as likely to be made based on students’ character rather than their assessment results, as this extract from an informal conversation illustrates:

So, last year we were going through the class lists right, and I come across [student’s name] on the list for the academic class, and I was shocked. She was a right pain the year before and I just knew she shouldn’t be there. So I take it up with [the Head of Department], who told me that she’d passed the pre-requisites to get in. But I knew that her behaviour would just disrupt the whole class, and other kids would suffer because of that, and eventually [the HOD] changed her to the other pathway. (Field notes, May 2011)

Differences between streams, in both the senior and junior school, played a significant role in shaping the emphasis of teachers. Those teaching higher streamed and/or senior academic classes were afforded the opportunity to concentrate on teaching without major
concerns over attendance, lateness, unpreparedness and disruptive behaviour. And when
problems did occasionally surface, there was normally consensus between the attitudes of
parents and teachers, and support from home.

The situation was quite different for teachers of lower streamed or less-academic classes. It
was apparent that teachers had to cope with truancy and lateness, uniform misdemeanours
and lack of appropriate equipment, including books and pens, and a perverse lack of
confidence from students who believed that they could not succeed at school. The high
rates of students lacking suitable transport or wet-weather clothing meant that many of
these students sat in wet clothing all day during winter months. All of these issues meant
there was less time for direct teaching. Communication with the parents and homes of
many of these students proved difficult, as did language differences. Inevitably these
differences shaped teachers’ perceptions of teaching and what level of achievement was
possible.

During my role as a teacher-aide, I found that the focus for low-streamed classes centred on
“doing work”, remembering key words, and filling in worksheets. Many teachers did not talk
to students about learning or thinking. They talked about paying attention and not annoying
others. They talked about the resources the students needed to use; about how long the
activity should take and what would happen if it were not finished on time. When I tried to
explain particular concepts to the students I was working with, to focus on their
understanding, it was sometimes implied that it was not worth the effort.

For example, during one of 9-C’s science lessons, their task was to colour in a diagram of a
flower using a different colour for each part. Their teacher, Philip, read a set of instructions
to the class before writing brief steps on the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. Philip
then sat at his desk, making notes for his upcoming senior chemistry class, before casually
strolling around the different groups. As I worked with a small group of girls to identify the
parts, they were quite interested in their functions and wanted to know more about how
the different parts interacted with each other. I had to think back to my own time in a
science classroom, but coupled with what knowledge I had picked up as a keen gardener I
helped them to understand that the purpose of the flower was for reproduction, by producing a seed from which new plants would grow. I tried to explain how the pollen was produced by the anther, which was perched atop the filament, and that for reproduction to occur, the pollen had to be transferred to the stigma. As the girls began to realise that flowers contain both male and female parts, they started to get confused. The diagram they were colouring was not much help. It seemed to be a copy of a copy; the original lost long ago. I left them for a moment, and walked outside to see if I could find an actual flower to help them better see the different parts they were required to identify. I returned with several hibiscus flowers, and the girls proceeded to carefully separate the different sections, closely examining them before correlating them with the parts on the diagram. At the conclusion of the lesson, I spoke with Philip and shared my impression that the students seemed to enjoy learning about the different roles of each part. We spoke briefly about some of the students, and the direction of forthcoming lessons. During this discussion he made it clear that there would be no further opportunities for experiential based activities, as “we have to knuckle down and get serious with getting through this stuff”. What’s more, as we walked towards the door, he shared his belief that this type of activity, and the specific content of pollination and plant reproduction, was a disservice to the students in 9-C, as it would “be of no use to getting a job later in life” (Field notes, May 2011).

Later that week, Sean invited me to attend a meeting with several teachers who were acting as representatives from their respective departments. The first period of examinations were looming, and the teachers had gathered to consider arrangements. Much of this meeting attended to logistics of scheduling rooms and timetabling specific exams, but one brief phase of dialogue is worth divulging here. The discussion had moved to consider the junior exams and the provision of reader/writers and extra-time for those students entitled to this support. At this point, Sean raised the question about provision for students in C-Band classes. His query puzzled many of the teachers in attendance, and it was clear that the expected organisation was for them to be included in the established routine. Sean then made a point of asking each teacher whether his or her department provided a different level of knowledge, or a different scope of the curriculum to C-Band classes. In each case,
teachers replied that their department either limited the number of topics, or units of work, which C-Band classes engaged in, or that they differentiated the level of content sufficiently that students only encountered a surface level of knowledge. Sean then posed the question as to whether it was fair to provide students with a different level, or amount, of knowledge but then expect them to undertake an examination that expected a much greater engagement of content. The general consensus was that the exams had to be set at a standard level, or it would not be fair for students who had sat a harder exam to then compare their results with students who had sat an easier version. But I truly felt that they missed the point Sean was trying to make. His point was not that assessments should be differentiated to allow every student the opportunity to succeed. Rather he was questioning the purpose and function of the exams themselves; whether they served the purpose of comparing and ranking students based on raw marks, or whether they provided feedback to students and teachers on how well the students had understood the content they had engaged with and what areas remained unclear. Instead, he was met with the age-old notion, “that’s the way it is done around here”, and his questioning spirit seemed to be domesticated.

Anecdotal evidence pointed to a long history of under-achievement and school dropout rates of students in lower streamed classes at Winstone Grammar. This assumption was confirmed when I spoke with the deputy principal who oversaw these statistics. I made several requests to obtain statistical data related to assessment results and school leaving statistics across the different streams, and also for data concerning the frequency that students were moved between bands and the justifications for such moves. On each request, I was told that the statistics for the issues at question did exist, and that I would be able to obtain a copy, but this never eventuated.

When I later, informally, asked teachers about how students ended up in different streams, very few identified issues of social class, ethnicity or culture, instead explaining that streams were based on “ability”, “intelligence”, and “work ethic” (Field notes, April 2011; May 2011). Some also pointed to behaviour issues, but when I followed up on this point they were uncertain whether they thought behaviour was a reason why students were designated to
different streams, or whether disruptive behaviour was symptomatic of being present in these classes day after day. Students, on the other hand, were keenly aware of these issues.

When I spoke with students about the differences between the streams, on top of the standard responses of “smart kids” and “good kids”, they also pointed to issues of economics, ethnicity and culture, with comments such as... “Most of those other classes are white kids...” “Yeah, or Asians”; “You hardly ever see any Islanders in those classes”; “Those kids have got more money than us,”; and, “Their families are rich...” (Field notes, July 2011).

When I questioned them about these responses, they were quite perceptive of cultural differences, believing that differences in the streams were not to do with biological differences, but rather that school was “better suited to Palagi20” (Field notes, July 2011).

While they were also adamant that money played a part in the differences between streams, they were less sure as to how it impacted. “I don’t really know how; all I know is that I’m sure their families are more rich than us... maybe their parents buy their education haha!” (Field notes, July 2011).

At the other end of the spectrum, students in higher-streamed classes put the differences down to work ethic and individual responsibility, with comments such as: “Anyone could be an A-bander if they really wanted to...”; and, “Those kids in those classes don’t work hard, they never do any work outside of class, like home work and assignments and stuff”.

A caveat needs to be entered here. The discussion of streaming in this section is used to provide an illustration of the enduring hold of common sense discourses at Winstone Grammar. It is not intended as a promotion of, or a challenge to, the practice of streaming.

In light of research considering the effect of “school-mix” (for instance, Lauder & Hughes, 1990; Thrupp, 1999), there are variables that were not taken into consideration here, which would be required to justify such an argument. At Winstone Grammar, streaming had a strong influence on segregating students from particular socio-economic classes and

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20 Palagi is a Samoan term often used to describe foreigners or anything that does not ‘belong’ to Samoan culture. It is usually used in reference to Pakeha New Zealanders, but at Winstone it was just as often used to describe western Europeans from different nations, including Australia, South Africa, and Britain as well as European and North American countries.
particular ethnicities were over represented in lower streams. At other schools, with a different mix of ethnicities and different socio-economic characteristics, the effect of streaming may have had different effects.

What the example of streaming does illustrate though, is the contradictory notions that were upheld in the common sense discourse at work in the school. While many teachers with responsibilities for lower streamed classes saw their students’ destinies as a reproduction of working class positions in life and that they were powerless to intervene, in other instances they still upheld the common sense notion that the power of their teaching could make a difference in the lives of their students, irrespective of the socio-cultural and economic issues that students face. This is possibly due to the fact that teachers were seldom responsible for only low-stream or only high-stream classes. While they celebrated their part in the success of high achieving students, they were quick to detach themselves from the low achievement rates of others.

One problem with making socio-economic issues invisible is that there is significant evidence that schools serving students of low SES make the best progress when they acknowledge and respond to the cultural backgrounds from which their students come (Smyth & McInerney, 2007). This point is entwined with a further example of the discourse of common sense at work at Winstone Grammar.

At Winstone Grammar, culture was understood as synonymous with ethnicity. But this conception misses a central tenet of Smyth and McInerney’s work, that culture is not just a matter of ethnicity; it has social class dimensions. To concentrate on the former at the expense of the latter is counterproductive. Foreclosing any discussion of socioeconomic issues shuts down any deliberation of, or provision for, contextual claims when faced with the politics of blame. Yet this is precisely what happened at Winstone when initiatives related to students’ cultural backgrounds were introduced.

There was a strong rhetoric of cultural inclusion at Winstone Grammar, and many staff members expressed pride in the diverse array of ethnicities that comprised the student body. An impressive collection of national flags nobly adorned the walls of the school hall,
symbolising each nationality represented in the school. The school’s overarching values
drew from tikanga Maori, and included: Whanaungatanga, “fostering relationships and
cherishing diversity, seeking the support of parents, families and whanau and making good
connections between people”; and, Manaakitanga, “uplifting, fostering and nurturing the
mana of each person” (School Website, 2011). Each of these symbolic gestures pointed to
the value placed on cultural inclusion; an interesting juxtaposition to the discernable
structural exclusion posed by the process of streaming. But the most significant school
initiative that I wish to draw attention to in this sense was the push for “culturally
responsive teaching”. The emphasis of this initiative was to move teachers away from
“deficit thinking”, which suggests that “interpretations of students, their families, and their
home life dominate teachers understandings of why students don’t achieve” (Culturally
Responsive Teaching Professional Learning Cluster (PLC), August, 2011), and towards more
positive frames of reference which focused on developing “positive classroom
relationships”. It was evident that the culturally responsive teaching initiative drew from
wider, Ministry of Education led strategies, such as Te Mana Korero (Ministry of Education,
2007c), Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008-2012 (Ministry of Education, 2008), and, Te
Kotahitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, &
Richardson, 2003). While the explicit focus of these initiatives concerned the educational
experiences of Maori students, the scope at Winstone Grammar was widened to focus on
students of all ethnic groups.

The emphasis on student diversity had the worthwhile intention of rejecting the notion of a
‘normal’ group of students alongside ‘other’ groups of students, thus positioning diversity
and difference as central to teaching practice at Winstone. However, the problematic
nature of “deficit thinking” reinforced the politics of blame, as Gutschlag (2007) and Thrupp
(2008, 2010a) have revealed in critiques of Te Kotahitanga. For instance, Thrupp noted that,

by strongly dismissing sociological arguments about the impact of socio-economic status on
Maori achievement as ‘deficit theorizing’... Te Kotahitanga chimes with the view expressed
by Anne Tolley that poverty is too often used as an excuse for underachievement”. (2010a,
p. 39)

He went on to suggest that there is,
overt ideological work being done here as the project seeks to actively prevent teachers from thinking about socio-economic issues through defining sociological perspectives as deficit theories and then requiring teachers to ‘positively and vehemently reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students’ educational achievement levels’. (2010a, pp. 39-40)

The idea that most teachers had succumbed to deficit thinking regarding students of minority cultures informed the main thrust of the culturally responsive teaching initiative. Lead teachers and educational support groups, such as Team Solutions facilitators, who were brought in to help establish the project, reinforced this view. But when I compared the supporting evidence on which the initiative was based with my own discussions with numerous teachers throughout the school, I sensed that it lacked the complexity of teachers’ thinking about their potential to make a difference to student achievement and their internal conflicts with this issue.

Most teachers were resolute that there was only a limited extent to which they could be held accountable for student failure. Particularly in the case of lower-streams, they pointed to issues of student motivation and self-concept, family background, and home-life as factors they had no control over. These factors were expressed repeatedly, albeit with differing value assigned to the level of responsibility teachers had, which reinforces Thrupp, Mansell, Hawksworth and Harold’s (2003) findings. And like Thrupp et al.’s findings, the teachers I spoke with also held complex and conflicting constructions of whether they could be held to blame for student underachievement. Many had wrestled with the tension between believing they could make a difference, and accepting their powerlessness, which illustrates,

how the often contradictory thinking of teachers... in this area may be grounded in years of experiencing both the triumphs and disappointments of teaching and justifying their continuing role as educators. (Thrupp, 2008, p. 11)

Hence, teachers’ were clearly struggling over these complex rationalisations and were poorly served by the simple depiction as deficit thinking.

The common rhetoric obscured considerable differences in individuals’ understanding and practice. Such differences account for contextual variables, such as teaching experience, different curriculum areas, and different interpretations of parent and student expectations
and aspirations. And they also point to the complexity of teachers’ thinking about the ways in which they can make a difference to student achievement, the extent to which they are able to do so, and the struggles they may face in the process. Such complexity, which was not easily articulated by the teachers I initially spoke with, belies the notion of common sense and has the potential to undermine the taken-for-granted. This is in accordance with Bourdieu’s (1990b) cautioning that collective habitus should not be viewed as impersonal preconditions that lead to singular views and practices beyond those that result from an individual’s embodied habitus. Although individual teachers were united within the homogeneous social conditioning of the institutional habitus, as Bourdieu believed, such a situation should be viewed as diversity within homogeneity. Although many teachers identified with the common sense discourse that formed the institutional habitus, their social position was dependent on their personal history and particular experiences within the field of practice. Hence, the experiences and interpretations of individual teachers differed according to their position in the field.

What is missing from the discourse of common sense is acknowledgment of the complex and contextualised realities of teachers’ work, and allowance of diverse ways to develop students learning and evaluate their progress. The claim that student success and the remedy to under achievement would come through ‘appropriate teaching methods’ in orthodox classrooms was very much part of the discourse of common sense that, under the pretence of the ‘common good’, veiled inevitable exclusions. In this respect, this proposition is hegemonic in that a group of people were able to define what the common good was and then impose this monolithic worldview by privileging some meanings over others. The questioning spirit of more critical teachers seemed to be domesticated.

I have attempted to illustrate that orthodox customs are implicated in hegemony through several means. For Gramsci, these customs bear a constitutive potential, insofar as a people are the ideas they believe and practice – the worldviews they embody and around which their habitus forms. As Gramsci foresaw, those people limited to the narrow worldviews of the orthodox and the inherent inconsistencies in the common sense, remain unable to
organise politically. Peter McLaren summarised this condition with reference to the field of education thus,

I believe that teachers have been swindled into accepting a number of specious notions: that they are primarily ‘practitioners’ rather than what Antonio Gramsci called ‘organic intellectuals’; that theory largely is unrelated to practice; and that theoretical discourse is primarily the select preserve of ivory tower intellectuals. Of course, those who occupy positions of power in our capitalist society don’t want teachers to have a firm grasp of political and sociological theory... Such a theoretical understanding, if embraced by a significant number of teachers, could have a devastating debilitating effect in dislodging the powerful and the privileged from the top of the capitalist hierarchy. (McLaren, 2007, pp. 53-54)

In McLaren’s view, the ruling-class would prefer that teachers think about practice using ideologically domesticated sound-bytes supplied by Ministry divulged rhetoric. Indeed discourses of common sense can be understood as sets of institutionalised practices that produce limited ways of going about day-to-day practices. The standardisation and normalisation of such practices produces what is taken as the ‘accepted’ ways things should be done; that is, the logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1990b). In defining the range of customary, accepted, and expected practices, particular expressive capacities are delimited as marginal, false or perverse. Hence, this points to a hegemonic project, which serves the interests of some at the expense of others. It tends to neuter critical ideas that are able to enter it. Its illusion-inducing effects bars effective social analysis, and it borrows language and concepts, which bind people intellectually to the leading class. Gramsci called instead for “an effort through which the spirit frees itself from common sense” (Gramsci, 1995, pp. 421-422).

**Beyond Common Sense**

While common sense is the realm on which the dominant ideology is formed, it is also the site of resistance and challenge to this ideology. Teachers are not merely passive players compliantly and unquestioningly upholding the discourses that the ideology presents. While they may have had difficulty articulating the processes of subjection taking place around them, some teachers were able to ‘answer back’, questioning external constructions of the subject in the formation of their own identities (Shore & Wright, 2011). Likewise, Michael Apple has recently argued against the passive view of socialisation that informs many studies of schooling. He points out that teachers “are creatively acting in ways which often
contradict these expected norms and dispositions which pervade the school and the workplace” (2012b, p. 87). It is this active aspect of the social orientation of teacher’s knowledge that I was particularly drawn to.

In considering teachers’ knowledge I was drawn to the work of two scholars, who both raise important questions about the role of the vernacular in fostering knowledge that goes beyond the common sense. Paul Willis’ *Learning to Labour* (1977) paid close attention to the educational factors that made critical consciousness possible, but always limited. He had a strong commitment to an image of the subject as possessing an active, productive consciousness that was historically and socially placed, but not inescapably shaped into a passive acceptance of ideology. Similarly, Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire) worked to construct a pedagogy that encouraged such consciousness, which created vernacular theorists.

Willis’ (1977) study focused on a group of male youths in working class schools, “the lads”, who rejected the culture of schooling. They interpreted this culture as teaching courtesy, submissiveness, acceptance, and obedience – the skills necessary for middle-class success. The lads opposed those values with their own: scepticism and rebellion against school rules, creation of personal space within unbending disciplinary structures, and affiliation with other rebels. Willis understood the lads to possess distinct theoretical insights into the official culture, which means that:

> Whole hinterlands open up of what lies behind the official definition of things. A kind of double capacity develops to register public descriptions and objectives on the one hand, and to look behind them, consider their implications, and work out what will actually happen, on the other. (Willis, 1977, p. 25)

What is interesting is that, without training in ideological analysis, the lads recognised that the official version is only one of many possible explanations. Yet, Willis paid closer attention to the forces that limit those insights, and which keeps even those who understand the system complacent in it.

Freire (1970) constructed a pedagogy that would enable such critical consciousness rather than push it aside. Like Willis, Freire did not minimise the oppositional forces to critical
consciousness of the dispossessed, stating that, “their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression” (Freire, 1970, p. 30). The result was that they could see and feel the fact of oppression but could not “grasp the causes which are a more rigorous explanation of the facts” (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 48). The tools for understanding those systematic social and political causes were to be provided by politically active bourgeois intellectuals.

But, as Aronowitz (2009) has argued, Freire did not mean to imply that the working-class required the leadership of foreign intellectuals. Rather, Freire had an immense respect for the ability of the oppressed to take their search for consciousness into their own hands. The role of the intellectual, for Freire, was to dialogue with the oppressed so that their own critical awareness of social reality could be put into words.

**Teachers Questioning Common Sense in Search of an Alternative**

The idea that teachers are more than docile bodies has been widely invoked since the work of John Dewey (Smyth, 2010). The work of Henry Giroux (Giroux, 1985, 1988, 2002, 2012; Giroux & Aronowitz, 1985) has presented some of the most vocal support to the conviction that teachers are political actors. Much of his writing was in response to the aforementioned neoliberal reforms, which he noted reduced the standing of teachers to “low-level employees... whose main function seems to be to implement reforms decided by experts in the upper levels of state and educational bureaucracies” (1985, p. 20). The result has seen a widening chasm between the politicians, researchers, and policy makers who decide what is best for schools on the one hand, and the schools and teachers who undertake work with students via curricula and pedagogy on a daily basis. Hence, teachers’ work is subjugated in favour of “the orders of others” (Giroux, 1985, p. 21), leading to a “separation of conception from execution... and the devaluation of critical intellectual work for the primacy of practical considerations” (Giroux, 1985, p. 23).

Giroux claimed that to challenge the place of injustice in education, including neoliberal ideology, teachers must be understood as *intellectuals*, and their work must be seen as a form of intellectual labour. Similarly, Herbert Kohl claimed that teachers must be
intellectuals as well as practitioners, stating, “An intellectual is also someone who has the courage to question authority and who refuses to act counter to his/her experience and judgement” (1983, p. 30). But to puncture the aura of the common sense is no easy feat. To do so, we have to understand how teachers develop the reflexive awareness that enables them to speak back to hegemonic ideology.

In recent times, the concept of ‘the reflective practitioner’ has become somewhat fashionable. As expected, I encountered numerous types of reflection at Winstone Grammar. The dominant form of reflection focused on clarifying personal meaning and allowed teachers to examine personal teaching habits in context and to make adjustments to their practice. A second type of reflection, which was more technical in nature, allied with teachers assessing how well they were using particular teaching strategies and how their practices compared with that of others teaching similar content. These two forms of reflection dominated the Professional Learning Clusters (PLCs), which teachers were required to attend as part of their professional learning. The PLCs consisted of small groups of teachers, sometimes based on their shared educational or pedagogical interests, at other times grouped more arbitrarily. Each week they would gather to discuss their individual progress on “teaching inquiries”, which they were required to undertake and which formed a key component of the school’s teacher-appraisal system. The types of reflection that took place during these meetings can be seen as a kind of thoughtful evaluation; a useful practice for considering the performance of one’s teaching. However, neither focus necessarily challenged the status quo in terms of confronting the structures nor ideologies that underpin education in its current form, and in fact often resulted in reinforcing injustices through adherence to the common sense.

The historical and structural issues that shape accepted modes of teaching so narrowly, according to Smyth (2010), will never be altered while attempts to improve teaching are considered exclusively in terms of individual deficiencies within teachers’ pedagogical stocks and styles.
In contrast, the critical orientation that the participants brought to their own reflective practices held more promise. Being critical was an essential attribute of the participants in this study. In fact, this critical facility was part of their professional expertise and was linked to their reflective practices. The participants, each in their own way, would juxtapose ideas, situations, or experiences and impressions against theories and established practices in an attempt to clarify and illuminate and ultimately to make significant change. This orientation not only aimed at clarifying educational means and ends, but also opened those means and ends to critical scrutiny.

In simple terms, being a critical teacher in this broader sense meant not accepting ideas, theories and concepts on face value or as common sense. That is to say, the critical teachers I refer to here were questioners, thinkers, and healthy sceptics.

As I gained the trust of my participants, they revealed their own accounts and understandings of their teacher selves. Their understandings were lived, relational and context specific stories of what they understood their role as a teacher to be, alongside what they considered best for their students’ intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth. Their understandings were considered and critical, many of which ran counter to the discourse of common sense at their school.

The teacher-participants were also sensitive to the Janus face of commonsense. They worked in tension between the common sense stories that dominated the professional landscape and their own educational values and beliefs. From their different and diverse perspectives, it is possible to distil several themes to their intellectual and political engagement. They include: (a) problematising approaches to teaching; (b) viewing classrooms as sites for serious inquiry; (c) considering access to academic and higher order knowledge; (d) bringing students lives and cultural knowledge into the centre of curriculum; and (e) considering the impact of wider sociological factors on students’ school experiences.

These themes are not intended to serve as any type of ‘best practice’ for the intellectual or political work of teachers, but to allow readers to translate the findings into their own experience and particular social and institutional context. Similarly, they highlight the
important role played in intellectual engagement not just by moral outrage, but also by the particular stances the participants chose, and the particular situations in which they pursued their commitments and orientations.

Problematising teaching serves as an umbrella concept for the way the participants engaged intellectually. In essence, this orientation involved challenging habits and taken-for-granted methods and questioning fundamental assumptions. This orientation accorded with many of Smyth’s (1995, 2010) critical questions, which moved the examination of teaching significantly beyond limited individualistic frames or exclusively in terms of personal deficits. The orienting questions that guided participants’ engagement included:

- What is happening here?
- Who says this is the way things ought to happen?
- What influences are defining the work of teaching?
- What contradictions and grievances are inculcated in this defining?
- How are issues of skill, competency, professionalism, and autonomy being expressed in the social relations of teaching?
- Whose interests are being served in the configuration of the professional landscape of teaching? How are the re-defined labour relations of teaching being played out?
- Whose voices are being excluded, silenced, denied?
- Why is this particular initiative occurring now?

(Adapted from Smyth, 1995)

The participants frequently told stories about their growing dissatisfaction with teaching, and more generally with schooling; dissatisfaction so deep that it led them to doubt, and eventually reject, the premises that orthodox conceptions of schooling and teaching were based on – the common sense discourse. This is the starting point for what I will come to call ‘a vernacular theoretical practice’. That is, they were posing theoretical questions – in this case about curriculum, pedagogy, and the culture of schooling and teaching – without thinking of themselves as theorists or making use of an academically constructed critical language. Their experience in the everyday culture of the school led them to sense the contradictions in classroom and school activity that was perplexing, confusing, or troublesome. They felt the disparity between their own idealistic beliefs and the survival tactics they developed working within the highly systematised and hierarchical nature of
their professional landscape. They reflected on and began to comprehend the assumptions behind such dynamics and such powers. But they did not yet have a language to systematise those theoretical questions or a new set of assumptions to pose as an alternative.

The participants’ orientation to their work as a form of intellectual labour was evident in how they regarded the school and their own classrooms as *sites for serious inquiry*. They asked, and answered, questions concerning the purpose of schooling, how it works for some students, and what conditions act to exclude others. This orientation to teaching, according to Carlson and Apple (1998), is political in the sense that teachers do not take the nature of their work for granted; they were prepared to question how it came to be that way and what sustained and maintained that set of views.

I have already referred to Sean’s questioning of streaming practices in relation to school examinations, but this point deserves further elaboration here. Sean supported a more integrated form of schooling than current policies of streaming allowed. He believed that streaming “*segregated and differentiated knowledge too much, which can’t be good for our kids*” (Sean). A point to note here, is that Sean frequently made reference to “our kids”, at times meaning students at Winstone Grammar in general, and alternatively as students in lower-streamed classes and/or students with recognised learning difficulties who received support from the Learning Extension Department. While talking about the streaming structures at Winstone, he alluded to the purpose of curriculum and pedagogy, stating that,

> Streaming shouldn’t cut some students off from particular knowledge, you know. And it’s always the really important knowledge, like synthesising and analysing specific content and interpreting meaning... that our kids miss out on. Teachers should be able to use different methods and different strategies to help different students connect with that knowledge and develop those skills. (Sean)

At the same time, he recognised that some students progressed at different rates, and wondered if the arbitrary mode of progression, based on students’ age, was the only option. In each case, Sean observed that the orthodox practices retained their control by excluding opportunities for students in lower-streams to develop the knowledge required to
participate in higher-streams. Teaching in lower-streamed classes essentially promoted common sense conceptions of the world, which Sean noted, “imprison kids in those streams. They cut off their chances of developing more critical knowledge and awareness of real issues” (Sean).

Sean’s view of streaming resembles Gramsci’s views on the proliferation of vocational schools and their maintenance of the gap between ruling and working classes, reverting “to a division into juridically fixed and crystallized estates rather than moving towards the transcendence of class divisions” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 41). Like Gramsci, Sean endorsed a public schooling intended to:

Meet the needs of these kids who are marginalised and disenfranchised. You know, what’s hard is that these kids have got potential but they’re stuck in these classes doing meaningless things... when they should be learning how to make connections between concrete thinking and abstract thinking. (Sean)

In short, Sean believed that a comprehensive education would replace lower-order knowledge with higher-order knowledge, which would help to provide students in lower-streamed classes with access to the knowledge of the dominant classes and thus, “transform [them] through a process of organic development that can lead [them] from simple common sense to coherent and systematic thought (Gramsci, 1985, p. 413).

Like Sean, Peter also felt a level of dissonance when considering the orthodox view of his students, and the manner in which many staff members regarded his position in working with Pasifika youth. He began this discussion by explaining how he had come to return to his old school:

[The former principal] saw me coaching the kids and asked me if I’d ever consider working in a school... I’d never given it much thought but I said of course I’d have to think about it, being my old school and all... A couple of weeks later he came back and said the Board of Trustees would like to talk to me about a position we wanted to create, a youth worker’s position in the school. I asked them, well, what does a
youth worker in a high school do because I don’t think there were any in New Zealand at the time, 1990. And they said, ‘Well, we’re having a bit of trouble with our Pacific Island and Maori kids and we’re really wanting somebody to work with them, to engage with them.’ It turned out that it was the normal: lateness, non-attendance, discipline, fighting; just the normal sort of gamut of kids in trouble. I hadn’t had any training in that area, although I’d been in the police, but I decided to give it a go. They initially called the position ‘a truancy officer’, but that wasn’t my understanding of it when I first got the job, because I was a youth worker. But they said, ‘Look Peter, we want a few things we can measure and one of them is definitely non-attendance’. So we attacked it quite strongly and then it actually evolved into what I thought it would be, which was working to support our kids. (Peter)

Peter went on to explain that when he commenced his position at Winstone in the early 1990s, many staff members had quite negative views of Pasifika youth, and saw his position as primarily concerning student discipline:

They saw me come in as an enforcer, because I’d left the police, and they were like, ‘Obviously he’s been brought in to shape the kids up’, you know, get them all on [The former principal’s] side. I suppose I didn’t do too much to dispel any of that because I was quite tough on some of the kids to start with. (Peter)

Peter went on to explain how, over time, he changed the shape of the role “to better meet the needs of our kids... by getting away from all the discipline stuff, and getting more connected with the community and the families” (Peter). Yet the dominant perception of his role remained:

When I gave the talk to the first year teachers, you know, the first few weeks of them being here they’d be bringing kids through the door; ‘this kid won’t listen to me, won’t do his homework’, and well yeah okay I hear you, but you see, you know, that’s normal discipline, that’s normal classroom management. I’ll usually talk to the kid because chances are I’ll know them a bit, and have a bit of insight into what’s really going on in their lives, but hey, you have to build a relationship first. I have to work
really hard with the kids I teach to get to that point where, you know, where we’re sort of on the same page. It’s not easy being a teacher. It’s hard. (Peter)

Several weeks after this conversation, a planned staff meeting was re-scheduled to allow a professional development meeting to take place, again focusing on “culturally responsive teaching”. I asked Peter if he would be attending the meeting, and his response somewhat surprised me. I had assumed that Peter would take a positive position in relation to an initiative trying to foster positive relationships in place of negative ones. As we walked towards his car, he justified his reasoning to me:

Nah, I don’t go to those meetings. I don’t know, I did at first... but yeah, I don’t really buy into all of that non-deficit view stuff. When you’ve got a kid whose causing a bit of chaos and generally up to no good, they are a deficit. They’re deficient in what’s acceptable, you know lacking in ways to act and how to control themselves, and knowing the content of the subject... I don’t think the answer is trying to support that identity... it’s shouldn’t be about not thinking about the kid as a deficit, it should be about thinking about the kid in context. (Peter)

With that, Peter invited me to join him on a tour of the local community, where he pointed out where particular kids lived, some of his old haunts from when he grew up in Winstone, and some of the community changes he had seen over the course of his life.

Laura was another teacher who was concerned with how beliefs and practices in the school community worked to marginalise and exclude particular students. In addition to her curricula work, as Assistant Head of the Social Sciences Department, Laura had an active, and official, part to play in the pastoral care of students as an Associate Dean. What set Laura apart as a teacher ‘working against the grain’ was her strong commitment to interrupting conservative influences and developing structures that produced critical dissonance (Cochran-Smith, 1991a, 1991b). Her dealings with students’ emotional wellbeing and social difficulties, coupled with her own identity as a gay mother, had led to her forming a commitment to challenge homophobia and ultimately make Winstone Grammar a safer space for students’ diverse sexualities:
Homophobia is a big one for me. Changing stuff like that is really big because there’s some people that really care about that here. There’s a lot of kids that really care about it here and [Winstone] is absolutely point blank not a safe place to be if you are gay or transgender. It’s a horrible place to be. It’s fine for me, cause I’m at the top and I’m really out and it’s fine and I’m kind of impervious to whatever anyone is going to throw at me, but it completely isn’t for the kids here. And the most out, strong capable gay students don’t come out at school. Every few years I have ex-students come out to me, and I’ve not once had a student come out to me, a present student. (Laura)

In my discussions with Laura, she frequently critiqued the culture of teaching and schooling and problematised the policies and language of schooling that were taken-for-granted. Yet at other times, she unwittingly subscribed to the common sense discourse when issues arose that she hadn’t dedicated her time to critiquing and analysing. Her critical praxis in response to these concerns is further illustrated in an example in chapter six, concerning identity politics associated with the waving of national flags during the time of the Rugby World Cup.

In a similar vein, when I spoke with Rebecca about the constraints that impacted on her teaching, she mentioned many factors related to the politics of blame and the positioning of teachers as bearing the sole responsibility for student success or failure. These included reduced staffing, large class sizes, lack of space, resources and funding:

*Physically our space couldn’t handle it. We don’t have space for them. We don’t have the staffing for it and we want to have more students in our department. If we were supported to increase that positive growth, we should be given three classes of 20, not two classes of 30. (Rebecca)*

But she was also aware of an ingrained mindset that subtly shaped what she was able and unable to do:
The perceptions, parental perceptions of what students should be doing at school and what is valuable. I asked a year 10 kid, [student’s name], whether he was taking this subject next year and he just said, ‘My mum and dad are choosing the options’. So he has absolutely no say. When we had our meeting with the curriculum committee that was one of the things that we brought up, in terms of challenges. That challenge of perceptions and students who were really able, would love to take it, but won’t take it because mum and dad are deciding what’s important for them to take. (Rebecca)

Rebecca’s concerns had several dramatic and direct implications for students. The most obvious was a bringing of students’ experiences and cultures into curricula focus, as I will lay bare momentarily.

Following problematising approaches to teaching, and viewing classrooms as sites for serious inquiry, the third form of intellectual engagement was the consideration of access to academic and higher order knowledge. For instance, the critique of streaming I earlier attributed to Sean, aligns with his view that all students should have access to humanistic education, and with his concern that lower-streamed classes were effectively quarantined from this knowledge. There is nothing really conservative about Sean’s valuing of traditional canons of knowledge for working-class students. There is, in fact, a long tradition of negotiations and struggles within the international working-class movement intended to secure access to humanistic education for the working-class (Borg & Mayo, 2006). Senese (1991), for instance, argued that promoting ‘alternative discourses’ as a means to student empowerment may actually produce the reverse effect by further marginalising working-class students (and I would also include ethnic minorities here) from the educational process. He suggested that, “‘dialectical’ radical pedagogies threaten to retreat from knowledge structures that are the basis of requirements for intellectual power” (1991, p. 15). These requirements are what Sean deems to be “essential school knowledge”. Drawing on Gramsci, Senese stated:

The terrain of working-class possibility may be argued to center squarely on the effort to equip working-class children with the linguistic and cultural power contained in the power
codes of traditional academic studies... to win for the marginalised and working-class children the right to the class codes and skills which the privileged pass on to their own. (1991, pp. 16-21)

While acknowledging the need to scaffold students’ access to academic forms of knowledge, Sean felt that this would be more empowering than being subjected solely to vocational and instrumentalist forms of education, which he believed served economic interests primarily. Furthermore, Sean clearly believed that education in the humanities and liberal arts had always occupied a subordinate position in relation to more instrumentalist views of education. His advocacy of aspects of a humanistic education is therefore well in keeping with a socialist vision which has often found, in this type of education, elements for a logical alternative to an instrumentalist education. The instrumentalist type of education favours capital. Sean seems to suggest that it is the instrumentalist type of education that working-class students are overwhelmingly faced with through the separation of “academic” and “vocational” streams of students. His critique of this aspect of schooling is also well within the radical tradition of repudiating any kind of differentiation in the quality of schooling claimed to be made on the basis of “meritocracy” (Apple, 2006). In effect, he sees the whole process as one of “social selection on the basis of class and ethnicity” (Sean). That Sean was capable of making such a critique is not surprising, but does show remarkable insight on his part.

Sean ultimately rejected streaming as a narrow-minded parochialism that impeded critical praxis, but he did not call for its immediate eradication. Instead, he viewed its potential transformation as a slower process, built upon actual experience. Sean’s aim was to sensitively bring a larger consciousness to lower-streamed students, but he knew that abrupt revelations would accomplish little. While he felt uncomfortable about the differentiation of knowledge and how this “effectively segregated students” and “locked them into pre-determined pathways... [which] denied access to ‘powerful knowledge’” (Sean), he felt that there was still a part to play in “connecting advanced and abstract knowledge to students ‘zone of proximal development’” (Sean). So while he opposed the practice of differentiating curricula knowledge in a manner that cut off students’ access to that knowledge, he emphasised the role of teachers’ pedagogical practices in “connecting
students to that knowledge when they are ready for it” (Sean). Sean believed that pedagogy must “begin with what people already know, with what they learn in their primary social environments”, and that education must function as a “making of meaning over time, not an immediate imposition” (Sean). Not surprisingly, he encouraged teachers and teacher-aides to connect with the student vernacular.

Through his teaching of 10-Ca, Peter highlighted the tension between ‘individualism’ and ‘community’ as he sought to implement a critical democracy in the classroom. My observations of Peter’s teaching revealed the importance of enabling students to develop an understanding of power that is tied to increasing their sense of social responsibility. 10-Ca was a class made up of 16 students by the time I joined them in the second term. At the start of the year there had been “just over 20 kids”, but through a combination of suspensions, expulsions, transfers and dropping-out, the numbers had shrunk. I joined 10-Ca for their social studies classes each week, after I had met Peter through communal lunches at the Learning Extension Department. When I joined them, there was a strong focus on the end-of-year exam, which I was surprised at; not that this group of students would be engaged in their assessments, but that the exams were still six months away. When I asked Peter about this, he said that the early focus was mainly his plan, “You see there’s been a history of 10-C classes failing this exam and over the years the response has been to change the content that they have to learn, you know ‘dumb-it-down’ a little” (Peter). Peter was not sure how he felt about that response when I questioned him, as he did not deem it okay “that some kids just miss out”, but at the same time thought that “some kids are just at different levels right. Like you can’t expect all kids to be able to understand the more complex stuff” (Peter). But what he was certain about, was the travesty of removing specific units of work from the curriculum for the 10-Ca class; namely a unit about politics and democracy. “Of all the things to take out, I can’t understand why they do that. That’d be the one the kids would feel most passionate about and, you know, really get” (Peter).

The struggle that Peter felt caught up in concerned a societal ethos of competitive individualism on the one hand, and his own attempts to develop a collective sense of caring
and a commitment to a shared responsibility on the other. I will further illustrate Peter’s response to this struggle in chapter seven.

The hallmark of Laura’s socially critical teaching was her ability to engage her students with questions that fired their imaginations to question the forces that shaped their lives. Her senior classical studies class often broke from the mandated curriculum to compare ancient societal structures with contemporary arrangements, and students were encouraged to imagine how particular practices and ideas, would translate into the alternate settings. For instance, frequent connections were made between the use of propaganda by such figures as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and the use of advertising and self-promotion today. At the time of the 2011 National Election, this issue particularly held interest (Field notes, October 2011; November 2011).

While the above example seemed commonplace in senior academic classes, Laura also encouraged more analytical thinking with her lower-streamed classes. When I asked her to share some examples of how she did this, she spoke about a recent lesson she had had with a junior social studies class:

Social studies is one way I try to develop a sense of social awareness and justice... Yeah, in social studies we do lots of that. Like today for example, we’ve been studying different continents and looking at differences in developing nations and more developed countries, and thinking about connections to migration, like push- and pull-factors and stuff. Well anyway, today I had this PowerPoint I wanted to use to try to challenge some stereotypes. So I was showing them these situations of poverty and things like crime and riots, and then contrasting them with pictures of wealth, but I didn’t tell them that the poverty pictures were from so-called developed countries, like here, and Australia, and America. And the beautiful homes were from places in Africa and the Middle East and places we normally associate with poverty. But before we even got into it, like right at the start, they interrupted me and were telling me that there’s poverty here in New Zealand as well. That was my 9-C class. They sabotaged my lesson, but it was cool.
So then we got into this cool discussion about how we determine what poverty is, and why poverty is able to exist even in developing countries, and that even where there is really immense poverty there are some people who are so rich they can afford these really amazing things even though they are surrounded by really sad and unfair situations. (Laura)

Laura’s examples capture the essence of what Smyth (2010) contended is involved in critical teaching that emerges from everyday life: she engaged students with questions that had relevance beyond the classroom; she worked with students in ways that enabled them to delve more deeply into content that is normally presented to them; she challenged mindsets and orientations rather than reinforcing stereotypes; she listened to the voices that originated from within her classroom; she questioned the authority of the teacher as the sole source of knowledge; and she focused on how power is reproduced through structures and forms of language. Hence, her conceptions of teaching also supported the next form of political engagement.

*Bringing students lives, perspectives, cultures and experiences into the centre of curriculum* in a way that involved students as co-constructors and co-creators of that curriculum, rather than passive consumers was the fourth theme regarding the participants’ intellectual and political engagement. Their commitment to taking their students’ lives seriously often led them to modify the hierarchically scripted curriculum in order to accommodate the storied and narrative representations of the way students led their increasingly complex lives.

For instance, Rebecca understood that for many of her students, electing to take her classes was not about getting a grade, or about providing a pathway to employment, but rather about having a place to express their selves. Rebecca emphasised youth culture and opposed the view that students possessed no agency to think for themselves or as creators of culture. Rather she believed that young people have voices that should be heard and actions that should be studied. Her students often suggested the visual contexts and mediums that she used to teach the techniques and approaches under study,
A couple of years ago, [colleague’s name] and I recognised that our aesthetic was completely out of touch with the students... we were still thinking in a very traditional sense and then we noticed that some of the work they were producing, to us, to our aesthetic, was really jarring... When we started to look and see the stuff they were exposed to, and seeing what was actually happening in contemporary practice, we went ‘oh my goodness’, you know, what’s happening is where they’re at. We went ‘okay, our aesthetic is completely out of touch, we need to get with the programme’. (Rebecca)

A further example of authentic power sharing was highlighted in Joseph’s ability to convert the power of his position into an expertise of authority based on dialogue and empowerment. Based on “talking with” students, rather than “talking at” them, Joseph was able to overcome a major obstacle that the coercive character of schooling, and in particular the traditional power of the teacher, posed to taking democracy seriously. While dominant strategies included ritualised language; routines to control large groups; loud tones of voice; nonverbal communication to control or assert power; and the manipulation of the structure of classroom discourses to exclude certain students (Warham, 1993), Joseph tended to use less dominant strategies, despite 10-Cb being a fairly demanding and tempestuous class. Joseph’s strategies included, encouraging students; creating group coherence; restating what students said when they lose track of the discourse; encouraging positive thinking; asking favours; establishing long eye contact; using peer group pressure and manipulating classroom discourse to support and include students; and keeping quiet to allow students to take responsibility for a discussion. At times Joseph found this approach difficult to maintain, particularly when other professionals were present. On one such occasion, a visiting health professional had been invited to run a workshop concerning positive sexuality messages. The workshop included a variety of activities and topical issues, but I only want to draw attention to one incident. The presenter had engaged the class in a discussion with the purpose of establishing their prior knowledge. The students were clearly uncomfortable sharing their thoughts with this virtual stranger, and the presenter was clearly struggling to think of alternative ways of engaging them. Eventually she asked the students to list as
many different types of sexual activities as they could think of, but when they remained silent she resorted to listing particular activities and asking if they had heard of them. When she mentioned "digital sex", Kenneth jumped in with a response, “Oh yes! That is when you have sex with a calculator! Its kind of hard, but you’ve gotta know how to press the right buttons. It’s really only intellectual types who do that” (Field notes, August). The class erupted in laughter, and the scene turned chaotic with students calling out to one another and beginning to mock each other. The presenter was deeply embarrassed and did not seem to know how to respond. But while the dialogue went wayward, and comical, Joseph was able to use his less dominant strategies to subdue the uproar, and prompt Kenneth to take responsibility for his misconduct. The lesson continued, under Joseph’s direction, and resulted in an animated and advanced discussion about societal influences on teenagers’ sexual practices.

As teachers considered the political nature of their work, a fundamental shift occurred in the direction of genuine sharing of power with students. Their methods went considerably beyond what they deemed to be inauthentic and tokenistic attempts of initiatives that were developed outside the context of their lived realities. And some of their methods also meant that students became more active, unmasking questions that are usually marginalised or pushed off the social and educational agenda of schooling. More of these examples are included in chapter seven.

Considering the impact of socio-economic factors accounted for the final theme of the participants’ intellectual and political engagement. Peter’s awareness of these issues was evident in a number of ways: he and his wife were active foster parents, despite having five children of their own, and had cared for over twenty young people in need of support; he understood the need for the school to raise funds in addition to their government entitlement, but questioned the practice of making profits from students and their families through expensive uniform prices, of which the school had a monopoly; he established working relationships with social agencies to help students’ families obtain the support they needed, and were entitled to; and he leant on prominent community members to assist in developing student scholarships that would allow them to purchase necessary materials,
cover the cost of fieldtrips, and even contribute to their university fees for study post-school:

Well I call on a lot of people, that’s for sure. Yeah, there’s no way you’d want to take a whole lot of these things on by yourself. But when I first started I tended to do that, but it just overwhelmed us. You start to build networks. People you know that when you call on them they’re not going to shove you on somewhere else; that they are going to help you and help that particular kid. So... if you stay long enough in a place you build your own networks, ones that work, you know, that you know when you ring a certain policeman he’s going to go, ‘Yes Peter, okay brother we’ll do that.’ If you ring a particular doctor, ‘Yes, I’ll make time to see that student right now.’

You want people that have an aroha for the kids and you and I know what each other’s going to do in our particular roles so that when I send a kid to you, you basically know I’m not asking you to send a kid somewhere else. I’m going, ‘Stu bro, you know, do your thing.’

With this particular kid, whether it’s ringing [Name] at Housing New Zealand and going, ‘[Name], have you got a spare house somewhere for this family, can you do it? A Maori guy...’ And he’ll go, ‘I’ll look at it,’ and you know he’s going to look at it, you know he’s not going to go, ‘Oh, I’ll ring you back’ and ‘Oh, sorry mate I couldn’t do anything.’ At least you know he’s helped place at least three out of five people for you, you know. There’s a point system and he explains the whole system to them, so it’s not a mystery. ‘This is how you qualify for a state house...’ you know, and ‘Here’s the emergency housing that’s available in [Winstone].’

In Staverley Ave the Maori Women’s Welfare League have a half-way house. The Salvation Army have a house, and all the rest of it so they can key you into people straight away. So that’s really, really important. (Peter)

Like Peter, Sean was also heavily involved with connections between social agencies, students, and their families. Some of these instances involved Child, Youth and Families
(CYFS) meetings, juvenile court hearings, assisting students and/or parents into drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and working with clusters of schools in the wider Winstone area to foster better working relationships and help ease the transition of students as they changed schools.

**Vernacular Theory and the ‘Good Sense’ in the Participants’ Thoughts**

A common sense understanding of critical theory holds that critical theorists possess instruments and practices that allow them to identify the structures that the rest of us live by. That is, critical theorists do the theory work *for* society, which is otherwise dominated by these powerful structures. But I want to claim that it isn’t only ‘theorists’ who raise important questions about the premises that guide cultural practice. The teachers in my study dealt with theory in a *vernacular* mode, although they wouldn’t necessarily consider themselves ‘theorists’.

While observing my participants’ practices throughout the school, and listening to their thoughts as we dialogued together, I began to see the potential for an ideology to lose its authoritative and hegemonic power to stipulate the purpose of schooling and the role of the people who carried out their daily tasks there. Further analysis of the empirical data revealed this process to consist of three phases. Initially, the participants became aware of the processes of domination occurring around them. This was often due to a feeling of dissonance, which was impossible to ignore. Consequently, the awkwardness forced the participants to be attentive to the process of subjection in the fullest way, leading to the second phase: rejecting the imposed image of their subject position and its corresponding norms of behaviour. Finally, they began to develop a critical language through which to better understand their experiences, which was grounded in local concerns. This wide-awake state of existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life was taken up as ‘the new normal’, that is, it re-constituted their natural attitude by way of a ‘vernacular theory’.

Houston Baker (1987) first used the term vernacular theory to describe the strategies for articulating the African American experience through the musical genre of the blues. In following Baker, my use of the term in this study refers to the practices of the participants
who, lacking cultural power, were still able to devise a critical language appropriate to their own concerns, and that was different to the language of academic knowledge-elites, yet still led to fundamental theoretical questions.

Such theoretical practice is widespread in society, despite an apparent distrust of much academic theory, which is often viewed as a detached and totalizing practice, and a widening gap between theory and practice (Apple, 2006, 2012b; Britzman, 1986, 1991; MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2001; Peercy, 2012). As I suggested in chapter one, the point of critical theory is to raise questions about the dominant paradigm out of a distrust for totalising systems; the force of the discipline being its questioning, open-ended spirit. In this sense, vernacular theory does not differ in kind from academic theory. Rather, academic theory is simply a more rigorous and scholarly version of a widely practiced analytical strategy.

Vernacular theory begins in local concerns and engaged practices, and seeks to develop an explanation of an actor’s lived conditions of reality, in the actor’s local dialect – hence the adjective vernacular. This again suggests similarities with academic theory. Academic theory often begins in specific interpretive complexities, advances by local, disciplinary rules, and speaks in language that is only intelligible in the cultural context of academic institutions. While vernacular theories clearly lack the intellectual prestige of academic theory, I believe that it is academic elitism that blinds us to the theoretical contributions that these knowledges can make. Ergo, the distinctions between academic and vernacular theory have more to do with status and scholarly rigour, than with the tactics and objectives of these practices.

One of the reasons that vernacular theories are subjugated in relation to academic theories is because the teachers tended to speak in narratives, while academics construct systematic reports of empirical results. The fact that the teachers spoke in narratives can obscure the theoretical nature of their thinking. In academic discourse, narrative is often associated with the personal, the local, and the idiosyncratic. It does not have the epistemological prestige of more expository forms, which seem more suited to what is often thought of as the
detached, abstract nature of theory. But the theoretical work of the teachers in this study took place within narratives of practice; their theories were not detached from their local practices; rather, practice made possible theoretical questioning, which led to new guiding assumptions and made new practices possible.

**Vernacular Theory and the Habitus**

Field and habitus offer the potential for understanding how the participants’ reflexive awareness emerged with regard to their teacher identity. In particular, the participants’ reflexivity – their questioning of conventional notions of teaching and educational priorities – did not simply arise from exposure to, and identification with, a greater array of alternative conceptions of teaching. Rather, it was related to the tensions inherent in their concrete negotiations of conflicting teaching roles and educational discourses, which occurred as the participants moved between various social fields.

Bourdieu’s concepts provide more space for agency and reflexivity than criticisms of his work concede. Many of his critics have failed to see beyond the perceived determinism of the habitus (Alexander, 1995; Giroux, 1983b; Jenkins, 1992; Mouzelis, 1995). But his later work in particular (Bourdieu, 1996, 1998, 1999a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), suggested that moments of misalignment and tension between habitus and field might give rise to a heightened reflexive awareness. For Bourdieu, habitus operates at a subconscious level, unless individuals find themselves moving across new, unfamiliar fields. It is in such moments that an individual’s habitus may become:

> divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalences and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of the self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities. (Bourdieu, 1999a, p. 511)

This becomes what Bourdieu (2008) termed a *habitus clivē*, a cleft habitus, which is “inhabited by tensions and contradictions” (2008, p. 2008). For Bourdieu, reflexive awareness arises from an individual’s negotiation of the discordance they experience as they move within and across fields of social action. He was careful to emphasise, however, that despite the existence of multiple fields and an increasingly mobile population, such disjunctions between habitus and field are not common occurrences. Rather, most people
tend to spend the majority of their lives within compatible fields. Hence, there is usually a fit between an individual’s habitus and the social world they live in. In such arrangements, the habitus tends to be reinforced rather than challenged. This was not the case with the participants, who each spoke of the experiences of marginalisation and discordance. So, we can understand that instead of viewing reflexivity as an inherently universal capacity of social actors, Bourdieu appreciated it as a much more complex affair, emerging only with its experience of dissonance.

**Conclusion**

The emergence of a cleft habitus created ambiguous spaces in which the participants were able to engage in complex and creative reflections on the type of teacher they wanted to be and their place within the school. In short, the participants’ experience of dissonance led them to reflect upon the dominant discourse, its manifestations and the subject positions it offered. They reasoned about the different sorts of identifications and the relationships they implied. They made choices about what terms evoked their desired personal and political subject positions. And they suggested that the practice of scepticism was a popular – rather than academic – commonplace.

The participants did not come from a tradition of philosophical critique, yet they were quite capable of raising questions about the dominant cultural assumptions. They did so in ordinary language, and at times they were caught in the blindness created by un-reflexive language. Nevertheless, they undertook the difficult task of uncovering the cultural assumptions that dominated their society, and infiltrated their professional landscape more particularly.

They devised languages and strategies that were appropriate to their own concerns – concerns that emerged from intensely local issues, and which led to fundamentally theoretical questions. Hence, I came to see that teachers at Winstone Grammar were not necessarily passive victims of the power elites who controlled and created the discourse of common sense. Nor were they merely subjects so thoroughly immersed in ideology that
they could not perceive its pervasive presence. They were individuals who were capable of modest objections to the embodied systems of culture.

Their ability to demystify social reality required both theory and action. In this chapter I have referred to the participants theories as their ability to make sense of all levels of the everyday – that is, the why and how of what has been happening in their lives, and not simply a focus on what is occurring. In the following chapter I consider the spatial realm of Winstone Grammar, and the participants’ endeavours to create spaces where they could enact responses to their vernacular theories.
Appropriated Space

Space is a social morphology... To picture space as a ‘frame’ or a container into which nothing can be put unless it is smaller than the recipient, and to imagine that this container has no other purpose than to preserve what has been put in it – this is probably the initial error. But is it error or ideology? The latter, more than likely. If so who promotes it? Who exploits it? And why and how do they do so?

—Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space

Appropriated space is one of the sites where power is consolidated and realized, and indeed in its surely most subtle form: the unperceived force of symbolic power. Architectonic spaces whose silent dictates are directly addressed to the body are undoubtedly among the most important components of the symbolism of power, precisely because of their invisibility... Social space is thus inscribed in the objective nature of spatial structures and in the subjective structures that partly emerge from the incorporation of these objectified structures. This applies all the more in so far as social space is predestined, so to speak, to be visualized in the form of spatial schemata, and the language usually used for this purpose is loaded with metaphors derived from the field of physical space.

—Pierre Bourdieu, Physical, Social and Appropriated Physical Space

A Critical Spatial Lens

To apply a critical spatial lens to the sociology of education means seeing the difference that space makes to our understanding of contemporary knowledge formation, social reproduction and the constitution of subjectivities (Massey, 2005; Soja, 1996). Such a view is not divorced from time and sociality, but does recognise that these have been privileged angles of view in modernity. In this chapter I reveal the complex processes at work in constituting the social relations of ‘school space’ at Winstone Grammar as a crucial site and instrument that is deeply implicated with power. In doing so, I consider the ways school spaces are culturally produced, particularly with regards to the participants’ conscious intervention through cultural exchanges and political struggles. Spatiality (Lefebvre, 1991; McGregor, 2003, 2004; Soja, 1996) and Bourdieu’s notions of spaces or fields (1984, 1990b) are particularly appropriate to this task as they not only account for the co-constitutive relationship between theory and action, and structure and agency, or that social systems
are dynamic, contingent and open, but that ideas can be made to matter in the interests of change and social justice (Cox, 1996).

The spatial is implicated in the data in two ways. The first concerns the spatial and spatialising metaphors in the material culture of Winstone Grammar School, and how these ordered and reordered pedagogic practices and professional identities. However, it is important not to focus solely on the physical and material design of these spaces, as they were not merely a backdrop determining how people interacted with and within them and the meaning they took from them. People interacted with each other and objects in space and in so doing constructed, disrupted, and resisted meanings and understandings. They therefore invested certain meanings in their built environments through the forms of interactions in which they engaged. Thus, the material culture of Winstone Grammar was a complex spatial experience for the participants, compounded by the fact that the school itself existed within a network of physical, economic, political, and cultural relations. Consequently, what was understood as the purpose of education and the role of the teacher was not simply what was intended through formal accounts of teaching and education. Rather, these understandings were part of a wider skein of relationships both within and outside of the school institution. Hence, the second aspect concerns what can broadly be termed the sociology of space, examining the spatial orderings in workplace dynamics and specific pedagogic sites and the forms of knowledge, practice, and identity they included and excluded. Within this section, we can see that the spatial ordering of the professional landscape had a strong hold on the participants. Yet, these arrangements were always subject to disruption and resistance, as one cannot escape the wider networks within which such a landscape is enmeshed.

To examine these two aspects, in relation to the tactics of neoliberalism, I present my empirical observations along with the participants’ accounts throughout the text in order to substantiate and extend the theoretical concerns of the chapter.
Education and The Spatial Turn

Though many disciplines have been informed by the spatial turn (Massey, 1993), there has been little sustained discussion of the spatial dimensions of education (Edwards & Usher, 2003). While Edwards and Usher noted that some work has considered the use of space in school classrooms (for instance, Comber & Wall, 2001), students’ experiences in higher education (Nespor, 1994), and the spatial representations of educational change (Paulston, 2000), much of this discussion has remained at the level of technical implementation. There have been few attempts to provide a wider framing that explicitly highlights the spatial ordering of curriculum, pedagogy, professional practice, and student experience (Edwards & Usher, 2003). Thus, Peters has pleaded for “educational theorists to take serious questions of space” (Peters, 1996, p. 106) and to develop a politics of space.

Similar claims have suggested that educational studies have been slow to mine the insights of critical geographers. This is despite the fact, as Robertson (2010) suggested, that within the sociology of education we can observe a rich set of spatial references (e.g., social stratification; social classes; open, distance and distributed learning; student-centeredness; communities of practice); unfolding political projects which depend upon space as both medium and resource in the (re)structuring of existing world orders, states and education spaces (e.g., processes of globalisation, the construction of new regional territories, state governance strategies such as decentralisation); the lived spatial nature of education practices on social beings (e.g., the consequences of “tracking” or “streaming”); and, the spatial nature of the social production of subjectivities (territorial/place based, e.g., a New Zealand citizen, or a working class girl). The absence of a critical spatial lens in the conceptual grammar of educational sociology, claimed Robertson (2010), has meant that our theoretical understanding of the work that space is doing is under-developed.

In light of Robertson’s assertion, the theorists whom I draw on have demonstrated that social spaces are culturally produced by the history, economic systems, social relationships, and mores that define day-to-day life (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b, 1991; Harvey, 1990, 1993; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2005; Soja, 1971, 1989, 1996; Tuan, 1977, 1990). More than just understanding space as a transmitter of meaning, these scholars have begun
to map the ways space is continually redefined through social practices. More specifically, daily life in schools is informed by critical studies of schooling that recognise that teachers’ and students’ identities and lives are made and remade through the sites of everyday life. Like playgrounds (Gagen, 2000), and urban and suburban spaces (Davis, 1990; de Certeau, 1984; Haymes, 1995; Lefebvre, 1991), the spaces inside schools are shaped by the discourses of those who use them and who are also, in turn, shaped by these spaces. In this chapter I integrate theoretical premises and empirical data analysis to provide illustrative examples of how power relations were inscribed into the buildings, material practices and social spaces that constructed individuals. At the same time, social actors transformed these spaces as they appropriated them for their own purposes.

Though few qualitative studies of teachers’ experiences have focused on space itself as a site of social struggle, several studies have considered the social geography of schools. For example, Flores-Gonzalez (2002) described how rigid tracking of an urban high school in Chicago created two distinct social worlds of “school kids” and “street kids”. Valenzuela (1999) noted how school practices create different spaces for students who possess different amounts and forms of cultural capital. Other scholars have noted the ways students become segregated even in integrated schools (Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2003). Eckert (1989) noted the different spaces occupied by “jocks” and “burnouts” in schools, and Foley (1990) charted the social geography of a high school pep rally to note the ways social locations are normalised and reinforced through the seats students occupy at school events. These studies traced how the spaces students physically occupy reflect their social and academic identities within the school and, ultimately, their access to resources and opportunity. Though useful, such analyses focus on relatively static conceptions of space. In this chapter I argue that school spaces are constantly contested and leaky, bleeding into one another in significant ways as parties express multiple interactions.

The role of the physical environment in teachers’ work has also received little attention, despite surveys of workplace conditions suggesting its importance. Studies rarely go beyond suggesting the need for more decent space in order to improve motivation and job satisfaction, and to enhance teachers’ ability to work effectively. However, the occasional
empirical study has suggested a relationship between architecture and collaboration. For instance, Siegel (1999) has shown that the arrangements of space have immediate and far-reaching consequences for teachers’ ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish daily activities, the formation of professional relationships, and the sharing of information and knowledge.

Other scholars have raised critical questions about spatial formation in schools, particularly probing the ways certain discourses prevail in school spaces and why. For example, Fine, Weis and Powell (1997) traced how schools informed student discourses on race and racism through policies implementing racial integration. In one high school, school officials tacitly supported the reproduction of White supremacy and the racist assumptions of White, working-class, male students, while in another high school teachers disrupted the reproduction of racist hierarchies by creating spaces for students to reflect on the meaning of race, class, and culture. Fine, Weis, and Powell’s study offers an example of the ways school spaces are culturally produced, as school practices and pedagogies reflected the values and power struggles within communities and informed prevailing discourses.

Beyond the field of education, the spatial turn has entailed a focus on aspects of space and the construction of subjectivities with respect to: identity and the body (DeLauretis, 1998; Razack, 1999); resistance in space and place (Mitchell, 1995; Pile & Keith, 1997; Ruddick, 1990, 1997; Sibley, 1995); the gendering of space (Duncan, 1996; Massey, 2000); space and the performance of sexuality (Bell, Binne, Cream, & Valentine, 1994; Bell & Valentine, 1995; DeLauretis, 1998; Grosz, 1995; Wigley, 1992); and how space is produced through racialised practices and (neo)colonialism (Mohanram, 1999; Razack, 1998, 2002).

The quotes from Lefebvre and Bourdieu that open this chapter, point to the ways in which I have conceptualised space. My theoretical starting point, that school space provides a field of operation for a political discourse such as neoliberalism, rests heavily on the work of Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991). He asserted that space is socially constructed and used politically to produce social relations. His point seems so obvious that it is often overlooked. Yet a more critical analysis reveals that the neoliberal order is both evident in, and exploitative of
the school spaces of Winstone Grammar, working to erect and maintain the boundaries between autonomous, ‘responsibilised’, neoliberal citizens and irresponsible ‘others’. In this sense, the built environment of the school site has neither developed naturally as an ‘act of God’, nor is it value-free and socially neutral. The cultural artefacts and the organizations of space are the material realisation of neoliberal hegemony (Lefebvre, 1991).

Although being used ubiquitously, the term school space requires closer attention. I have conceived school space as the range of social locations offered by the buildings, the grounds, the arrangements of furniture and cultural artefacts, classrooms, staffrooms, and offices. In this sense, school spaces epitomise the tension between distinct places, in which concrete social interactions take place, and the apparent spacelessness of popular opinion and public discourse. While admittedly very broad, this definition of school space can be conceptualised further with the help of Bourdieu’s theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990b, 1999a), where he recognised the materiality of space, the social practices of actors, and the immanent rules that structure social relations of ownership, access and control of space, and the expected and accepted practices which occur in those spaces.

Like Lefebvre, Bourdieu viewed the design, governance and use of school space as reflecting the inscription of social structures in physical space. In his theory of practice, Bourdieu (1990b, 1999c) distinguished between two basic types of spaces: social and physical space. In social space actors are positioned towards one another on the basis of their economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. According to their position specific habitus (i.e. acquired dispositions to perceive and evaluate social reality, to think and act in a particular way), actors employ distinct social practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Physical space is the material abstraction of space, in which the laws of nature determine the relative position of elements. Bourdieu (1999c) understood social actors to be bound in physical space, as their bodies cannot be in two places simultaneously. This matters in defining the social “inasmuch as power is distributed spatially as well as socially” (Painter, 2000, p. 257). While the spatial boundaries of social space are blurred, Bourdieu broadly defined them as the point at which the logic of the field ceases to have influence on the actions of the individuals.
Similarly, Lefebvre understood social space as not just space itself; it is not a frame or a container that is designed to simply receive whatever is poured into it. On the contrary, social space “incorporates social actions” (1991, p. 33), and “is at once work and product – a materialisation of “social being” (1991, pp. 101-102, my emphasis). In this way, according to Lefebvre, all societies secrete space, producing and appropriating it as they go along.

The Spatiality of Winstone Grammar School

When I entered the space of Winstone Grammar School, I knew my place straight away. I entered the carpeted foyer of the school having followed the path beneath the leafy trees that lined the car park and past the sign asking all visitors to report to the general office. Standing in front of the polished counter, behind which several women were busy either answering phones or flicking through papers, I was struck by the immediate surroundings. A flower arrangement in front of student artwork; numerous glass cabinets housing school trophies; a notice board displaying newspaper clippings related to the school and its students; and a sign welcoming visitors in multiple languages. On the wall hung large wooden honour boards displaying the names of the head prefects, stencilled in gold lettering. The corridors beyond this neat foyer were filled with the energy of people going about their daily tasks – excited chatting, a mixture of broad smiles and furrowed brows, but overall a sense that they were happy to be there.

On that late summer morning, the architecture had done what it was designed to do – send the message that ‘we are in the business of education’, and celebrate the success that comes from competing in the school market place. Yet the stories and histories that the school wrote about its self – embedded and embodied in the sights, sounds and artefacts of the school context – were carefully selected. These stories were never static. Displays were changed; artefacts were put up and taken down as they were shaped by, and in turn shaped, what was understood as success. These changing artefacts in the school bear comparison with the changing policies and discourses of education, as the advancement of neoliberal agendas actively shaped the ground upon which teachers stood. Winstone Grammar, in this sense, was playing its part in a larger system of administrative control and
institutional governance; regulating citizens and governing space in the interest of creating “competitive commodities” that provide “workforce opportunities” to build “stronger economies”.

However, such everyday practices are problematic. The study of space at Winstone Grammar creates a unique and vibrant theoretical context within which to consider the ordinary and habitual moments of actors in the school. This theoretical framing is particularly useful to consider how neoliberal tactics bore down on the work of those whose ordinary lives unfolded in the school. These actors were never divorced from their material surroundings; they were never freed from the history of their surroundings, nor the way they were implicated by that history. They existed in dynamic relation with the world, contributing to and affected by multiple productions of meaning that bound the social with the material, refusing easy distinction between objects and the meanings they evoked. This was clearly visible in the choice of school emblem and motto at Winstone Grammar. The original use of the lion, as with the other Grammar schools in Auckland, was in recognition of the strength of the British Empire and a romanticised view of New Zealand’s colonial past. The development of an independent board of governors, and the decision to replace the traditional lion with the phoenix as the school’s emblem, were symbolic of the end of a colonial era at Winstone Grammar, if not necessarily the wider Winstone community.

As a process whereby people from dominant territories, usually expanding empires, leave the familiar old world and migrate to settle in a new place, Winstone had experienced a colonial history, as I illustrated in chapter three. Individuals were often pawns of imperial powers. Indigenous peoples were expected to make way for progress lest they be erased from history, and settlers were to reproduce their society – only better – in the new world. So Winstone’s desire to develop their own school emblem was not simply a change in aesthetics, but a show of strength and commitment, breaking away from imperial attitudes that arrogantly asserted superiority over local knowledge, and rising anew from the ashes of old.
Yet colonialism wasn’t completely wiped from the pages of Winstone Grammar in 1955. The school’s motto, Sursum (“to the heights”) remains; its Latin origin a borrowed tradition from ‘The Great Schools’ of Britain, and a further influence of colonialism. The idea is simple, a bit of Latin spells a dose of gravitas, and a hefty slice of tradition and history.

What is evident here is that temporal and spatial conditions are inherited and projected. A closer examination of these conditions reveals that the way space is organised at Winstone produces particular social relations. Rather than simply being a backdrop to social relations, space is made through the social; it is enacted and so continually created and recreated. McGregor (2003, 2004) referred to this understanding of space as ‘spatiality’: the production of space through the interaction of the physical and the social. This interaction recognises that, while much of our world is constructed through social relationships, these are materially embedded. Thus, a relational understanding is developed where outcomes are not solely determined, but also open to change.

The Construction of Space

Schools in the Western world share more similarities than differences when it comes to their social, organisational and cultural architectures. Educational designers of the 19th century industrial schools in Britain, from which the modern template of New Zealand’s educational system and schools developed, identified the design and use of space to be as important in schooling as the curriculum or timetable. In an historical analysis of the role of space in school as social production, Markus (1993) demonstrated how space in those 19th century industrial schools was organised to produce hierarchical relations based on strong ideologies of religion, order, surveillance, discipline, hierarchy and competition. They reflected, in microcosm, the new socio-economic relations emerging in the rapidly industrialising wider society.

Structures that were created in this way have been substantially reproduced without question in our schools over the last century, keeping asymmetric power relations intact. Indeed, public schools in New Zealand, past and present, were designed by State architects
and built according to norms and standards determined by the authorities, to effect schooling as given in social policy.

The development of school buildings in New Zealand was closely allied to the growth and expansion of the education system, and changes in the political economy of the times have been directly reflected in the type of buildings provided for the purpose. In the early days of the colonisation of New Zealand, education rested almost entirely in the hands of the churches (Garnock-Jones, 1966). Schools were established wherever there were sufficient populations. Classes were often held in private houses until such time as school buildings could be built. These early schools varied considerably in construction from ‘wattle and daub’ to timber or stone buildings, but all were generally small, over-crowded and primitive (Garnock-Jones, 1966).

To oversee the design and construction of public buildings throughout the country, the colonial government set up the office of Superintendent of Public Works in 1840, and the responsibility for primary education and the provision of school buildings was transferred to Provincial Governments in 1853. A Colonial Architect’s office followed in 1869, before the creation of Government Architect, within the Public Works Department, in 1909.

During this period, schools were often the most prominent buildings in many localities, and were often social and community hubs. In 1877 state-provided primary education was made compulsory, secular and free. More schools were built and existing ones enlarged. The architecture of most primary schools was more utilitarian than ornate, but secondary schools of the time were often grand structures of neoclassical and neo-Gothic style, designed to impress and to convey school values (Garrett, 1966).

The period immediately following the Second World War saw an increase in school population, which led to a shortage of new buildings. Garnock-Jones (1966) explained how The Auckland Education Board sought to overcome this problem by adopting a standard type of primary school plan. The standard model was taken up at a national level, and primary schools throughout the country adhered to the Dominion Basic Plan.
Likewise, standard post-primary school plans were prepared to meet the great increase in school population following the war. The first of these standard plans, known as ‘the Naenae type school’, was a two-storey building, of reinforced concrete construction up to the first floor level and timber frames above. Classrooms were laid out in long rows, with corridors providing access at both levels. According to Garnock-Jones (1966), this was the first school fully planned as a complete entity with the incorporation of specialist facilities for the full range of subjects in the present day curriculum. And it was to this design that Winstone Grammar was constructed between 1953-1955.

**Material Space and the Manifestation of Ideology**

The original main block sits at the centre of the school. It is closed in on three sides, forming a large outdoor courtyard in the centre, lined with seats and basketball hoops, and is home to the school cafeteria, which serves takeaway, convenience snacks. Adams (1978) noted that the original courtyard design significantly contributed to a sense of ownership within the school community, encased within the heart of the school, while providing a visual focus for the interior spaces. Adams’ impression of well-being could also stem from the protection this space provides, distanced as it is from the permeable boundaries of the school, and hence removed in physical space from those outside influences. With large windows looking out to this space from the corridors that surround it, the courtyard and the students who use it are subjected to ongoing surveillance.

Beyond the northern aspect of the main building sit clusters of prefabricated classrooms. Fragmented into different clusters, these buildings recently housed independent curricula departments and their designated classrooms. There is an air of impermanency about these buildings, which seem to hover above the ground on their skeletal footings. Yet they have served the school for over thirty years. With the construction of three new buildings over the last ten years however, many of these “prefabs” were relegated in status, and now serve as overflow classrooms for those teachers and classes who cannot be housed in the main building or either of the two new buildings. Despite their degradation, in both status and appearance, the classrooms were constantly occupied during the phase of my
fieldwork, even though the Ministry of Education has recognised that such classrooms are inadequate as teaching spaces, in part due to their poor insulation and inadequate temperature control (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Sean referred to these classrooms in one of our conversations, noting that they tend to serve primarily “non-academic students”. He believed that “there’s something wrong about sticking them back in the shitty prefabs at the back of the school. When I came to teach at [W instone], it was just like when I had left in 1976” (Sean).

On the opposite side of the main building lie specialist hard-technology classrooms. These buildings are arranged in a linear formation, sandwiched between a secondary playing field and a well-used driveway that leads to the gymnasiums and sports fields. As such, they do not give rise to intimate communal spaces.

In recent times, the school has constructed several new buildings, as well as additions and remodels of existing buildings, to cater for their growing student population. The additions, conversions and remodels covered almost every curriculum area, but especially science, commerce, health and physical education, and social sciences. While health and physical education and science benefited from the construction of specialist areas (two new gymnasia, and specialist science classrooms), the other additions were predominantly general classrooms. Aside from the gymnasia, the new buildings were characterised by compact volumes and simple internal layouts. In some instances, internal corridors were converted into classrooms, downplaying the value of social space in comparison to learning space – the place of educational outcomes. In place of the corridors, “catwalks” were erected, moving circulation spaces to the exterior of buildings. Running alongside large windows that look into classrooms, these catwalks have led some participants to consider the increased possibility of surveillance, for different intents and purposes.

As one of the recipients of a teaching space in the new social sciences building, Laura commented on the increased feeling of collegiality among the department: “The fact that we are next to each other, that collegiality has created a kind of safe home for us” (Laura).
She went on to explain how the catwalks and windows have assisted in her support of a new teacher:

*It’s so cool eh. It’s made a huge difference. It’s made a really huge difference in appraising the teacher that I’m mentor of. So I have a window all the time and it makes a real difference to the kids because they are just so, ‘Hey, there’s Miss Cranch,’ and then they just continue with exactly what they were going to do anyway. So you can see the reality of what’s going on in the classroom. And it’s much easier to help support a teacher to work out issues if you can see the reality of what the issue is.* (Laura)

In considering Laura’s positive view of the catwalks, we can see that her understanding of surveillance stems from her observation and supervision of the teacher she is supporting. When I questioned Laura about this, she explained that,

*I don’t think appraisal’s about judgment. There’s huge opportunity for older teachers who are in mentoring positions to learn so much from the people that they are mentoring and I think we do that really well in my department particularly. And I think that I take away that feeling [of judgement], when I hang out in Felicity’s classroom, or her window. It does take away that feeling of, you know, I’m watching you, when actually I’m probably trying to steal some resources, or looking at how you’re doing this because I think you’re doing a really good job.* (Laura)

However, Laura’s view of the catwalks and their surveillance provisions stands in contrast to Peter’s. When we spoke about his teaching experience, he again referred to his sense of vulnerability. This feeling of exposure was heightened by the sense of surveillance by teachers around him, particularly owing to the openness that the catwalks and windows proffered. Peter’s response was to draw the curtains, an action that had become so innate that it was usual for one of the students to pull them closed, often with comments such as “we don’t want them suckers staring in on us, eh sir!” (Field notes, September, 2011).
Already, we can see that the built educational environment, along with its visible and material school structures, can be read as texts that espouse public symbols of knowledge and the presence of communal (even if contradictory) practices. Burke and Grosvenor similarly understood that “schools are the products of social behaviour” and “project a system of values” (Burke & Grosvenor, 2008, p. 8) in their materiality. Benito added that school architecture is a “class discourse” that includes “the appropriation of educational culture and a complete semiology which exhibits different aesthetic social and ideological symbols” (Benito, 2003, p. 53).

In this sense, the material space is a manifestation of ideology, reflecting the varied discourses and ideologies that have shaped the school over time. The wide diversity of buildings at Winstone Grammar illustrates the use of morphological and spatial patterns, some of which follow traditional types whereas others differ from them. The choice of a given type reflects educational philosophy and politico-economic policy, practice and priorities, which strongly influence the design, spatial layout, materials/construction, and use of the buildings. Notwithstanding the diversity in school building designs, and the hierarchy between these various spaces, approaches to these designs have tended to evolve towards a new vision of learning environments that is in step with the latest political-economic thinking.

Yet, despite considerable changes in society and policy, the classroom remains peculiarly static. This may be due to organisational and political inertia, notions of what constitutes education and school, and/or the separation of designer and user. Yet whatever the cause, the outcome remains the same – the physical form of produced spaces expresses antecedent social arrangements and also predisposes current practices to emulate them.

**The Genealogy of the Classroom**

At Winstone Grammar, as with other schools, the box-like structures of individual classrooms are a persistent spatial form. In fact, so ubiquitous are these orderings that their taken-for-granted quality obscures the way in which the setting is active in the production and reproduction of practices that maintain persistent and unequal power relations. The
dominant metaphor of classroom-as-container can be traced back to the late 19th century. McGregor (2004) stated that the emergence of the classroom during this period is particularly revealing of the normalising and socialising functions of the school. In the early 19th century pre-monitorial schools, held in large spaces, students related directly to the teacher (Markus, 1993). This interface between teacher and student was changed with the advent of the monitorial school system, with large numbers of students subdivided into groups and instructed by pupil monitors, still in the large open space of the schoolroom. The method was premised on “more able” students being used as helpers to the teacher, passing on information they had learned to other students (Markus, 1993; McGregor, 2004).

Student’s position in the hierarchy of achievement was reflected in their physical location in the schoolroom, which according to Paetcher (2000), explicitly spatialised their performance. The development of the teaching gallery allowed the surveillance and control of a large group of students through eye contact.

Along with being credited for inventing the playground, Samuel Wilderspin pioneered the idea of separating the entire school into classes, which were taught simultaneously by teachers in separate rooms. This separation in space conferred to teachers the status of independence and relative freedom from the surveillance of colleagues (Markus, 1993), while students were more homogenised (Paetcher, 2000). Thus, teachers gained private space while for students it was more public, exposed to the gaze of peers and the geometries of competition as they were compared and ranked both within their own class, and between other classes (Markus, 1993; McGregor, 2004).

This classroom form has been substantially reproduced by design over the last two centuries, presenting classrooms as universally recognised images across nations and cultures. Markus argued that, “asymmetries of power in society... were kept intact in such buildings” (1993, p. 317), and McGregor suggested that it is the familiarity and continuity of traditional design principles that presents them “unproblematically as free from ideological contestation and struggle, somehow pre-existing and even immutable” (2004, p. 15). Similarly, McLaren claimed that, “classroom reality is rarely presented as socially
constructed, historically determined and mediated through institutionalised relationships of class, gender, race and power” (1995, p. 35).

Understanding these spaces as socially produced helps to reveal current social arrangements which maintain and solidify such power relations, but which can then be contested and changed. As I have already stated, the architecture of schools and classrooms embodies particular ideologies of education and pedagogy through their physical arrangement and the interaction with the social, employed through timetabling and classroom allocation, explicit and unspoken rules of use, and other habitual organisational practices. The dominant metaphor of classroom-as-container constructs not only particular ways of viewing and speaking of teaching and learning, but also creates a practical logic of the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu, 1990b); a sense of sensible practices and a practical sense of how “the game” of schooling is played. This practical logic functions as ‘an imagined geography’ of education, constituting when and where teachers expect learning to take place. For instance, Upitis (2004) discussed how school spaces dictate what is learned and how it is learned. She further argued that the spatial organisation of the school and the set-up of classrooms promote a preference for specific core subjects over others, while shaping the actions of individuals and groups.

In dialogue with these theoretical ideas, the empirical data point to technologies of spatial arrangements and cultural artefacts that result from the dominant metaphor of classroom-as-container. While formal spatial strategies such as ‘place-capturing’ are no longer practised, the disciplining of students through the regulation of seating was a major strategy employed by teachers in their management of classrooms. Each teacher, for example, constructed a spatialised, materialised theory of learning in their organisation of the teaching space and grouping of students. While some of these decisions were based on educational research, most appeared to be more intuitive, based on a personal knowledge of their students and group dynamics, their own teaching preferences and styles, or, and especially in the case of “transient” or “floating” teachers, the existing layout of the teaching space that they encountered on entering their temporary teaching space.
During the phase of my fieldwork when I was working as a teacher-aide, I spent 56 hours with one year 9 class. The particular class was part of the C-Band; the lowest of three streams, organised and sorted by the students’ performances in literacy and mathematical testing. 28 of these hours were allocated to their science lessons. During this time I was able to read that power was deeply inscribed into certain places within the classroom. For instance, the “teacher’s desk” consisted of a raised bench in the front-centre of the room, immediately in front of the large whiteboard. With the teacher scarcely straying from his raised bench, it formed both a symbol of authority and a point of surveillance.

The same teacher also insisted on particular forms of grouping as a means of controlling or punishing students. Students were regularly told to move seats in response to their being “off-task”, “chatty”, “too slow”, “distracted”, and “cheeky”, and even “to teach those silly boys a lesson” (Field notes, May 2011).

In contrast to the austere and authoritative science room, entering the Learning Extension Department was like entering a warm and welcoming home. The classroom and the communal spaces were full of treasured objects, and the walls were adorned with articles of student work. The emphasis of the department was on “creating an environment where we can create relationships with our kids, and they can create relationships with each other” (Field notes, April 2011). This emphasis was not lost on the students, who appreciated the freedom to sit with their friends, and could often be found “hanging out” here before school and during breaks between lessons.

My observations and interactions with Joseph also revealed how the physical configuration of the classroom can pose problems for floating teachers, who were required to share a room with other teachers, many of whom were the predominant users of that room. As a teacher of health and physical education, Joseph was confronted with the problem of a lack of classroom teaching spaces for health lessons, despite the significant investment in practical physical education teaching spaces (the two new gymnasia). The school’s response was to timetable most junior health lessons into free classrooms throughout the school, which were usually the domain of teachers who were permanently assigned to these rooms,
but stood empty during their non-contact periods. This organisation required that teachers share their classroom space with other teachers and that the students use the classroom space according to the differing teaching styles that were put forward by these different teachers. Whilst in theory this appears a practical use of resources, tensions did arise between the different teaching styles and orienting philosophies that different teachers brought to the same physical classroom space.

When I asked Joseph about the impact of being relocated into random classrooms around the school, he said,

This is probably the second year in a row that I’ve had a class all the way around the other side of the school. It’s quite difficult sometimes because you want resources, like you want to have a classroom where you can actually show work, but you can’t. And I’m saying, “I want to show some of the kids work, because if they see their work it may give them the satisfaction of what they’ve done; it’s up on the walls”. But I can’t because it’s not my classroom. I can’t put my class photos up. It’s sort of tough. You want to create a room that you and your class can relate to, but you just can’t. You’re not there long enough. You’re not teaching there for the majority of the week. So oh well, I’ll just wait until I get a proper class. (Joseph)

Joseph went on to discuss the limitations that went along with the specific location of the classroom, both in distance from his office in the health and physical education department, and also being situated in the maths department,

I think with it being in the maths department, that’s predominantly maths and I’m not going to go around trying to pull down maths department posters or anything like that. So I’m not even going to go there. But I think predominantly for me in that classroom, because I only teach one lesson, I feel like I am just leasing, I’m renting it for that particular period a week, and so I don’t really have ownership of it. But that’s an interesting classroom to allocate. Like if it was in C block, closer to the PE department, it would be awesome, it would be so easy. I think everybody else in my
department has their classes around D block, C block, G block and M block and that’s it. I’m the only one on the other side of the school. (Joseph)

Joseph’s desire to teach his health lessons in an “interactive way”, including the use of “group work”, “cooperative learning” and “interaction amongst the kids” (Joseph) was also hampered by the physical configuration of the classroom. The pre-existing arrangement saw desks placed individually in a grid-like fashion. Even more authoritative than the classic row set-up, this arrangement placed students in an audience collectively focused on traditional teacher-centric lessons.

At the start of each lesson, Joseph would ask his students to move the desks into small groups. This arrangement better allowed for discussion of sensitive topics, and collaboration among the students as they completed their learning activities. But it also meant that Joseph had to allow time at the start and end of each lesson for the furniture to be moved about.

That’s why I always give the kids five minutes to pack up, five to 10 minutes to pack up, because I know if we finish on the bell that it’s going to take ages for them. As soon as the bell goes they are out through the door and then maybe a minute later the teacher is in and he’s changing desks. I’ve had complaints sometimes that the desks aren’t put back how they go, and I go, “Oh geez, here we go.” So there are constraints in terms of that. I was in a classroom next door to it last year; same thing. I would love to show some of my kids work. Have health posters up around the wall. But there are just not enough classrooms that are allocated specifically for health and PE. You’ve got probably three classrooms and that is it. (Joseph)

During these lessons, Joseph employed a seductive pedagogy, where the students were seduced into their learning through positive reinforcement, even pacing, a caring tone and the use of inclusive phrases rather than commands. This contrasted with the maths teacher’s reductive pedagogic practice, which was characterised by a more formal tone, and was much more hyper masculine, loud and heavily centred on classroom control and order. The impact of this pedagogic style seemingly shut down the spaces for learning, restricting
the agency of the young people in his lessons, as they were required to submit to more formal, individual learning styles. This was particularly evident in the students’ embodiment of their spatialities: they sat hunched over their books, heads in their hands, or holding papers to their faces. Their movement and their interaction were restricted, and peer collaboration was minimal (Field notes, August 2011; September 2011).

Moreover, Joseph’s pedagogy seemed to open up the teaching space for the student’s learning. This was especially evident in physical education lessons, where Joseph’s approach to teaching encouraged student’s movement throughout the learning space in search of understanding. It enabled a fluid use of personal and teaching/learning space, which paved the way for creating a potentially more democratic environment than conventional classrooms with fixed configurations of desks.

Hence, classrooms are not merely material spaces that are readily perceived but also conceived spaces – representations of space that powerfully shape visions and productions of education. In Lefebvre’s (1991) analysis of “the house” he critiqued how people hold container-like perspectives of the material and social locations of everyday life. In his analysis, a radically different image of the house is made possible by stripping off the walls and observing flows of energy of every kind, seeing the house as a “complex of mobilities” or an “active body” (1991, p. 92). The everyday image or imagined geography, he claimed, is defined by the walls, and, failing to see them as screens emphasises their stability and capacity for creating boundaries. In this container-like perspective, space is perceived as a location in which activity occurs, which juxtaposes with Lefebvre’s counter-imagination of in and out conduits as one way of representing (social) space as produced through ongoing movements.

Leander, Philips and Taylor, extended Lefebvre’s analysis to the classroom, stating,

One might also see the classroom as the epitome of immobility as well, representing not only conventions of material structure but also conventions of teaching practice, of schedule, of seating charts, and seatwork routines. (2010, p. 332)

This was particularly exacerbated under the politics of blame and the school-based responses, which prioritised particularly rigid forms of teaching at the expense of other
pedagogical approaches. And this, then, gives rise to Leander et al.’s subsequent question of what might we observe if we deliberately “destroy the appearance of solidity” (2010, p. 332).

In the case of classroom space the informal, yet still hierarchical, modes of school space governance shaped the actions and interactions of actors in the school. Yet, the informal modes of governing these sites were in a constant flux of contestation, and school spaces were sometimes appropriated.

**The Appropriation of Space**

The inherent social order of Winstone Grammar manifested itself in distinct places through the spatial distribution of people and resources. Bourdieu (1999b) called this projection of social space on the level of physical space ‘appropriated physical space’ or ‘realised social space’. As the consumption of space is a typical way to demonstrate power (Bourdieu, 1999b), the material space that could be occupied by a teacher and their own sense of place were excellent indicators of their position in social space. In turn, social recognition and status could be achieved if teachers could spatialise their social position by “owning”, controlling or even temporarily claiming a certain place for themselves, enabling them to use it according to their own interests. Access was then restricted for other teachers, or they were expected to abide by the arbitrary rules that were ascribed to the specific locale.

Hence, access to and use of school spaces was not free to all teachers as their access and use depended on their resources and their social relations to the most powerful agents in the field who set “the rules of the game” (Bourdieu, 1990b). But the governance modes that were in effect at a particular site in the school were heavily contested. Teachers from lower positions in the social hierarchy, from subordinated curricula areas, with less experience or low social standing competed for the use and control of specific school spaces with those from dominant subject positionings, with more years experience and more powerful standings. Consequently, teachers at Winstone Grammar not only had to physically appropriate sections of school space in order to carry out their day-to-day actions, but also sought to position themselves in the local fields of power. Submission to the hegemonic
modes of governance determined the teachers’ access to, or their exclusion from, the most sought after school spaces.

The appropriation of school spaces was found to relate directly to power relations, as more powerful actors could gain spatial advantage over others. Accordingly, the term appropriation not only refers to the occupation of physical space, but also to the acquisition of related perceptions, attitudes and practices (Bourdieu, 1999b, 1999c; Etzold, 2011). The processes of appropriating school spaces, which were at times subversive, indicate how the prevailing social order and hegemonic rules of access and use of school spaces were accepted and contested at Winstone Grammar.

During the course of my fieldwork and its subsequent analysis, I was able to extend the work of Bourdieu (1999b) and Etzold (2011) to determine several elements to the appropriation of school spaces. These elements included: (a) the occupation of the physical space itself; (b) the appropriation of a position in social space; (c) the appropriation of “rules” that regulate access and use of that space; (d) the appropriation of the “right” spatial practices; and, (e) the appropriation of that space’s symbolic value and meaning.

The occupation of a physical space, a bodily practice, included the ability to take advantage of, or modify, physical structures or configurations of that space. For instance, as I have already illustrated, the ability to reconfigure arrangements of furniture was key to Joseph’s use of the classroom space when teaching health lessons. This material appropriation required an investment of time and physical labour in establishing and/or modifying the configurations of that space.

The aspect of social appropriation understands school spaces as social spaces, where actors take on relational positions of power on the basis of the capital they hold. As Etzold noted, their position-specific habitus,

frames their perception of a particular public [school] space, their evaluation of its value and meaning, and thus their own interests, and serves as a disposition to act in a specific way. (Etzold, 2011, p. 5)
Thus, a privileged position in social space increased a teacher’s ability to appropriate a desirable physical space. In turn, the material structures and geographic position of a specific school space mirror the social relations of those actors who have an interest and effect in that arena.

Different school spaces were imbued with different “rules” of operation, according to the predominant user, the location and the function of that space. That being so, the appropriation of rules concerned the formal and informal rules that governed patterns of access and the use of school spaces. These rules determined who was allowed to use particular spaces, and what practices were allowed under particular conditions, and which were not. In order to appropriate particular school spaces, teachers had to first learn which formal and informal operating rules were present at a site, before evaluating their plausibility, practicability and meaning. While Senior Management set formal rules of governance by way of institutional rules and standards, and classroom timetabling, other teachers in dominant social positions were able to set and influence the informal modes of governance pertaining to particular sites.

In their active, yet bounded, participation in the spaces of Winstone Grammar, teachers acquired knowledge about the institution, about the “right” order of persons and things in space, and about normal or appropriate spatial practices. They learned to manoeuvre within constricted spaces, to accept or trespass spatial boundaries, and even to construct new barriers for others. Specific spatial practices were the expression of the actor’s habitus, determined by, and determining of, their specific spatial perceptions. Over time their practices, their styles and routines of interaction in space, established the nature of specific sites.

The production of meaning in specific school spaces and the spatial practices that occurred there concerned the symbolic appropriation of space. In The Right to the City, Mitchell (2003) illustrated how the highly contested People’s Park in Berkeley, California, became a “space of representation” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 129) suffused with a fundamental meaning in the history and identity of the individuals and groups involved in its contestation. People’s
Park, according to Mitchell, became an iconic symbol of a broader political movement. At Winstone Grammar, symbolic appropriation of space occurred in a parallel manner, albeit at a different level.

The different “physically objectified spaces” (Bourdieu, 1999b, p. 125) were roughly superimposed, resulting in a concentration of high-value curricula areas (those seen as being pre-requisites for obtaining entrance to university and/or the workforce, such as maths, science and English) and their teachers occupying certain sites of physical space in new buildings or in closer proximity to central spaces such as the staffroom and the administrative building. Hence, the spatial practices relating to high-value curricula areas served to reproduce and validate the neoliberal priority of ensuring education served the economy. Such an arrangement contrasted in every respect with the sites that principally, and sometimes exclusively, collected the most disadvantaged groups. At Winstone these groups included the Learning Extension Department, English for Speakers of Other Languages, “transient” teachers, and curricula areas perceived as being non-academic, like health and physical education. The geographic positions and material design of sites of these groups included: a relatively central position but in a derelict and rundown building formerly occupied by the social sciences department; cold and austere “prefab” classrooms at the far southern perimeter of the school, formerly used by the hard-technology department; and a mix of old structures, new gymnasia and outdoor spaces (including the playing fields and swimming pool) at the far south-western corner of the school.

As Bourdieu illustrated in The Weight of the World (1999a, 1999b, 1999c), where he juxtaposed the High Streets of Paris and New York with the spatial arrangements of working class areas, the sites of high concentrations of either high or low valued groups make an essential point: centralised and newly constructed buildings brought together high-value curricula areas; that is, groups of teachers who had in common the fact that they occupied elevated positions (positions thus homologous to each other) in the social space of Winstone Grammar; positions which were best understood when they were seen in relation to curricula areas and teachers situated in the same field, in lesser positions, but in other regions of physical space.
Contemporary and proximal sites thus had far greater symbolic value than other school spaces. The regulations of and access to these highly valued school spaces were therefore more restrictive. In turn, there were spaces in the school that were less contested, as they were seen as unimportant and marginal, especially by those actors with higher social status and more powerful positions in social space. Such spaces had little symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1999b), yet while they were perceived from above as worthless, these spaces were still highly valued by the teachers who *chose* to occupy them.

In this sense, it can be understood that rather than being governed from above, these sites of less significance were appropriated from below. While teachers close to the field of power had greater capabilities for occupying and appropriating space for their own use, other teachers were less able to do so. Instead, spatial appropriation from below denotes the subtle, slow and often subversive occupation of space by actors with less symbolic capital.

The participants’ styles of appropriating school space, and the extent and location of space that they could effectively use, were sound indicators of their social position and therefore reflected their social vulnerability. For instance, when Joseph taught his health lessons, he took on the characteristics of a floating teacher, and only had temporary access to the teaching space (the classroom). As a floating teacher he could not change or challenge the very local modes of governance in the arena of the classroom because his position as both a floating teacher (albeit temporarily) and a teacher of health and physical education placed Joseph in a marginal social position, with less respect from his colleague in the maths department – he had only little symbolic capital. He therefore had no option but to adapt to the dominant mode of governance in the arena.

Yet the affordance of mobility that came with teaching health and physical education allowed Joseph to enter other arenas and his flexibility enabled him to evade conflicts and surveillance (perceived or otherwise) and still teach his lessons in the pedagogical style he valued. This was clearly evident in Joseph’s decisions to conduct some of his physical education lessons in locations that he deemed to be free from the scrutiny and surveillance
of more critical colleagues. Such locations included the field hockey turf, which was hidden behind the gym at the far extremity of the school, and in the old gymnasium, which was seldom used by other teachers. When we discussed this phenomenon, Joseph firstly spoke about the streaming of junior classes, before explaining how this impacted on his decision to teach his lessons in separate spaces,

*In terms of PE the C-band kids tend to be the most talented. But with your B-band and A-band kids, while you get a few that are, they often aren’t the most physical but they are the most willing to work, and have the best attitude. So depending on what class you have, you can have a trade-off of sorts: awesome kids but who aren’t willing to work as much, or kids who aren’t as physical but are willing to give anything a go. So there’s always a trade-off in terms of that… And that’s why with [10 C] sometimes I’m a bit hesitant to share the space with another class. Mainly because they [Joseph’s C-band class, 10 C] just go, ‘Oh no, they’re B-banders, they know more than us.’ And I might go, ‘Who said that? Who told you that?’ ‘Oh because they do better at tests.’ But who cares! And then sometimes I get a bit worried about their behaviour and what other teachers might think. (Joseph)*

It is interesting to note that Joseph’s comments also point to the social positioning of students based on the stream they were in. Students were also keenly aware of this mark of distinction, with streams acting as both means of ridicule and emblems of pride depending on which side of the “class” split students fell. It also appears that the social positioning of students was perceived to reflect on how the teacher was regarded, which again points to the constant flux of teachers’ status.

Joseph wasn’t alone in commenting on the streaming process at Winstone. In a conversation with Sean, he stated,

*The streaming or banding system’s flawed because they use an English literacy test, essentially, to determine your intelligence and so we’re over represented with Pasifika students in the C-band, mostly with kids in the literacy classes. But then both of those groups Maori and Pasifika are over represented in terms of poverty. So*
there’s a cultural and an economic aspect that needs to be addressed within the classroom. (Sean)

This comment is particularly interesting, as it connects with a point that Peter made when he described his role in the school and some of the misperceptions that were made by the staff. As I have previously explained, Peter had a role that saw him engage with the Maori and Pasifika community both within and outside of the school.

When Peter started to teach in the social sciences department, he wanted to challenge the misperception that he was there as a disciplinarian.

_I said to them, ‘Don’t give me so-called tough kids, but you know... I think most of the classes that I’ve had have been manufactured for me. Like the first class I taught was all boys... Form 3 [Year 9], there was 28 of them. I think a lot of them were given to me for behavioural reasons, because they were perceived as – they were going to be a little bit of a problem, and there were some boys that had been expelled._ (Peter)

Peter went on to say that a lot of students in his early classes dropped out of school,

_We lost a lot of those kids, you know, to things like drinking, or just doing nothing. It’s sad, you know. I don’t know where the labelling [as C-Band] was a good thing to do to them, you know, because to lose that many kids, it’s pretty rare._ (Peter)

But the positive impact began to show through over time, and in response to his suggestions, his class size was reduced.

_I only have 15 of them now, whereas I started out with 28 and I just couldn’t get around them in all a lesson. We had eight of our kids move into the B-Band, which is a bit of a victory, which is good. And actually most of the kids that sat the exam passed, so that was another plus. So, you know, you take your wins when you can._ (Peter)

So, while Peter felt a sense of vulnerability regarding his teaching and how he was positioned in social space, he was able to prove his worth through auditing technologies of
attendece, re-enrolments, and test scores. But there was a further avenue where Peter was able to have a significant impact on the lives of his students, an avenue that continued to disrupt orthodox notions of teaching space – coaching rugby.

Like Joseph’s use of the open space of physical education, Peter viewed his involvement in rugby as a space for enacting a style of teaching and interacting with students and their families that was perhaps more democratic and real than what was sometimes afforded in (and by) traditional classrooms.

*That’s a classroom for me, for sure. Rugby’s just another way to do our work. And particularly with Maori and P.I. kids, because it’s something that we love doing. It’s like singing. We love singing. And rugby, you know, we get all of that, we get the singing, we get to say a prayer and we get to be together, get to eat. So, in a lot of ways it just captures us as people, which is why our parents love to come to rugby because their kids aren’t getting told off and it’s one place I can see them and they can see me. And it’s not a watered down version of me because when I’m standing there, I forget everyone and they say ‘Oh Peter, I was driving down the road and I could hear your voice, when you’re at the school.’ ‘Well good, because I want to make sure your son’s going to hear my voice.’ But it is, you know, it’s a passion but it’s another way of doing your work, for sure. Anyhow, we’ve done a lot of trips. There wouldn’t be too many schools that have done as many trips as we have, you know, Argentina, Chile, Samoa, Fiji, Australia probably seven times. (Peter)*

During my fieldwork I witnessed a multitude of interactions between Peter and his Under 15 rugby team, as well as their families and supporters from both within and outside of the school. These instances included trainings and games, lunchtime meetings, fundraising efforts, celebrations, welcoming and farewelling team members (some of whom were international students from countries in Asia), and pastoral care sessions. Not only did Peter’s involvement with this group of students disrupt notions of teaching spaces, it also disrupted traditional understandings of coaching and school sports. Team meetings and practices concerned more than just technical and strategic aspects of the game. Rather,
they were based around ideas of what it means to be a good team member and how this related to being a good citizen. They focused on students conduct, both on and off the field and as players and also supporters, and students were encouraged to consider the impact of their actions. And they also employed fundraising and learning about budgeting to help prepare for and fund their different excursions.

From a socio-cultural perspective, Peter’s notion of the rugby-field and sports team being a classroom understood processes of thinking and learning to be not contained within individual minds, but rather distributed across persons and learning environments. This perspective has strong links with the work of Vygotsky (1978). When extended by the work of Vygotskian scholars (for instance Cole, 1996; Wertsch, 1998) Peter’s perspective can be described as a ‘mediational’ take on learning, as it focuses on mediational tools of all types used in the process of learning. In this regard, Peter’s commitment aligns with Gee’s description of an expanded notion of “opportunity to learn” (2008, p. 76), which pushes beyond traditional psychological perspectives of mind and thought and traces the relations between learners and their experiences in the world.

In contrast to the experience of Joseph and Peter, Laura occupied a (somewhat) privileged position in social space, as both a House Dean and an experienced member of the social sciences department. As such, she did not have to temporarily appropriate teaching spaces, but rather was afforded a stable position in physical space by way of being timetabled to a permanent classroom. However, Laura’s spatial and social practices of this teaching space deserve closer attention.

The first time I entered Laura’s classroom was immediately following one of the Year 9 science lessons I discussed earlier in this chapter. After leaving the science lesson, several students engaged me in conversation, which continued as we walked towards their next lesson. On reaching the door, the students asked me if I was going to come to this lesson with them too. Laura overheard them talking, and recognising me from my introduction at the staff briefing earlier in the week, invited me to stay. The juxtaposition between Laura’s classroom and manner of talking with the students, and the lesson I had just left, struck me
immediately. The formal tones and regimes were discarded, and there was a sense that the students were happy to be there. Desks were arranged into groups, and as the students entered the room they quickly chose their seats by themselves. As she commenced the lesson, Laura perched on the back of a chair, before roaming the room and crouching alongside students as they progressed through their work.

While such practices were not altogether unfamiliar, they stood in stark contrast to the teachers’ practices during the previous lesson. When I later asked Laura about her approach to teaching, she replied,

Yeah it’s funny, because I haven’t thought about my teaching, like consciously thought about it... I mean I do, all the time, like I go out of every class and reflect on what happened, but its something that just kind of develops. I get to know them and try to help them to feel comfortable in my class and try to establish some common goals, so me and them have the same kind of thing that we’re working towards. And then it all sort of just falls into place... like I don’t sit down and decide that I’m going to create something within my class, it just kind of morphs. (Laura)

However, Laura also noted that while this was an important aspect to her teaching, she found it difficult due to the size of the classroom and the number of students in her classes.

I guess it [the class size] is a challenge, and it can be depending on the kids. In [9 C], there are far fewer kids. My bigger classes have about 30, and that makes it quite difficult. It means that I am choosing at the beginning of my year to spend time on - actually not just at the beginning of the year, all through the year - to actually spend time sitting with the kids and talking with them, because they are a person, and you know, that’s completely aside from what we are doing. (Laura)

In addition to these early observations of Laura’s spatial and social practices, it was evident that her classroom served as a repository for cultural artefacts pertaining to gay rights, positive sexuality and social inclusion. Alongside the curricula themed displays that adorned the walls of the room, hung gay pride flyers and notices about peer sexuality meetings.
Inspirational quotes about social inclusion were scattered among displays about migration, the Pacific, and Ancient Greece. One such quote read:

> All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential.
> – Harvey Milk. (Field notes, April, 2011)

When we discussed these artefacts later in the year, Laura spoke about why and how she tried to create a safe space for gay students.

> I think my role isn’t about trying to change the fairness of the world, I think my role is changing the compassion of the world probably. I think really I can teach kids to be nice to each other. I can help them learn to be nice to each other. I can help them learn to take into consideration the effects of their, the consequences of their actions, and the effects of their actions and what they do to other people and teach them graciousness and generosity. Help them to learn it, not tell them. (Laura)

She went on to say,

> Homophobia is a big one for me. Changing stuff like that is really big because there are some people that really care about that here. There are a lot of kids that really care about it here and [Winstone] is absolutely point blank not a safe place to be if you are gay or transgender. It’s a horrible place to be. It’s fine for me, cause I’m at the top and I’m really out and it’s fine and I’m kind of impervious to whatever anyone is going to throw at me, but it completely isn’t for the kids here. And the most out, strong capable gay students don’t come out at school. Every few years I have ex-students come out to me, and I’ve not once had a student come out to me, a present student. (Laura)

While the above comments point to how Laura used the material culture of her classroom to promote social practices of inclusion, and thus create a safe physical and social space for gay students, the complexity of her views was exposed in a later conversation. The commencement of the Rugby World Cup in September, led to public declarations of ethnicity, heritage and passions throughout New Zealand by way of flying flags. On houses,
hedges, cars and clothing, people showed their true colours, turning private loyalties public. At Winstone Grammar students were banned from bringing flags onto the school grounds, despite many students being involved in official World Cup performances, and several former students involved in the competition. When we spoke about this, Laura said,

Yeah, you know we were talking today about the flag thing. OK, so kids have got flags out and they've already started claiming territories around the school. And that’s where potential for issues to arise is quite high. So, we've had to say, ‘you’re not allowed flags’. And I think it would be a great opportunity to go ‘Hey, that’s kind of cool. Lets have flags, and lets be nice to each other. And this is just what we expect to happen.’ And if you don’t its not about the lets take flags away from everyone. Its ‘hey, you've done this thing to this other kid, and its pretty serious, and we’re going to deal with it because we completely do not accept that kind of stuff at [Winstone]’.

But it’s because there's so many of them. And its a shame, because it’s a real opportunity to go ‘go Tonga’ or ‘go Samoa’, or whatever, and be really proud of who you are and where you came from, but unfortunately it doesn’t seem to work that way. (Laura)

So while Laura actively sought to promote social inclusion through advocating for gay rights and educating about homophobia, when it came to issues of cultural and ethnic inclusion, she felt that she was unable to promote a more inclusive approach that took a critical stance on the issue.

**Conclusion**

In the case of Joseph and Peter, who endeavoured to temporarily appropriate classrooms for the own teaching, they faced protests and complaints from teachers more regularly in possession of these spaces. At Winstone Grammar School these campaigns of complaints by high profile actors against “ordinary” teachers were not merely erratic threats to the participants’ positionings, but an immanent part of the logic of school space governance. The exploitation of subaltern teachers as well as their condition of insecurity and
vulnerability seemed to be a widely accepted aspect of ordering the social and professional landscape among the teachers at Winstone Grammar.

According to the logic of the micro-politics of the school, that we can quite clearly read into the participants’ accounts, the powerful actors at the school were not interested in finding a permanent solution to the issue of contested school-space, for instance by permanently allocating more set teaching spaces to spatially-transient teachers. Instead, they sought to continue with the status quo. For Joseph and Peter, the result was that their social status remained in constant flux. It was no surprise then that protests from spatially transient teachers were often unsuccessful in producing changes to such things as obligations to share or allocate permanent teaching spaces. The prevalent mode of governance in the politics of school space was not only efficient in terms of providing locations for teaching and learning to take place, but also created contestation and a socio-curricula hierarchy that contributed to the persistence of hegemonic school governance structures and thus to a continuous exploitative cultural politics. Yet, behind the scenes, teachers were able to appropriate particular spaces for their own use, in their own way. In the following chapter I engage with the practices that took place in these appropriated spaces, away from the scrutiny of more powerful peers – practices I have termed hidden practices.
Hidden Practices and Everyday Acts of Resistance

Society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities, and... It’s extremely shortsighted to believe that the face society happens to be presenting to you at a given moment is its only true face. None of us knows all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population.

—Václav Havel, Disturbing the Peace

Introduction

The story of this chapter is the story of agency amidst constraints. It continues the analysis of chapters five and six, which focused on the teachers’ ability to firstly see through the publicly sanctioned and expected approaches to teaching, and secondly, to appropriate school space for their own use. In this chapter, I focus on the notion that teachers had their own practices of resistance, played out as subversive behaviours that undermined the everyday discourse of common sense. To do so, I explore the resistant private realm of teachers’ practices, which contested and challenged the taken-for-granted public sphere.

While their practices were not necessarily collective, they shared the common characteristics of secrecy and inaccessibility to those dominant groups in the professional landscape, who served as the guardians of the common sense discourse. The participants’ resistant practices stemmed from their alternative imaginations as they created new and different meanings about themselves and about the world around them.

While traditional notions of resistance have been critiqued for limiting our conceptual horizons (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004), understanding the teachers’ practices as ‘everyday forms of resistance’ (Scott, 1985, 1990) opens up new possibilities to explore unnoticed social practices that may in fact be forerunners to significant social changes. It helps uncover the logic of practice among dispersed individuals under the conditions of hegemonic rule, when challenges and critique are suppressed. It illustrates how people manage, resist, and subvert domination through their everyday practices.

At the same time, the notion of everyday resistance challenges the ideas and excuses that justify inaction under conditions of domination and surveillance. It helps us to recognise,
indeed gives us hope, that despite hegemonic rule there are always means in which people resist, express agency, and instigate change, rather than waiting for a saviour or resorting to hostility.

It should be noted, however, that I did not initially see the agency in their actions. In fact, it was not until I began to understand the teachers as vernacular theorists that I began to see the resistant nature of their actions. Rather, I overly attributed the term ‘passive’ to their practices to begin with.

**Preoccupied with Passivity**

My initial fieldwork endeavours, and my early preoccupation with the common sense discourse, led me to initially consider many teachers at Winstone Grammar to be politically passive, struggling to make ends meet. Because I understood many accounts of political conflict and resistance to be dominated by descriptions and analyses of open political action, I unintentionally extended the notion of ‘the passive teacher’.

For instance, during the first six weeks of my fieldwork, I entered into innumerable conversations in the staffroom about topical issues. Oftentimes they were profound and insightful commentaries of wider political happenings, sporting results, and entertainment trends. But when the talk turned to educational issues that were currently making headlines, I found that the discussion would routinely dwindle, and once-philosophical orators would withdraw from the conversation. Many such topics were prominent in mainstream news broadcast at the time, including school mergers and closures; funding cuts to early childhood and adult education; national standards in primary schools; ministerial forced replacements of school management and boards of trustees, particularly of school’s not following policy directives; sexuality education; trades academies and the push for increased vocational education; league tables and the publication of student and school “results”; and practices of excluding students from sitting national qualifications (Field notes, April; May; June).
Occasionally these topics drew brief comments, which were more aligned with the moral standing of the individual rather than their professional judgements, as was the case with sexuality education. But the sagacious discernment that characterised much of the alternative subject matter seemed missing.

Similarly, staff meetings and work place discussions that involved differing opinions seemed to be marked by capitulation and compliance. Even on those occasions when subaltern teachers did speak their mind, it appeared that dominant individuals or groups got to have their way.

Despite my empathy for the teachers with whom I was working, the conceptual weakness of ‘the passive teacher’ became clear before long. As I began to see the diversity of subcultures within the teaching staff at Winstone, I realised that I had been viewing the culture of teachers through a lens of essentialism, as the culture of passivity was only one among many. My generalisations had not accounted for the varying ways in which different teachers handled their subordination. Essentially, I had contributed to the politics of blame, not by attributing student failure to the work of teachers, but by only seeing their marginal status and passive responses to begin with. My realisation of the limits of this conception resembles Perlman (1976) and Castells’ (1983) critiques of the myth of marginality in urban sociology. Both of these scholars demonstrated that the marginalised poor were a product of capitalist social structure. Like Perlman (1976) and Castells (1983), my experiences in the field helped me to see that the myth of marginality was an instrument of social control.

**Struggling for Survival**

The notion of ‘survival strategies’ took me one step towards implying that although teachers were subordinated under the politics of blame, they did not sit around waiting for fate to determine their lives. Rather, they were active in their own way to ensure their survival. In order to ‘survive’, teachers developed coping mechanisms that allowed them to manage the immense expectations and responsibilities that were placed on them. Thus, to counter the demands of more administrative work and assessment requirements, they sacrificed their own time and took work home over the weekends; to meet the demands of auditing
expectations, which pre-occupied their ‘non-contact’ time, many teachers relied on set routines and often ‘winged it’ in the classroom in lieu of rigorous planning; and many seemed to be accepting of mediocrity in their work, if it meant they could complete one task on their never-ending list and move on to the next.

This was especially evident in the lead up to the first instalment of school reports. The reports were due to be sent to parents in the third week of the second school term. With teachers required to write an individual, evaluative comment for each student of each class, the report writing process placed immense pressure on their already high workload. Most teachers used the two-week break between terms to write their reports, which left little time for the curriculum planning, resource preparation and extra-curricula commitments that many teachers had hoped to undertake. For those teachers with families and dependent children, the extra commitments and expectations caused extra stress on their hopes of obtaining a better work-life balance during this two-week period.

Upon their return to school\textsuperscript{21}, however, the pressures of the report process did not subside. Each teacher, having completed the writing of their own reports, was then required to proofread and correct the reports of another teacher, before amending any of their own reports as they were returned to them. The reports then went through a further proofing process, before form teachers compiled each set for each student, bounded them together, and sealed and addressed them ready for delivery to parents. The pressures during this three-week process were unmistakable. As I worked with teachers in their classes, and spoke with others in the staffroom, they revealed their survival strategies to me. The number of cars remaining in the staff car parks until late at night escalated. And it was not uncommon to see teachers leaving for home with file boxes of reports piled atop their regular arsenal of ‘homework’. Students were often given independent bookwork to complete during lessons, and the frequency of watching movies (often unrelated to course work) increased, as teachers tried to keep up with the demands that were placed on them.

\textsuperscript{21} I use the term ‘return to school’ here lightly. Many teachers continued to work at school over the two-week break between terms, and often brought their own children to work with them. ‘Return to school’ more accurately signifies the return of their regular day-to-day commitments and routines.
In this thinking, teachers were seen to survive; however, their survival came at the cost of their students and colleagues, and sometimes themselves. While resorting to coping mechanisms seemed quite widespread at Winstone, I began to feel that overemphasising the notion of survival strategies was contributing to the maintenance of the image that saw teachers as victims, denying them any agency. In fact, I began to see that many teachers also resisted and made advances in their lives when the opportunity arose.

In initially viewing the teachers as overly passive in the face of an unjust common sense, I was essentially crediting objective structures with the control of an ordered society. In this view, the collective social forces of the discourse of common sense, the politics of blame, and the neoliberal hegemony were seen as acting on, and through, teachers. What’s more, in accord with their socialisation, their only response was to act in line with the normative order. In the words of Bourdieu, this view gave primacy to “objective structures independent of the conscious will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices” (1989, p. 14). Such a view was untenable, according to Bourdieu, as it failed to recognise the existence and power of human agency. I had to move beyond such a definitive explanation of teachers’ actions.

My increasing discomfort with notions of ‘passive teachers’ and ‘surviving teachers’ opened the way for the development of an outlook in which the subordinated teachers emerged as political actors. This conception, which developed from my engagement with the aforementioned works of Giroux (Giroux, 1985, 1988, 2002; Giroux & McLaren, 1986) and Smyth (1995, 2010), understood teachers as not being marginal, but marginalised – professionally (and economically) exploited, politically repressed, socially stigmatised, and culturally excluded from a closed social system. My attempts to highlight contentious politics as well as non-contentious cooperation among teachers undercut drastically both the ‘culture of passivity’ and ‘survivalist’ arguments, granting a significant agency to teachers, through their everyday modes of resistance.

But at the same time, I could not overly attribute an agentic power to the participants akin to voluntarism. On the one hand, passivity was untenable as it gave primacy to overarching
deterministic structures, and on the other hand, voluntarism was unsuitable as it gave primacy to free-willed human agents in determining social practices. Understanding the duality of human agency and objective social structures helped me to appreciate the nuanced resistance that was taking place. The discourse of common sense and the social space at Winstone Grammar had triggered complex power relationships. And these relationships were signified by what I eventually realised was a deep distinction between public and private spaces.

**Resistance**

Historically, many discussions in sociology and cultural studies have tended to present an oversimplified view of resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). It appeared that only some forms of contestation were able to count as resistance, and what got to count as resistance tended to be what the bourgeois observer approved. In Fox’s (1994) study of working-class identity, particularly as it was reflected in late nineteenth and early twentieth century novels, she argued that theories of resistance tended to detach ‘resistance’ from ‘conformity’ or ‘incorporation’. Thus, she suggested, the complexity of people’s lives was often reduced to simply one or another of its dimensions. Instead, Fox wanted to “mark out a more expansive conceptualisation of... resistance” (1994, p. 19), and offered a more complex theory. In doing so, she argued that,

> What we identify as a ‘conformist’ attitude or position may be rooted in another kind of transgressive logic that is equally (if not more) compelling than the need to challenge capitalist or patriarchal ideologies directly. (Fox, 1994, p. 19)

Fox’s analysis unsettled the conventional divide between submission and resistance. Her concept of ‘class shame’ understood resistance in a more accurate way, as a complicated form of refusal directed at both dominated and dominant culture.

In education literature, resistance has often been framed as either collective or individual in nature. Collective participation has generally concerned a common struggle to be heard, with the intention of addressing a particular set of conditions or constraints. Individualistic resistance has often been seen as oppositional participation, where an individual reacts to a given situation, with no intention of altering those conditions (Langhout, 2005). However,
recent interdisciplinary scholarship has fractured this binary. From sociology to cultural studies, the term resistance has been used to “describe a wide variety of actions and behaviours at all levels of human social life” (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004, p. 534).

Hollander and Einwohner’s (2004) review of resistance literature found that the interdisciplinary concept of resistance had come to include notions of recognition and intent. But what does ‘recognition’ mean in the context of resistance? For Hollander and Einwohner it implied that an oppositional act is “readily apparent to others” (2004, p. 539) that is, it must be visible. But this does not necessarily mean that resistance need be visible to the powerful, or vertically oriented. Visibility may be horizontal as well, producing relationships of resistance amongst subordinates, for their own solidarity. As Scott suggested, such everyday acts of resistance “make no headlines” (1985, p. 36). Yet he believed that such acts must be seen in the framework of resistance because they “mitigate claims made by appropriating classes” (1985, p. 302). In Scott’s view, what may appear to be passivity does not necessarily imply compliance, as subordinates rarely have resources available to them to resist those in power.

In a similar fashion, Bourdieu pointed to the apparent paradox embedded within relations of domination:

When the dominated quest for distinction leads the dominated to affirm what distinguishes them, that is, that in the name of which they are dominated and constituted as vulgar, do we have to talk of resistance? In other words, if, in order to resist, I have no other resource than to lay claim to that in the name of which I am dominated, is this resistance? Second question: when, on the other hand, the dominated work at destroying what marks them out as ‘vulgar’ and at appropriating that in relation to which they appear as vulgar (for instance, in France, the Parisian accent). Is this submission? I think this is an insoluble contradiction: this contradiction, which is inscribed into the very logic of symbolic domination, is something those who talk about ‘popular culture’ won’t admit. Resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating. Such is the paradox of the dominated, and there is no way out of it (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 155)

This distinctly cynical excerpt appears to verify Bourdieu’s determinism and to comply with his critics who argue that his work denies a political imagination and vision. Yet it is evident that Bourdieu saw resistance going on along side domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In fact, it is the logic of domination that connected submission and resistance in a
paradoxical relationship for Bourdieu. It is not that people lack agency: rather, there is no resistance that is not in some way complicit with power. The complex relationship between habitus and field may in fact lead individuals to act in ways that are not obvious as resistance. This is not because they are passive or ‘lacking’ in any way, but because “people are not fools”,

they are much less bizarre or deluded than we would spontaneously believe precisely because they have internalized, through a protracted and multisided process of conditioning, the objective choices they face. (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 130)

How liberating is it to have your ideas, your beliefs, your teaching practices vilified? On the other hand, how liberating is it to jettison such indicators of difference and in their place adopt more normalised and accepted markers of the habitus of the dominant? But to cast off the markers of one’s own domination poses no threat to either the discourse of common sense, the politics of blame, or the neoliberal hegemony. There is a marked difference between individual forms of accommodation and resistance and the overthrow of systems of domination.

For both Bourdieu and Scott, recognition and visibility did not depend on being visible to dominant groups, but may indeed need to remain concealed, or may only be visible to a small cohort of peers or allies. Such modes of concealment are of primary concern to the experiences of the participants.

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) also considered the shifting nature of intent as it related to resistance scholarship. They claimed that many scholars assume that when an “actor intends to resist, then her or his actions qualify as resistance” (2004, p. 542). Others assume that “actors may be unable to fully articulate their motivations” (2004, p. 542), or that “an actor’s intentions are not central to understanding something as resistance” (2004, p. 543). Not considering the intent behind acts of resistance implies that intent is irrelevant or wholly inaccessible to analysis.

An enduring problem in determining whether acts of resistance contain elements of recognition and intent is the messiness of interpretation. As Hollander and Einwohner put it,
“different researchers can understand the same behaviour differently” (2004, p. 543). However, Scott (1985) argued that it is sometimes possible to analyse actions in order to infer intent and recognition. In doing so, it is possible to overcome the significant epistemological problems endemic to any analysis of intentions.

Scott’s (1985, 1990) departure from a structuralist position in studying the peasantry in Asia to a more ethnographic method of focusing on individual reactions of peasants contributed greatly to a paradigm shift in resistance studies. For Scott, resistance emanates “not simply from material appropriation but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterise exploitation” (1990, p. 112). In particular, Scott (1990) was concerned with patterns of passivity and compliance that emerged under obvious surveillance. The prevalence of surveillance exacerbated the risks that subordinates faced in response to any form of oppositional act, thus compromising what their efforts could achieve, and complicating how they were recognised, and the intent behind them.

Everyday Resistance

Scott discovered a vital history of “everyday forms of peasant resistance” (1985, p. 29), which referred to those forms of resistance that were “the nearly permanent, continuous, daily strategies of subordinate rural classes under difficult conditions” (1985, p. 273). Scott considered the war of words, ideologies, and symbols as well as acts of pilfering and vandalism.

The notion of resistance came to stress that power and counter-power were not in binary opposition but existed in a decoupled, complex and perpetual dance of control. Everyday acts of resistance largely consisted of small-scale, everyday activities that individuals could afford to enact given their social and political constraints. This understanding of resistance permeated not only peasant studies, but also a variety of fields, including labour studies, identity politics, ethnicity, women’s studies, studies of the poor and, of particular relevance to my focus, studies of education.
Much has been written about resistance to oppression and domination in education (for instance, Alpert, 1991; Boren, 2001; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Erickson, 1984, 1987; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1988; McLaren, 1991, 2007; Shor, 1996; Willis, 1977) but these studies have largely concentrated on resistance of students against their teachers and/or the school system. Several studies have concerned the overt resistance of school principals and/or teachers in response to wider political discourses and initiatives (for instance, Locke, 2007; Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 2012; Thrupp & Easter, 2012), but there is still very little known about the comparatively hidden, undramatic and highly personalized resistance among teachers who oppose the structuring of their professional landscape, and the imposition of subject positions, from outside of their local concerns. Yet, as I further considered the teachers’ practices in different school realms, my own understandings of what ‘qualified’ as resistance began to take shape.

Acts of teacher resistance were not often distinctly oppositional, but were instead deflective, spontaneous, and tactical. In this sense they were harder to observe and interpret as resistance, particularly as the discourse of common sense, the politics of blame, and the neoliberal hegemony remained intact. What was apparent though, was that teachers understood the consequences of being defined as troublesome. There were risks involved with directly opposing the authority of dominant groups, and many did what they could to avoid raising suspicion. Interestingly, as I will explain, some participants were able to deflect the punitive gaze of dominant groups by participating in them through their positions of authority.

The teacher participants were not merely yielding to the injustices of the discourse of common sense. They were meeting it with a range of responses that I came to understand as everyday forms of resistance.

Undoubtedly, my attempt to grant agency to the teachers who I had previously viewed as passive, submissive, apolitical and oppressed was a positive development. The resistance paradigm enabled me to uncover the complexity of power relations in society in general, and the politics of the subaltern teachers in particular. It warned me to not expect a
universal form of struggle; that the local should be recognised as a significant site of struggle as well as a unit of analysis; that organised collective action may not be possible everywhere, and thus alternative forms of struggles must be discovered and acknowledged; and that organised protests as such may not necessarily be privileged in situations where suppression rules. Simply put, I came to value a more flexible and small-scale activism.

Yet I was still troubled by occasions when participants not only acquiesced to the dominant forces they rejected, but also appeared to explicitly support them.

With the help of Scott’s (1990) notion of the hidden transcript, I began to see that surface appearances did not always account for what took place behind the scenes. As I continued to develop my relationships with teachers, I began to be invited ‘back stage’, to the arenas where the hidden transcript was enacted.

**Hidden Practices at Winstone Grammar**

Scott’s (1990) framework of hidden and public transcripts helped make seemingly contradictory positions coherent by recognising that everyone performs different roles in disparate social arenas. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott (1990) described three forms of political discourse. The most public form was characterised by unwavering support of the dominant elite. Scott termed this form the *public transcript*. In stark contrast, the second form involved subordinates explicitly dissenting against those rulers. The third form was characterised by a more complex and strategic relationship, located in between the alternate forms. Scott described this third space as the “politics that might make use of disguise, deception, and indirections while maintaining an outward impression, in power-laden situations, of willing, even enthusiastic consent” (1990, p. 17). These are the politics of *hidden transcripts*, which, in Scott’s view, “every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, [and, which] represent a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (1990, p. xii). Since ideological resistance can grow best when it is shielded from direct surveillance, I was led to examine the social sites where this resistance could germinate.

Hidden transcripts, according to Scott (1990), are specific to a given social situation and
community, and are typically staged outside the scrutiny of the public domain. Behind the backs of those considered more powerful, hidden transcripts emerge as individuals respond, resist, and react to the oppressive scenarios within which they find themselves. They are unique to a particular set of actors and may include a whole range of patterned yet spontaneous gestures, actions, and verbal expressions, such as ridiculing an authority or reclaiming and refashioning a once demeaning moniker or name. As hidden resistance becomes organised and enacted, power is reconstituted; facades of reverence are exposed, discourse is shifted; and the configurations of its performance become political and grounded (Scott, 1990).

Applied to my engagement with teachers at Winstone, these transcripts helped me to understand teacher resistance more clearly. I had initially understood their upholding of dominant discourses as their absorption into the hegemonic processes. But reframing these practices as performances for the public transcript, and being allowed access to their hidden transcripts, reinforced that hegemony is never complete. Rather, it is continually fighting for compliance, and social actors move between these transcripts regularly.

Hence, hidden transcripts lingered within and alongside the participants’ production of dominant ideology, which raised questions about the extent to which they had internalized the discourse of common sense. This seemed to stem from a dual obligation, which on the one hand conformed to the expectations placed on them, and on the other induced hidden practices of resistance against the perceived injustice of said discourse.

Sean’s involvement in implementing a new school-wide initiative offers a prime example. The initiative in question was called Positive Behaviour for Learning, referred to as PB4L in Ministry of Education policy. The aim of this policy initiative was to provide programmes for schools, teachers and parents across the country to promote positive behaviour in children and young people, based on the belief that improving student behaviour would lead to improved engagement and achievement. PB4L was a joint initiative between several education sector organisations, but was primarily led by the Ministry of Education.
Sean was a key member of the steering committee for implementing PB4L at Winstone, and took responsibility for its planning and financial expenditure, as well as running staff development courses.

When the initiative was originally suggested at Winstone Grammar, it was met with some concern. The Head of Guidance at the school, for instance, believed that the initiative was overtly behaviourist. Rather than focus on controlling students, she felt that the counsellor to student ratio should have been improved, as students did not always receive the emotional support they needed to manage the immense range of emotional trauma they experienced (Field notes, July).

Like the Head of Guidance, Sean privately believed that the money that was spent on this initiative at the national level could have been better utilised supporting and strengthening current school-based initiatives, which were proving successful. When we spoke about this, he stated,

_The government is pouring a phenomenal amount of money into this, but there isn’t any real evidence that what is being done is creating a real difference, especially for the most severe behaviour problems._ (Sean)

And, Sean’s scepticism of PB4L extended beyond economic concerns. He also took issue with the fact that the initiative was founded on overseas models,

_The Ministry has really just bought in programmes from overseas, instead of developing programmes in New Zealand, judging their relevance, and then circulating them around the country, as they are needed._ (Sean)

_Another difficulty is that the overseas versions are said to be evidence based, but they’re not New Zealand based. So the trouble becomes that if you change them to make them more relevant, then they’re no longer evidence based, but if you keep them the same, then they’re not necessarily relevant for our school and our kids._ (Sean)
Given Sean’s scepticism of PB4L, I wanted to know why he had not only become involved in its implementation, but also served as its principal driver within the school. His reply was fairly frank:

_money obviously. You see, we get sixty thousand dollars each year to trial this programme and to then make it work. In education, that’s a lot of money. When I think about what that amount of money could do to support some of the stuff that we’re already doing... I don’t know... I just couldn’t see that chance disappear._ (Sean)

But the lure of extra financial support did not cause Sean to sell his soul. While his public support of the programme helped to gain the trust of the senior management and also attend to the official policy requirements, behind the scenes Sean was able to enact hidden practices. To begin with, he set about re-shaping the intentions of the initiative as it was rolled out in staff workshops. While the intended focus was to identify undesired student behaviours and then set about changing them (Ministry of Education, 2011), Sean widened the scope to examine the _causes_ of such behaviour, and involved teachers in this examination (Field notes, August). As they began to make connections between student achievement and undesired behaviour, they also began to see that the problems stemmed from wider social issues, including poor physical health, poor housing and over-crowded living arrangements, and a cycle of school failure. So, while some groups devised ways to correct misbehaviour and promote positive behaviour more generally, another group conceived of ways to address these wider issues, which emanated from beyond the school gates. This included seeking extra funding to provide students with the essentials they required, establishing a breakfast provision for students who needed a nutritious meal before school, and lobbying local government for further support of incumbent school practices.

As the scope of the project began to take its new shape, Sean was essentially granted the mandate to use the project funds to support these practices. He would frequently take me along to see different initiatives: a literacy class where students were arranged into small groups, each with a teacher-aide to support their work, while the teacher was free to work
individually with specific students, or to oversee the whole class; a thriving homework club that was also open to students’ wider families; a school cluster meeting, which focused on improving students’ transitions between schools; and a community consultation meeting to openly discuss ideas and concerns. But it was the contingent of teacher-aides that Sean was most proud of, “See, this is what that sixty thousand dollars gives us” Sean told me, as he held up a spreadsheet of timetables, “We’ve got ten full time teacher-aides working here, and half a dozen part timers and volunteers, on top of two full time literacy teachers” (Sean, field notes, October). While the PB4L expenditure was not solely used for funding teacher-aides, and did not cover this expense independently, Sean was able to direct some of the funds to augment their capacity.

Hence, Sean subverted the rituals, rules and representations, not by rejecting them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system he had no choice but to accept.

In earlier chapters, I referred to Peter’s decision to not attend staff meetings and his method of spatial appropriation linked to his drawing of the curtains as his lessons commenced. I want to reiterate here that these rituals were also forms of hidden practices for Peter22. But there are two other practices that are of most relevance here: his success in establishing a charitable trust to fund a diverse array of essential costs for families in need, including books, shoes, and school camps; and, his response to the removal of the politics unit for his 10-Ca class, which I mentioned briefly in chapter five.

In response to his awareness of families’ economic difficulties, Peter corralled several prominent past-students and together they established The Sursum Foundation as a Charitable Trust whereby donations were sought to create a capital fund, which would never be spent. Assistance to students (and eventually staff) was only made from interest-generated funds.

22 Likewise, the forms of spatial appropriation attributed to Joseph in chapter six, cover most forms of his hidden practices.
Peter stated that he had been feeling “like a bludger” after years of having to ask notable past-students for money to help students who would otherwise miss out.

About a year ago we had a young girl who was fundraising to go on a language trip to France. The family didn't have a lot of money and she was working part time, but she was still going to come up short. I approached [a prominent former student] and the next day a cheque arrived. It felt pretty good but I still felt stink. I mulled it over and eventually had a bit of a moan with [another former student], and she said ‘Why not set up a charitable trust?’ So we went about setting up a board, which [the two former students] now co-chair, and the other members are all former pupils too. (Peter)

At the time I was completing my fieldwork, The Sursum Foundation was hoping to raise $1,000,000.

We’re hoping to raise $1m and just use the interest to help kids. We had a meeting on Saturday and we agreed to spend $5-6,000 on kids right now and we’re doing another fundraiser in May/June to put the money back and then at the end of the year we’ve got a major fundraiser and art auction down the bottom of town. We’re going to go hard for a couple of years and see how much money we can raise.

It’s got off to a good start. We’ve been promised by a number of people and other families that if we make certain targets they’ll give us more money so that’s quite encouraging and also the quality of people on our board is really, really high.

They’ve brought a model to the foundation that is really ‘business with a heart’. We actually have a lot of fun. We laugh heaps. It’s quite nice, you sit there and they’re laughing, and then we’ve got [trustee’s name] who’s father is a billionaire and he scrutinises everything. Like when we were talking about buying a Year 13 jumper for this girl. She’d been selected as a prefect, a really lovely girl, but she couldn’t afford the jumper. It’s $200. He looks at it and goes, ‘No way. I can get a jumper from somewhere for less than this...’ and I’m looking at him and say, ‘The school is the only place you can get the uniform.’ He goes, ‘Really? I’m going to write a letter! That is
"ridiculous!" The thing is, we must be making a lot of money from uniform off our own kids, when we should be subsidising our kids. (Peter)

The trust will eventually hold $1 million, which will generate an annual income of about $40,000 to be spent on everything from books and shoes to camps, and hopefully we’ll get into a position where we can make a major contribution to uni scholarships. You know, kids who are high achievers always attract funding, but those who work hard and don't quite get to the top don't get a lot of help. (Peter)

While Peter’s practices in establishing the Sursum Foundation were not exactly ‘hidden’, he was able to subvert the system by finding an alternative method for enacting his commitment to social justice. His pedagogical practices are also worth considering here.

As I previously stated, students in 10-Ca had a history of low achievement in the social studies exam, and as a result the Head of Department decided to drop the unit on politics from their syllabus. According to Peter, the Head of Department made this decision because she deemed it too difficult and not relevant to the students in 10-Ca. I tried to confirm this with the Head of Department, but my efforts to meet with her were unfruitful. Peter felt that this decision was a travesty for 10-Ca, stating “of all the units to drop, that would be the last one I’d choose. These kids need to know this stuff, it’s totally relevant” (Peter). His response was to implement an incentive to help motivate the students and, according to other teachers, this had proved successful in previous years. Peter used his contacts in the community to obtain enough funds to reward the students with a day-trip to Wellington23, a tour of government buildings, and an encounter with Members of Parliament. But the philanthropist who provided the funding also imposed several stipulations. Their funding was dependent on improved results from the initial exam, and students would have to fundraise a certain portion of the cost of the trip as a class. The students were extremely motivated towards this goal, and set about planning proposals and obtaining official approval for their fundraising events. And their motivation also extended to their

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23 The capital city of New Zealand.
schoolwork. Even when individual students would lose enthusiasm, their peers would rally to encourage them, or occasionally intimidate them back into focusing on their learning.

In undertaking this endeavour, Peter also conformed to the public transcript in some ways, particularly when he modified his teaching to explicitly meet the demands of the exam. He was aware that the year 10 social studies exam had remained unchanged for several years, and used this to guide his teaching of several units. Ordinarily this could be seen as doing a disservice to his students, by narrowing the scope of the knowledge and learning experiences for particular topics. But if we shift our focus away from the means of Peter’s teaching and towards the ends, we can better understand his motivation. Peter felt that learning about politics was of most importance for his students, yet they were denied access to this knowledge. In order to gain access, there were specific demands that had to be met, and he was determined to do so for the benefit of his students.

Unfortunately, despite the students’ success in the end of year exam and their efforts to raise a significant portion of the cost of the trip, the benefactor had to reduce the amount of funding they were able to provide. Coupled with the increased cost of airfares to Wellington, the trip had to be amended. Peter was still resolute on planning an experience with a political focus, and we eventually used the school vans to drive the class to Rotorua, where they learnt about historical conflicts, and the politics involved in New Zealand’s colonial past.

Additionally, when I later met with Peter in the year following my fieldwork, he told me that the school had tried to charge him personally, with associated costs of the trip.

*Do you know they tried to ping me for the use of the van? A dollar a kilometre, for using the school van. It was like 400 and something. The boss asked me in a meeting, just him and I about some other stuff and then he says, ‘By the way I just want to ask you...’ I said, ‘Do you know what? Stuart came down for free, gave up his time, drove the van, and I took my own car down. The kids didn’t have to pay for anything. Now you’re asking me for 400 bucks?’ He tried to tell me that it’s school policy, but I said, ‘[Principal’s name], I’ve been here longer than you by four times and I’ve never ever*
heard of this. I’ve never used the school van and been asked to pay for it. We put the gas back in the tank – fair enough – but to be asked to pay for the use of the van? I think that’s wrong.’ Particularly when teachers take kids away, it’s a major commitment and a lot of the kids will never go to Rotorua again. That’s just the truth of it. (Peter)

I never said that I wouldn’t pay for it – which I wouldn’t have – but I never heard any more about it after that. (Peter)

Peter’s practices derived from and responded to his own social positioning. He raised questions about how the culture defined and managed an important practice, and though his theories had no academic prestige, they were connected to political practice so directly that academic theorists might envy his ‘organic’ connections.

Rebecca’s hidden practices were unique to her own situation and included a whole range of patterned yet spontaneous gestures, activities and speech acts. Her classroom was a space where she was free to enact pedagogies that challenged widely held assumptions. Undertaking this commitment meant that issues previously off limits were brought to centre stage and confronted in the classroom; issues such as racism, gender, violence, and economic exploitation.

Perhaps her most influential hidden practice was the decision to redevelop the year 10 art programme; a programme that only Rebecca and her ally Sylvia were responsible for teaching. As I noted in chapter five, Rebecca had recognised that their aesthetic was out of touch with the students’ influences, so they set about making changes. In this way, they were able to implement an unorthodox programme away from the scrutiny of more traditional teachers in their department.

[Head of Department’s name] hadn’t been interested in the past. We just kept on doing the same old thing, and our numbers were really dropping. But when we knew he wasn’t going to be teaching the year 10 programme we decided to do it anyway...

We reduced our year 10 classes to half a year so that we could get more traffic. We
doubled the number of students that have taken our subject in year 10... [We] basically had a negotiation with our classes, and we talked about what they wanted to do, what they wanted to get out of being here, and then, together, we matched that up with what we wanted to try... I think the atmosphere in the class is really good. I think that’s a really good reflection that there are kids in the class who just feel good about doing the work, what they’re interested in. (Rebecca)

However, Rebecca’s views on education and the aesthetics of her teaching practices created some dissonance when confronted with the orthodox school culture. As a result, she had to be creative about how she enacted her practices. The following example illustrates how she embedded critical issues into these lessons.

We had been spending some time developing our own concepts of a superhero one lesson, when I overheard a conversation that Rebecca was having with several students about the conventions of comic book characters. She had been walking among the students, observing their work and providing advice, when she engaged a small group of girls and boys in a conversation about the female body. “I’ve always thought that if I was a superhero and had boobs that big that they’d just get in the way” (Field notes, June).

The students giggled at her comments, but were then asked to think about the conventions of drawing superheroes, and the messages that they send, before thinking about cultural conventions in everyday society. This small group of students were thoroughly engaged and continued their conversation as Rebecca wandered off to the next group.

Her passing comment pointed to her commitment to focusing on critical issues, but her practices were not limited to such spontaneity. When I later asked her about this instance, she said:

I feel there’s a luxury, where I can teach a, ahh, a hidden curriculum. I do purposefully think about that other layer and I try to take opportunities to discuss different issues. Sometimes it will be, like my analogies; I love coming out with different analogies and stuff, and they become a little opportunity to inject a critical stance. (Rebecca)
The explicit focus of this unit of work concerned the study of characters and the particular conventions used in portraying them. Norms of hyper-masculine men, and women with revealing outfits, large breasts and petite bodies were critiqued, as students examined “the continued legacy of sexism in a culture that is virtually post-feminist” (Rebecca). Rebecca believed that the conventional representations of superheroes were a part of a wider ideological field of gendered understandings of power. The examples that she introduced her students to clearly illustrated a collective poverty of the imagination when it came to thinking about how and why gender should matter. The gendered representations of superheroes, with their narratives of patriarchy, protection and (secular) salvation clearly revealed the power of sexism. In response, Rebecca encouraged her students to develop their own characters that challenged the stereotypes. Their forms included strong Pacific and Asian influences, as well as an increase in female characters and more ‘ordinary’ identities, such as ‘Scooter Boy’, ‘Independence’, ‘Miss Commerce’, and an un-named elderly character whose super-power was ‘wisdom’.

Rebecca’s approach was structured, but it also responded to the interests of her students. She mentioned other discussion points that had arisen in other classes, including good versus evil, and how it was often difficult to reduce human relationships to two polarities. The course work also included other critical issues, such as issues of culture and cultural symbolism in art, and its connection to colonial subordination and resistance; youth culture and graffiti art, and the critical questions of who decides what counts as art, and how they obtain the power to do so; and, brand design and economic exploitation in the apparel industry. In each of these units, Rebecca encouraged her students to research their own community and portray prominent symbols that appeared in the Winstone locale. Yet officially, the curricula objectives were recorded as, “developing visual literacy and aesthetic awareness as they manipulate and transform visual and tactile ideas”, “experiment with materials to develop their visual enquiries”, “explore and use art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes”, “develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations,
observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists’ work” and “create static art works” (Field notes, August - Year 10 Art Scheme, 2011).

Rebecca’s hidden practices were also revealed in her discussion regarding the school appraisal system. More widely, Benade’s (2012) critique of the Education Workforce Advisory Group’s Vision for the Teaching Profession has analysed the specific neoliberal policy directive that has given rise to the priority of teacher appraisal and accountability. On the surface, the need to improve teacher support and enhance their development is a positive concern. But neoliberal reformers have detached the issue of improving teacher quality from the conditions that produce it (Benade, 2012; Connell, 2011). Instead, the reformers are pouring vast amounts of money into accountability systems and “an imposing new apparatus of testing, accreditation, and surveillance” (Connell, 2011, p. 74). These accountability standards are designed to replace collaborative professional culture and experienced instructional leadership with what Karp referred to as “a kind of psychometric astrology” (2012, p. 278), which lacks credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible (Connell, 2011; Karp, 2012). Instead of elevating the profession, neoliberal accountability is deforming it.

Yet, Rebecca was able to manipulate the mandatory appraisal process, to help gain traction with the changes she envisioned. The appraisal process included observations of her teaching by her Head of Department, who Rebecca described as, “a bit of an old dinosaur really. He just does his same old thing, but he’s really a bit of a handbrake to some of the developments we’d really like to make” (Rebecca). While Rebecca was required to demonstrate particular competencies and expected practices, she spoke of how she exploited the situation to try to influence her Head of Department’s future teaching:

[Head of Department] did an observation of me the other day… which was interesting because we decided to do it on my movement around the students. It was a goal that I came up with because we know that that’s an area that [Head of Department] would benefit from seeing. (Rebecca)
Rebecca had an ally in her department, whom she worked with to surreptitiously implement a critical dimension to the art programmes. But not all of her work-friends shared her stance. At the beginning of one staff meeting, I was sitting with Rebecca and several of her friends from an array of departments, waiting for the meeting to commence. As we looked over the agenda, Rebecca spoke quietly with a geography teacher sitting next to her about the appraisal observation I have referred to above. I took this teacher to be a trusted confidant, but interestingly she was unsure about Rebecca’s actions, and expressed caution about “not rocking the boat” (Field notes, October).

Laura’s hidden practices extended to educating students about homophobia and heteronormativity, in response to their use of terms like ‘gay’, ‘homo’ and ‘les’. By acting in this way, Laura called into question dominant notions of sexuality. In doing so, she exposed the ‘cultural arbitrary’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) surrounding sexuality, that suggested particular cultural practices and beliefs were more acceptable than alternative conceptions, despite the fact that all of these forms were socially constructed. Laura was aware that particular conceptions of sexuality were silenced at Winstone, making school a difficult place for students who identified as gay:

Pretty much every single gay kid that’s come through [Winstone], it was their worst time here. Even though all of their friends were here and they liked class, it was still the worst time in their life for a lot of them. They hear the word ‘gay’ being sung around as an insult. So if they hear someone using to mean that something is inferior and has some kind of negative connotation to it, then it implies that being gay is negative and not normal. (Laura)

She went on to explain how she had seen other teachers respond to the use of homophobic language:

I’ve heard some teachers say, ‘Don’t use that word as an insult in this classroom’. But it’s hard to tell if they are viewing that use through a homophobic lens, or are meaning something more like ‘Gay culture is not normal, so don’t even mention it
around me’. What ever they mean by it, I don’t know if it actually changes their [students’] beliefs if they just tell them to stop it. (Laura)

In contrast, Laura took a more educative approach:

I stop them too, and I say, ‘This is what I’ve just heard...’ They usually respond with something like, ‘Yeah I didn’t mean it like that’; ‘No it just means like stink’; ‘It’s just another word’. I’m like, ‘Well if you do some thinking about it, you are using that, you know the term gay, to denote something that is bad’. So, like I just said, if a gay person is hearing you use it as something negative then it implies that being gay is negative and not normal. (Laura)

Rather than just banning it, I try getting the kids to think that way because I’ve been teaching for a while and have a bit of experience, but I think its something that’s always been important to me... I don't know... maybe because I’m gay, I'm kind of on the outside, like on the outskirts of society, and have my opinions and stuff based on how life was for me as a kid and growing up. I don't know, maybe that’s it. That’s really effective. They never say it around me anymore, but I know they still say it out there. (Laura)

But despite her efforts to challenge the use of homophobic language through education, Laura was philosophical about the impact of her endeavour:

I think it maybe makes them think, because mostly they are pretty good to me and they don’t want to offend me. Even if it’s just one person that they do that with, I think there probably is a lot more I could do, but it’s a really hard one, it really is. I don’t know how to change it... I think that if we focus on the little stuff... we won’t change it. You can’t do what I do and expect it to have a massive impact, cause it’s not. It’s going to have an impact within these four walls where I said it, to those kids that I said it to. Maybe they will think, but maybe they won’t. Maybe they will only think when they’re around me. That’s not actually what I want to happen because that’s just making me think that the school is a safe place when I know that it’s not
We do a huge amount around bullying, around homophobia. We are the school that has the largest Peer Sexuality Support Programme, the most active mediators; we train more mediators, I think, than any other school. And it’s still really, really unsafe. I think a better way to do it is structurally, from the top down. I’m not sure how, but I’d quite like to do something about it. (Laura)

Laura was one of several teachers in this study who went on to occupy similar locations in the hierarchy as those who reinforced the dominant ideology. As a house dean, Laura had particular expectations of her, and at times she found it difficult to uphold both sides of her professional identity. The complex contradictions that Laura spoke of were the epitome of her public transcript versus her hidden practices.

When I asked Laura how she juggled the dual demands, she spoke of how she had to pick and choose when and how she responded to different issues:

I think I only publicly rebel when things really offend me. Usually I stick within the rules, and I’m a real rules girl. But when I see that something is holding someone back, like stopping them from being who they are, or who I am, that’s when I’m rebellious. In the last, maybe five to ten years, I think I’ve learnt to not be as in-your-face with my outspokenness, but just to make sure that I am consistently saying the same thing. (Laura)

Standing up for my beliefs has sometimes won me some friends, but in the past it has got me in trouble too. Like sometimes I stand up too vehemently and I’m not prepared to step back, especially if it involves an injustice. And I’ve had to manage some of my relationships carefully, particularly since being down here [in the Dean’s offices], you know, tread carefully. (Laura)

It is at this point that Margaret’s experience is useful for considering what happens when the frontier between the hidden and the public is decisively breached.

Margaret was first pointed out to me when Catherine showed me around the administrative block for the first time. She was one of the teachers that Catherine warned me to be weary
of. Indeed, throughout the course of my fieldwork, many others made similar insinuations. I sensed that Margaret had not won many friends since arriving at the school six years previously.

Nevertheless, my growing awareness of the other participants’ hidden practices made Margaret intriguing to me. While Sean, Peter, Rebecca, Laura and Joseph went to great lengths to present an outward appearance of conformity, Margaret had no qualms about being outspoken. She would frequently interject during meetings and made formal complaints about issues that she believed were unfair.

Margaret introduced herself to me one lunchtime, as we were waiting for the microwave in the staffroom. When I explained the focus of my research, she informed me that she had a great sense of social justice and that I must come and talk to her (Field notes, September). I attended several of Margaret’s classes, and appreciated her efforts to engage with her students, and to include a dimension of ‘life skills’ in her early childhood class. The specific focus of this class was on developing distinct skills and knowledge that could be used in early childhood education settings. Many of the students in this class expressed a desire to train as early childhood educators once they finished secondary school. But Margaret’s informal nature with her students was somewhat troubling. She would often talk about private issues with her students, which were irrelevant to their course work, and I overheard her speaking disloyally of other teachers on more than one occasion.

I persevered with my interactions with Margaret as I sensed there was something in these experiences of relevance to my study. But when we met for our ‘dialogic conversations’, the discussions tended to result in Margaret rambling at great length about private grievances and criticisms of other staff members, which were more of a personal nature than professional judgments. Transcriptions of these conversations resulted in page upon page of Margaret’s disjointed and verbose complaints, which were difficult to make any sense of.

Things reached a critical point though, in the year following my initial fieldwork, when Margaret’s outspoken criticism landed her in disciplinary proceedings with the senior
management. Although I had ceased my work at the school, I was still in regular contact with my participants, and they divulged what had taken place.

Margaret had been asked to cover a class for another teacher, which was made up of students whom she did not know. The students’ alleged that Margaret made disparaging comments about staff members and students, using derogatory language and offensive comments to express her annoyance. The school principal asked Margaret to stay home, on full pay, following the students’ complaints. The school’s Board of Trustees then investigated the allegations, which resulted in them issuing Margaret with a written warning over the incident. Margaret then took a case before the Employment Relations Authority (ERA), alleging she was unjustifiably disadvantaged by being suspended and issued with a warning. The ERA found that Margaret was not unjustifiably disadvantaged.

The ERA proceedings are publicly available documents, available through the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment’s Employment Law Database. Accessing these documents enabled me to corroborate the story.

Margaret’s public refusal to produce the words, gestures, and other signs of normative compliance were construed – and apparently intended – as an act of defiance. Scott (1990) noted that the crucial distinction in such cases is between a practical failure to comply and a declared refusal to comply: “The former does not necessarily breach the normative order of domination; the latter almost always does” (Scott, 1990, p. 203).

When Margaret’s practical failure to comply was joined with her pointed, public refusal it constituted a throwing down of the gauntlet. As Scott (1990) suggested, it is one thing to fail to comply with the appropriate expectations; such a failure might be construed “as an inadvertent lapse of attention having no symbolic significance” (1990, p. 203). It is another thing to boldly refuse to comply with professional expectations. In some respects the behaviour may be nearly identical, “but the former is either a harmless or ambiguous act while the latter is an implicit threat to the relation of domination itself” (1990, p. 203).
The distinction that the school management made between the inadequate performance of other teachers and Margaret’s declared violation of norms was not the result of an overly delicate sense of honour. Rather, it originated in their understanding of the possible consequences of open defiance. Margaret’s open refusal to comply, then, was a particularly risky form of insubordination. In fact, Scott (1990) suggested that the term *insubordination* is quite appropriate in cases like this because,

> any particular refusal to comply is not merely a tiny breach in a symbolic wall; it necessarily calls into question all the other acts that this form of subordination entails. A single lapse in conformity can be repaired or excused with negligible consequences for the system of domination. A single act of successful [overt] public insubordination, however, pierces the smooth surface of apparent consent, which itself is a visible reminder of underlying power relations. (Scott, 1990, p. 205)

Because Margaret’s acts of symbolic defiance had such ominous consequences for power relations, she was dealt with more harshly than others who had merely made infractions of the norms.

**Conclusion**

Following Scott (1985, 1990), in this chapter I endeavoured to reveal the everyday and seemingly informal configuration of resistance – the kinds that “make no headlines” (1985, p. 36). Scott’s complex notion of everyday resistance afforded me a vital tool for analysing the actually existing conditions of teacher agency. For Scott, audience recognition had little to do with whether a particular act of defiance could be called resistance. This counterintuitive claim was deconstructed through Scott’s notion of ‘the public and hidden transcripts’. At Winstone Grammar, the participants’ public transcript included a collection of sanctioned roles, practices and behaviours. As they acted out the public transcript they produced the outward impression of conformity. By way of contrast, Scott argued that the practice of domination created the ‘hidden transcript’ – “the privileged site for... subversive discourse” (1990, p. 25). The participant’s behaviour within this discourse took place under the nose of the dominant groups in the school.
In arguing that the participants were incompletely absorbed into the dominant system, I am not denying that social reproduction is also a by-product of the professional culture of schools. Rather, I am correcting the theory to argue that social reproduction of teachers in schools is not complete and this incompleteness offers both hope and raises serious dilemmas for teachers in public schools.

The alternative agency comprised in the hidden practices survived despite the powerful messages circulated by the discourse of common sense in the school, and in society more generally. Though these forms of agency were subjective, individualised and unremarkable in the significance of their overall impact on neoliberal hegemony, they were sufficiently memorable and important for the individuals. It is in the intimacy and modesty of their personal resistance through which we see their negotiations of competing and contradictory discourses of teaching and schooling.

From the vantage point that hidden practices offer, the teachers not only struggled for survival, but strived in an enduring process to improve their circumstances through often individualistic and quiet challenges to the norms imposed by dominant groups.
The Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary

After all, if you do not resist the apparently inevitable, you will never know how inevitable the inevitable was.

—Terry Eagleton, Why Marx Was Right

Introduction

We live in a time when it is crucial to recognise and analyse the power and the real repercussions of neoliberal policies in education. It is also essential to understand the renegotiations that are made at the local level as these policies are put into practice. As Stephen Ball emphasised, “policy is... a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings” (1994, p. 10). Thus, rather than assuming that neoliberal policies dictate exactly what occurs at the local level, we have to study the re-articulations that occur at this level in order to map out the creation of alternative imaginaries.

Although I have avoided claiming that changes in the larger economic and social context of society have a direct and commensurate relationship to changes in education, I have endeavoured to illustrate the links between such changes and the new demands that these changes create in schools. Within the hegemonic logic, schools have always been considered an advantageous arena in which to acclimatise new generations to social life and to the workplace. If the spheres of the social and the workplace are changing, we can indubitably rely on the hegemonic groups to propose corresponding changes in the educational arena. As Michael Apple explained:

Education is a site of struggle and compromise. It serves as a proxy as well for larger battles over what our institutions should do, who they should serve, and who should make these decisions. And, yet, by itself it is one of the major arenas in which resources, power, and ideology specific to policy, finance, curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation in education are worked through. Thus education is both cause and effect, determining and determined. (Apple, 2001, p. 36)

In society more generally, those who promote neoliberalism suggest that, in the long run, the trickle-down of an eventual national economic growth will compensate for the difficulties that lower socio-economic groups, and other marginalised groups, are currently
facing. In the mean-time, schools and teachers are expected to pave the way to the workforce, assist in social programmes to alleviate the hardships, and avert possible social unrest. It is because of this intimate relation between education and society that I have set about demonstrating how secondary school teachers manage the complex relationship between their own commitments to social justice and the priorities associated with neoliberalism in their work in schools. To do so, I have illustrated how a group of teachers at a public secondary school in Auckland, New Zealand, responded to the larger social and economic processes that affected their professional livelihoods.

As institutions, schools do take up some of the social challenges presented by neoliberalism. However, they more closely reflect the sentiments of the politics of blame than the actual everyday practices of ordinary people. The end result is that the global neoliberal restructuring is producing and reproducing subjectivities, social space, and the terrain of political struggles that current theoretical perspectives cannot account for on their own. Interestingly, this process has created new subjectivities of marginalisation.

**The Professional Community and The Subaltern Teacher**

The onset of neoliberalism in educational settings has given rise to the growth of a marginalised, subaltern teacher in public schools. Such socially excluded and informal groups are by no means new historical phenomena. However, the recent global restructuring seems to have intensified and extended the conditions that lead to their marginalisation. What is novel about this form of marginalisation is that many subaltern teachers do not come from historically oppressed groups. They are educated people with high aspirations and social skills, and who sometimes obtain positions of status in their schools. Yet they still come up against dominant and powerful groups, who dictate the purposes of education and determine what methods are deemed appropriate.

As the participants acknowledged, philosophical, cultural, and attitudinal differences – or different positionings in the field – seemed to mediate how their orientations were perceived by others. More often than not, they were ‘put in their place’ during interactions, according to whether their discursive practices were perceived to ‘fit’ or not. Hence, it was
difficult to establish productive professional relationships between people in different fields, or even conflicting positions in the same field, because communication was based on the dominant cultural literacy and institutional practices. Each occupied its own circuits of knowledge and ways of acting and did not often speak to each other in a professional capacity. When they did, each tended to treat the other as ‘straw figures’.

While professional discourse shared among longer-serving staff, as well as those in dominant positions, constituted a core of workplace communication and bound the community together, it was also found to isolate teachers who did not subscribe to such understandings. This was a key element in the spatial politics of the workplace, and even if the participants met other professional and/or workplace standards, their educational beliefs were still often positioned on the margin. The participants’ lived experiences, which were oriented by their concerns with social justice and responding to the perceived inequalities in their students’ lives, were not taken into account. As such, this process of production devalued the participants in terms of their professional belonging.

Because the idea of ‘a professional community’ was imagined in a particular way at Winstone Grammar, a number of gate keeping mechanisms filtered the inclusion of teachers into the professional space. Possessing different socio-cultural capital to that which was valued in the professional community, subaltern teachers found themselves discursively positioned to comply with the neoliberal conceptions of education. They were produced by a discursive ventriloquism, as they were creatures of the languages, values and knowledge that the professional community had inherited, and which subconsciously exerted control over their thinking and behaviour.

The inherent and irrepresible desire to maintain the familiar practice conditions in the professional community can be linked to Bourdieu’s (1990b) state of doxa. In Bourdieu’s terms, doxa is “the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 68). The dominant players in the professional community of Winstone Grammar identified so strongly with the discourse of common sense that they had become devoted to it. In times
of threat, such as when they were confronted by alternative educational discourses, they felt the need to defend the taken-for-granted practices of their field of practice. Indeed, they were so familiar with these traditions that they had come to accept them at a tacit and unspoken level of consciousness. Or, in Bourdieu’s words: “The mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalisation of the structures of that world” (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 18). Over time, the dominant players’ familiarity with the cultural traditions of their professional community had come to provide them with a sense of security and belonging – a practical faith in the field. As I have suggested, at Winstone Grammar these players had become the captains of consciousness – they were so powerfully positioned within the professional community that they were able to ordain what was accepted as fitting practice, and what was rejected.

The desire to retain the doxic modality, that is the existing state of affairs, was also of interest to Bourdieu. He explained this via his concept of ‘homogamy’: “the paradigm of all the ‘choices’ through which the habitus tends to favour experiences likely to reinforce it” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 61). The dominant players at Winstone Grammar, and in the wider field of education in New Zealand, protect their patch through the subconscious use of avoidance strategies. They distance those who threaten their ongoing existence, including people, practices, and alternative discourses. Bourdieu (1990b) explained this as the habitus defending itself from change by rejecting the information that is capable of denouncing its accumulated capital. The habitus insulates itself from critical challenges by providing itself with a surrounding to which it is pre-adapted. In this way it perpetuates a relatively constant universe of situations that reinforce its dispositions. So, the logic of the common sense appeared to be necessary, even natural, to those individuals who identified with it because it was that logic that provided the basis “of the schemes of perception and appreciation through which they are apprehended” (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 53-54).

While practical faith provided some teachers with a sense of belonging to the professional community, it also formed a basis for excluding those who did not share the same history and, by association, the same practical beliefs. Bourdieu (1990b) suggested that this is why
one cannot enter this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of will, but only by birth or by a slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth. (1990b, p. 68)

But according to Bourdieu, the deep-rooted doxic modality of a field is actually a cultural arbitrary, as all fields of practice are arbitrary in nature. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) claimed that the positions and relations of the cultural field are valorised by power relations rather than by any intrinsic aesthetic qualities. By designating the cultural as arbitrary, Bourdieu and Passeron challenged the perception that the sacred objects of high culture are valued this way because of some intrinsic quality that they possess. From this point of view, such sacred objects deserve their status and reverence because of something about them that is ‘real’. But Bourdieu argued that this in fact is an illusion. Rather, the field of culture is arbitrary in that the positions, and the objects that mark them, lack any intrinsic justifications or qualities. Rather, their meaning is relational. That which is valorised is the opposite of that which is deemed to be lacking in taste. Each has meaning only in relation to the other. It is the relation that makes the meaning.

At Winstone Grammar, the discourse of common sense was arbitrary in that its valorisation reflected no more than the interests and discriminations of those who arbitrarily held power. What’s more, those who controlled the common sense had no natural right to the power they held. Rather, their positions were historically contingent, and their role in the transmission of knowledge was tied to their desire to impose their authority and gain legitimacy for the dominant cultural arbitrary.

But to dismiss the subaltern teachers’ actions as marginal entirely overlooks the vital role of power relations in constraining forms of resistance open to subordinate groups. The professional risks involved in an open confrontation preclude many forms of resistance. But, if only overt forms of struggle are called resistance then all that is being measured is the level of suppression that structures the available options.

In the cases of the six teachers who participated in this study, I have argued that the formal discourses that were expressed in the public spaces of the school concealed a less traceable, but more extensive, daily practice of theory and resistance by people who would never
think of their practices in those terms. Being perceived as the peripheral ‘other’ meant being seen as foreign or antagonistic. But rather than assimilating the taken-for-granted practices, the participants developed a dual-discursive competence by way of their public and hidden transcripts. This allowed them to creatively hybridise their professional and cultural identities. In this sense, they were able to use their marginality to rethink their subjectivity and to transform their peripheral situationality into emancipatory power. As bell hooks (1990) argued, periphery can become a location from which the ‘other’ initiates the disordering and transgression of asymmetrical relations between the centre and the margin.

In this respect, some participants used their marginality as a vantage point from which to re-imagine educational means and ends. They resisted assimilation into the dominant discourse of common sense, and retained their educational, pedagogical and ethical commitments to social justice. For many of the participants, the lived politics of subordination served as a main reason for engaging in the construction of subversive subjectivities, practices and discourses in the school space of Winstone Grammar.

As Bourdieu noted,

> when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a ‘fish in water’: it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127)

Hence, all is well in the relation between habitus and social world provided that social actors have a ‘feel for the game’, or are as ‘fish in water’. At Winstone Grammar, the social world – the professional community – was constituted by the discourse of common sense, which in turn was structured by more powerful actors. Accordingly, the teachers who felt most at home there were those who shared the characteristics and worldviews of the powerful. Yet, as I have illustrated throughout this thesis, the participants in this study seldom shared these attributes. Rather, their habitus were inscribed through the dispositions of their lives other than the dominant and in experiences other than the traditional.

As a result, they felt a sense of dissonance when they were unable to activate their pre-existing practical knowledge – their understandings of the causes of social and educational inequalities, and their commitments to social justice. It was as if there was no place for it in
a social world that required them to demonstrate knowledge of, and commitment to, dominant discourses of teaching and education. Unable to activate their socio-cultural capital in an alien world, they felt like ‘a fish out of water’, and felt unable (or unwilling) to unreservedly ascribe to the accepted practices.

The socialisation into the dominant discourse of the professional community – the common sense understandings – served as a gate-keeping device and had the potential to prevent subaltern teachers from gaining a standing in the social space of the school. If they refused, or failed, to assimilate to the accepted practices, they would be subject to powerful discourses that blamed them for problems in which they played no part; problems, in fact, which they were trying to respond to in the first place.

In Margaret’s case, this discourse of scrutiny became a further site of alienation, leading her to feel a sense of ‘not belonging’, despite her initial willingness. While Margaret possessed quite different beliefs to the other participants in this study, her experience serves as a powerful reminder of what is in store for teachers who refuse to ‘toe the line’.

I have also argued that the activity of questioning the premises that guide practice is more widespread in contemporary culture than is readily apparent. My argument does not deny the power of ideology. Indeed many teachers were caught in the un-reflexive blindness that is produced by, and produces, the discourse of common sense. But it does deny the power of ideology to remain invisible. In the individual cases of the teachers, they showed that they were able to come to the point of raising questions about the rules that define schooling and teaching, and which guide educational practices. They were vernacular theorists.

The participants used their vernacular theories as a discursive practice. This was a complex process in which they simultaneously conformed to, and called into question, the expectations, responsibilities, status and stature of their local context. In doing so, they were able to rely on particular meanings and understandings garnered from the social sedimentations of their past and a current reading of their political circumstances. In this way, their performances can be interpreted as a production of an act that stemmed from
dispositions and conventions built over time, yet socially situated within the fervour of the present climate in such a way that they ‘made no headlines’.

**Quiet Encroachment**

In their introduction to *Learning and Social Difference: Challenges for public education and critical pedagogy*, Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo referred to “neoliberal encroachments on education”, which limit “the pursuit of knowledge mainly to employability, workers’ efficiency, mobility, flexibility, and one’s self-responsibility for continuing education” (Borg & Mayo, 2006, p. 4). Framed in this way, the discourse reflects the perceived power of education to foster economic return. But it is Borg and Mayo’s use of the term *encroachment* that leaps out to me. To encroach is to intrude on someone else’s territory; to advance *gradually*, yet in a way that causes damage, or claws back ground previously lost.

In this concluding act of my thesis, I employ the term *encroachment* in a similar way to Borg and Mayo, but with an altogether different focus. I propose that the coalescence of the concepts of vernacular theory and theorists, appropriation of space, and hidden practices suggest an alternative outlook – *quiet encroachment* – that I think might be more suited to understanding the activism and engagement of subaltern teachers, not only at Winstone Grammar, but in public schools more generally.

Asef Bayat (2000) originally coined the term ‘quiet encroachment’. Perhaps he was following the claim of political theorist and fourth president of the United States, James Madison, who spoke of “gradual and silent encroachments” in his address to the Virginia Convention in 1788:

> Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpation. (Madison, 1788; cited in Grigsby & Brock, 1891, p. 130)

Based on extended studies of the urban poor, particularly on the streets of Middle Eastern cities, Bayat offered the term “quiet encroachment” to capture the “silent, protracted ad pervasive advancement of ordinary people in relation to the propertied and rich people in the city in order to survive and improve their lives” (2000, p. 545).
Hence, quiet encroachment refers to non-collective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals to acquire the basic necessities for their professional livelihoods. From this vantage point, teachers not only struggle for survival, but also strive in a continual process to improve their lot through an often individualistic and quiet encroachment on the public goods, and on the power and property of the dominant groups. In this process, as I have made clear throughout this thesis, the grassroots do not attempt to overthrow neoliberalism. The atomistic acts of subaltern teachers involved little coordination. They ranged from closing the curtains of a classroom, to realigning funds intended for a controversial initiative to better support present, and proven, practices. In essence, their atomistic acts consisted of attempts by individuals to strike out at local manifestations, and perceived injustices, of the prevailing order.

In addition, these struggles were not only defensive manoeuvres aimed at protecting an already achieved gain, but accumulatively encroaching, meaning that the subaltern teachers tended to expand their space by winning new positions to move on. This type of quiet and gradual grassroots activism was able to contest many fundamental aspects of the hegemonic prerogatives, including the meaning of order, the control of school space, and the acceptance of particular practices.

These teachers carried out their activities not as deliberately rebellious acts; rather, they were driven by the force of necessity – the necessity to survive and improve their professional livelihoods. Necessity was the notion that rationalised their often unaccepted acts as principled and even ‘natural’ ways to maintain a professional life with dignity. Yet these very simple and seemingly mundane practices tended to shift them into the realm of contentious politics. The teachers became engaged in (informal) collective dialogue and action, and they viewed their practices as political only when confronted by those who threatened their gains.

Driven by their desire to enact their professional and moral commitments, the teachers set out on their ventures rather individually and without much excitement. They even deliberately avoided collective effort, large-scale operation, and publicity. But why
individual and quiet direct action, instead of collective demand making? Prior to the neoliberal restructuring of the 1980s, institutional mechanisms and unions were relatively strong. But more recently, the hegemonic discourse has worked to paint these means in a bad light, as obstreperous and irksome. The result is that subaltern teachers are now more likely to operate outside institutional mechanisms through which they could previously express their grievances and enforce their demands. They prefer to remain hidden and unnoticed, instead of conspicuous through more public acts of disruption. In this vein, these teachers move directly to fulfil their needs by themselves in place of protest or publicity, albeit individually and discreetly. In short, theirs is not a politics of protest, but of redress. They struggle for an immediate outcome through individual and direct action.

What do these teachers aim for? By and large, they hope to attain autonomy, both cultural and political, from the regulations and control imposed by the discourse of common sense. But how far can subaltern teachers exercise autonomy in the conditions of neoliberalism? Not only do subaltern teachers seek autonomy, they also need security. That is, they require freedom from the probing and surveillance of dominant groups, because a scrutinised existence amidst the discourse of common sense is a vulnerable existence. In their quest for a less marginal existence, the subaltern teachers are in constant negotiation and alternation between autonomy and conformity. They tend to maintain an impression of conformity as part of their public transcript, yet behind the scenes they tend to critique the rivers of power that flow through the school. In response, they act outside the boundaries of the dominant groups and bureaucratic institutions, basing their work as teachers on their vernacular theories, rather than on accepted ways of thinking and acting as imposed by the discourse of common sense.

Re-Imagining the Notion of Professional Community

At Winstone Grammar, the concept of ‘professional community’ denoted local practices, face-to-face relations, and a united teaching faculty as essential to the fulfilment of a democratic ideal in the workplace. This image assumed that teachers’ sense of belonging emanated from their democratic participation in the workings of a quality and efficient
school, and the accountability of all community members for school improvement, effectiveness, and improved learning and professional outcomes. The necessary traits in such a professional community were self-reflection, personal development, effective communication, cooperation, and a willingness to enhance the community. These attributes were believed to be essential for participation in the professional community, which was itself committed to establishing a stable nucleus of teachers through the aforementioned strategies of socialisation.

While the ideal view of professional community imbues almost every venture of school improvement, I believe that there is a danger in borrowing the notion of community from anthropology and applying it directly to the workplaces of teachers. It is clear that surmising a consensus based on common interests, commitments, and bureaucratic professional standards gives rise to a logic of hierarchical opposition of what counts as accepted and unaccepted practice and hence who can be included and excluded. As Iris Marion Young (1990) suggested, a desire for community implies a desire for social wholeness and common identity that at the same time produces a spatial boundary between inside and outside, ‘us’ and ‘them’, the ‘pure’ and ‘impure’. This reinforces the binary logic of inclusion and exclusion that penetrates the identifications of ‘self’ and ‘other’. The discourse of common sense in this study exemplifies that conceiving of community in such a way is problematic.

While the participants did refer to positive relations within their workplace, there was an abiding sense that the ideal of equality, mutual reciprocity, and support was quite romantic. The main reason for this was that ‘the professional community’ at Winstone Grammar was thought to be discursively and culturally pure. The concepts that I have illustrated throughout this thesis –vernacular theories, spatial appropriation, and hidden practices – suggest that the production of professional space is always mediated by certain discourses that go beyond face-to-face experiences and beyond the local setting. The spatial-discursive production of professional communities, then, bears resemblance to the construction of larger communities, which Benedict Anderson (1991) portrayed as ‘imagined’. In this sense, professional communities of teachers are imagined as sharing a significant common history and a shared cultural heritage. This imaginary presupposes the homogeneity of ‘insiders’
and eschews their social-discursive differences. Likewise, the dynamics of power in the social relationships between teachers are not considered. Rather, the image of a deep-seated fraternity is accentuated, which assumes trust and gives rise to a semblance of equality in creating and managing the workplace. While this may not transpire in reality, the community must imagine itself in this way for teachers to feel in harmony with each other and to ensure that the doxic modality of the school is sustained.

Such a view of professional community can only create a socially homogenising space in which it is difficult for social-discursive differences to survive. With the growing diversity of student populations in New Zealand schools, escalating numbers of people living below the poverty line, and widening gap between high and low educational achievements, it is clear that schools must be cognisant of the sociological and contextual circumstances impacting on the lives of their students. It is also important to imagine those professional communities that are responsive not only to the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity of its students, but also to diversity in terms of the professional histories and experiences of its teachers.

In this light, we need to imagine a community of teachers who can establish a multifaceted relationship of mutual interdependence and support among its members by learning how to live with difference in a positive way and seeing it as enriching educational and pedagogical practices. This imaginary becomes equally important for disrupting the neoliberal notion of the professional community that is based on homogenisation and marginalisation and for articulating a new vision of workplaces that would reflect the fabric of a heterogeneous society such as Winstone, or indeed New Zealand.

**Concluding Comments**

The strategies and tactics employed as resistance by the participants in this study did not enable them to overturn the oppressive order imposed on them by the neoliberal hegemony, but they did nevertheless subvert it. The hidden spaces within the school landscape were the openings in which teachers could oppose the dominant notions by questioning their arbitrariness, refusing to play by their rules, and exercising their own
agency. Their actions were secretive, but still contested the public hegemonic discourse by encroaching upon the grounds of the dominant, fracturing the everyday panorama. Through apparent acts of voluntary submission, they made of the laws imposed on them something quite different from what the dominant classes had imagined.

In highlighting the fact that people are often unable to overturn the regimes of power that dominate them, in this thesis I have provided a useful antidote to those inclined to romanticise resistance. But in doing so, I have also illustrated how a particular group of teachers who are committed to issues of social justice managed to create a space for themselves within their school. And they did so amidst a powerful and unrelenting hegemonic discourse regarding the purpose of education and accepted teaching practice. They subverted the rituals, representations and rules not by rejecting them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were positioned as other within the very system that outwardly assimilated them. Their use of the dominant social order deflected its power, which they lacked the means to challenge. They escaped it without leaving it.
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