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Elite education and everyday encounters: Examining the multiple dimensions of privilege in young people's lives

by

Hayley Christine Sparks

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Abstract

This thesis examines the operation of systems of privilege in place, drawing on the experiences and identities of young people who attend elite private schools. Privilege, particularly in the context of elite education has become a significant area of research. This work sits alongside research which centres on understanding how social structures shape the lives of more disadvantaged young people. It is argued that to mark and name privilege denaturalises assumptions and normalisations. Therefore, by examining young people’s lived realities through the lens of privilege, the reproduction and performance of privilege through multiple dimensions is demonstrated. This research takes the position that while education is the access point to engage young people in the research, it is important to look beyond the school gates to understand how privilege shapes everyday life. Thus, the focus on young people’s everyday encounters and practices is central to this thesis.

The literature base for this thesis draws on interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge. The geographies of privilege is a growing area of interest, but much relevant work on privilege comes from sociology and education. Principles of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach underpin this research. Young people are acknowledged to be experts on their own lives, and the social and cultural construction of childhood is recognised to allow nuanced understandings of the pluralities of childhood. To do this necessitates that privileged groups experiences and identities are studied. Part of this study requires consideration of the reproduction and enactment of privilege through the process of socialisation. Spatialised elements are also critical to understanding the nuances of multiple dimensions of privilege. From a theoretical perspective, Bourdieu’s insights on education and power, including the concepts of capital and habitus provide a language to discuss how privilege is reproduced. Therefore, arguably, performances of privilege, which contribute to its reproduction, are evident in the taken-for-granted practices of everyday life.

The central objective of the thesis is to examine the lived realities and identities of young people who attend elite private schools in Auckland, New Zealand. Through this work, the thesis develops a critical understanding of privilege as a social discourse which is simultaneously unmarked but visible through material manifestations in people and places. The primary methods used include focus groups and online dialogic diaries. This combination allows for the exploration of group dynamics as well as more personal
participant reflections. The research is thus able to examine young people’s identities and experiences of place and privilege by marking and privileging privileged voices. Textual analysis of material on elite private education and school websites was also undertaken to help investigate the institutional component of privilege. In this way, this thesis concludes by illustrating how embracing uncertainty is critical to examining privileged childhoods and developing a deeper understanding of how systems of privilege operate. Narratives of identity and experience revealed by young people who attend elite private schools contribute to understandings of how practices actively construct and reproduce privilege through institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions.
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Thirdly, this thesis would not have been possible without the willingness and enthusiasm of the students, their parents, and schools. The students’ readiness to engage and openly share their experiences has provided a rich array of data to narrate through this research. The commitment shown by the schools to allow me to come into their classrooms and work with their students was greatly appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their support. Even when it was not always clear to you why I was embarking on a PhD, or what my research was about, you believed in me. Mum, Dad and Matt, your love, encouragement, and patience throughout the journey has not gone unnoticed. To my friends, you know who you are, your support and encouragement to aim for a more balanced approach to this journey has provided us all with great memories.
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Preface

Narrating the plurality of privileged childhoods

Driving through the gates, expansive, modern structures nestled next to historical buildings, and lush green fields come into view. Students dressed in smart, tailored uniforms laugh with each other while heading to class, laptops in hand. These reflections paint a picture of an elite private school where privilege is expressed and (re)produced through an intricate array of practices. It is difficult to disassociate privilege from these spaces, as elite private schools have a distinct character and students are also perceived to be similarly distinctive. However, universal images seemingly associated with privately educated young people, of a homogenous group of ‘uber privileged snobs’\(^1\) precludes any understanding of the diverse lived realities experienced both inside and outside the school gates. By privileging the voices of the privileged, the multiple, diverse experiences of childhood for young people attending elite private schools are narrated:

Lily

‘…where to start. Now that I think of it I don’t think I’ve really done much that is special in my life, but I’ll try and write down what I can.’

…When she was in primary school Lily participated in everything, “literally every club or co-curricular activity available” was something to be involved with. But, the reality of leaving primary school and beginning high school posed some challenges for Lily as many of her friends did not move on to the same school as her: “all of my friends were most likely going to the same school, and I would be starting somewhere completely new and I wouldn’t know a single person”. Lily’s parents decided to put their savings into a

\(^1\) This description was provided by a participant in a focus group, and a common response reiterated by others when discussing public perceptions of elite private school students.
private education and her new school “was a big change: more homework, fancy uniforms and classrooms, weird rules, only girls in my classes, a massive school, and most of all more people!” Lily unexpectedly struggled to make friends, “it felt like everybody already knew each other and I was just that odd one out”. Along with struggling to make friends, Lily has experienced bullying, so to try and stay positive and take her mind off these issues, she focuses on her grades and co-curricular activities. Achieving top academic awards, Lily found herself part of the gifted and talented programme, taking extended math classes and learning ancient languages as an extra subject. The most important thing about the year for Lily was discovering her love for helping others more in need than herself by participating in the World Vision 40-hour Famine. However, Lily still struggled to make friends and feel like she belonged. Lily’s perseverance and willingness to work hard paid off as now she has “some good friends while continuing to achieve highly, play soccer and gymnastics and find new ways to help others”. Singing in the school’s top choir is important to Lily, and she is also part of the Philosophy Club and a dance group. Lily does “do quite a bit but I prefer being busy – I don’t have much free time for catching up with friends or free time at all and sometimes I wish I did, but it keeps my mind off things”. Lily goes to youth group on Friday night where she meets up with old friends, plays sport, eats food, and has time away from “an often empty and kinda cold house that is home”. Lily aspires to go to university, in Dunedin (New Zealand) or Melbourne (Australia) to study medicine. Having been going on ward rounds with her Dad (who is a doctor) from a young age, Lily has always been interested in medicine and dreams of becoming an anaesthetist. Lily does not really want to be wealthy, but just wants to be happy and for her kids, if she has any, to be happy as well…

**Liam**

…For most of his fifteen years, Liam has lived abroad, growing up in a range of countries all around the world. Born in New Zealand, Liam’s family soon moved to Australia, spending three and a half years there. The next stop was Singapore, where Liam started school and was able to travel to many countries around Asia. Thailand was a particular highlight: “definitely up there with one of the best trips I have been on”. After four years in Singapore, the next move was to Belgium. Liam got tired of moving, but thoroughly enjoyed living in Belgium. With opportunities to travel to most European countries, Liam met some of his best friends, and saw snow for the first time: “I was as
happy as can be”. Enjoying his time abroad, Liam was initially sad when his family received news that they would be returning to New Zealand after three and a half years in Belgium, but was excited to be returning to his birth country. Back in New Zealand, Liam’s passion for rugby blossomed, and he was elated when the All Blacks won the Rugby World Cup in 2011. Sport is one of Liam’s main interests, with rugby union, rugby league, American football, and athletics amongst his favourites. Stemming from his childhood experiences, travel and visiting new places is another of Liam’s interests. Liam has been on heaps of great holidays, including a trip to Egypt and Jordan: “Me and my family arrived in Cairo, Egypt and headed straight to the hotel. The next day we met our guide, who would show us around Egypt. We got to visit places like the Great Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, Valley of the Kings, and the Valley of the Queens”. Building on these experiences, Liam would like to become a professional rugby player, or take a gap year with his friends before, perhaps going to university and studying something to do with sport. Liam has “insanely good friends” and “life at the moment is good!”...

Zoe

“My life so far has been a series of ups and downs. I was the classic ditsy child who thought she was a mermaid her whole short life until the reality of boys, looks and cell phones came in touch. I have always stood out from the crowd, always never ‘clicked’ with a particular group. I’ve tried being popular, I found myself looking like a dork, I’ve tried the try-hards, their group had collapsed before I even got there, and most recently I have tried the know-it-all’s/obnoxious group, but they are just pure selfish and mean to their own group members; so quite often I ask myself where do I belong?”

...Being sponsored to attend an elite private school, Zoe promised her parents that she would never turn into an “obnoxious snob”. She feels like she will never fit in with anyone because she “cannot keep up with the latest, most expensive designer things and does not listen to the latest music because I am always trying to get to the next sporting activity”. Zoe enjoys hockey, aerobics, cycling, running, swimming, skiing, dancing, laughing, visiting friends, and spending time with her pets. Travelling with family has been a big part of Zoe’s childhood. Recalling a trip to Australia, Zoe went to Sydney to spend time with “frankly the youngest, coolest Grandma ever! We travelled on trains, planes, boats, taxis, cars, bikes, and while in the city we walked A LOT. We once went on a 6-hour shopping trip which was amazing...getting to spend my money that I had been saving from
my birthday the year before, which honestly has been burning a hole in my pocket! ” While the experiences were significant, for Zoe, the most important part of this trip was visiting her Grandma: “This was a trip of a lifetime and I am so grateful for it, to see my Grandma finally and getting to see all the things I saw...” Zoe has always wanted to be a sports specialist, but she has realised that this will not allow her to truly fulfil her dreams. Recognising the position of New Zealand as the third most obese country in the world, Zoe is determined to become a personal trainer who helps people get healthier and into shape. Zoe describes her story as a fairy tale because “however hard it is to find a friend, at least I can actually go to a very privileged school. Once upon a time I thought of this school as some big castle. I know that someday I will FINALLY fit the glass slipper of friendship”...

Nathan

...Raised on a small island in the Hauraki Gulf (Auckland), Nathan has a strong attachment to the people and the island. In a somewhat alternative community, Nathan and his sister were raised by a nanny, Skate, an elderly hippy who “was short and wore denim jackets. She breeds silkworms and partakes in many anti-nuclear marches”. Skate remains a close friend of Nathan’s to this day and has been a pillar of strength after recent events. As Nathan was about to start school, his family moved to an exclusive inner-city suburb: “I remember life being different for me here”. When Nathan began attending an elite private school, “every morning I was picked up in an old minivan with a lovely driver. I didn’t have many friends in Year 7 or 8, but I still enjoyed the college”. Life quickly changed for Nathan when “a good friend of mine introduced me to a girl, who long story short, became my first sort of girlfriend”. Since then, Nathan has made many new friends who are influential in his life as he enjoys “more and more weekends going out and hanging out at parties, or going to friend’s places, or the movies”. As well as making new friends, Nathan’s interest in progressive rock, metal, and hard rock music grew. With a friend, Nathan was “obsessed over Metallica, and would dance around air guitaring to the One solo pretty much every weekend”. A significant event occurred in Nathan’s life very recently, when he returned home from spending time at his friend’s place to find his mother had passed away in very difficult circumstances. The friends Nathan had made “were extremely supportive, and I wouldn’t be the same as I am today without them. I was depressed and they picked me up, if I needed something they got it for me. I’m very lucky to have them”. With the sadness of the event, Nathan discovered new spaces to hang out
and contemplate life: “I needed a place to go and clear my mind, so I would just hop on a link bus and head down to Queen Street for a few hours. I’d chill in Real Groovy, sit in parks, and find abandoned spots, anything to relax me”. In the time after his mother’s death, religion was also an important comfort for Nathan, who often met his Church Leader in town to talk over coffee. Nathan has overcome struggles with the help of his family, friends and school, however, he will “never forget about Mum, I’m just not sad all the time. That’s pretty much my life, I go downtown and hang there with friends or alone, I play drums, I love my music, I go to [School B], and I like to hang out with friends on the weekend”...
1

Geographies of childhood, privilege, and education

The preceding vignettes provide a glimpse into the childhood experiences of a group of young people who all attend elite private schools. While written in the third person, the stories are constructed using young people’s own voices to ensure the core of their stories is not lost through interpretation. The voices of the privileged are privileged here, and their stories reveal the plurality of privileged childhood experiences. There is no denying that elite private schools are spaces primarily associated with the most privileged social groups. However, it is also important to acknowledge the diverse array of socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual backgrounds that have shaped the growing up journeys of young people who attend elite private schools. Like all young people growing up, their journeys are interrupted by events which challenge prevalent perceptions of young people whose lives play out in relatively privileged settings. These stories raise several interesting questions about how privilege is enacted in everyday life, shaping experiences in both stimulating and sombre ways. Privileging the voices of the privileged in this way is critical to developing a more nuanced understanding of how and why privilege shapes everyday life. This approach helps to unpack dominant, taken-for-granted assumptions about privileged experiences which pervade understandings of social realities. Examining how privilege is reproduced and learnt, simultaneously hidden but visible through everyday actions, thoughts, and experiences is central to this thesis. The thesis expands on key themes
identified in these narratives and the geographies of young people’s everyday lives. Discourses and practices of privilege are explored as one way to make advantages visible and uncover the multiple ways in which systems of privilege operate in place.

1.1 Encountering privilege: Inclusion and exclusion

Seeking to understand privilege is not only about acknowledging that others have privilege, but also comprehending traces of our own privilege regardless of whether the demarcation of privilege is based on attending an elite private school. Growing up in a relatively affluent part of South Auckland, New Zealand, where poverty and disadvantage are very visible, I have always been very aware of social differences which structure the reality of everyday life for different groups. The visibility of inequality was most apparent during my school days, attending a decile 1 school where being white put me in the minority. Facing inclusion and exclusion, I became accustomed to being ethnically different to most students at my school. I always wondered how I could be living in comfort, while across the bridge children were going hungry, wearing dirty clothes, and living in overcrowded homes. Through exposure to privileged spaces and practices during childhood outside the school gates, I knew that there were private schools stereotypically known as ‘where the rich kids went’. Growing concern about the effect of inequalities, specifically of poverty, on children is widespread in New Zealand. The focus of media debates and solutions to reduce inequalities is often on how those living in poverty could improve their situation. However, inequalities exist because some groups and individuals are privileged (Johnson, 2006). In a sense, my middling position, of not being impoverished, but also not socialising or being educated amongst the most privileged and elite, prompted my interest in seeing how young people, such as those portrayed in the foregoing autobiographical sketches, experience everyday life. What could young people, being educated in elite institutions, tell us about how social differences become (re)produced and embodied? The silences around privilege and reliance on anecdotal perspectives contributed to my sense of wonder: Are portrayals of young people who attend elite private schools, immersed in networks and experiences of privilege, accurate?

---

2 Funding for state and state integrated schools in New Zealand is currently based on a decile system, with categories based on the socio-economic position of a school’s community in comparison to other schools. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low-socio economic communities (Ministry of Education, 2017c).
This thesis examines the everyday experiences and practices of young people who attend elite private schools in Auckland, New Zealand. Little research has considered the everyday lived realities and identities of young people within and beyond the gates of elite private schools. Focusing on everyday practices is central to this research, providing a snapshot of the experiences of a specific cohort, in a particular time and place. It is contended that nuancing perceptions of elite private school students, and understanding the journeys of young people growing up in relatively privileged settings is critical. Friendships, home, school, travel, and family are central to young people’s narratives, and by combining these around a central theme of privilege, the ways in which systems of privilege work to structure both mundane and spectacular experiences is examined. This study, therefore contributes to a niche research area, offering new knowledge to help further understand the geographies of young people’s lived realities.

1.2 Examining childhood (and) privilege: Geography and beyond

1.2.1 Children’s geographies and the ‘new social studies of childhood’

A relatively recent addition to geographical scholarship, children’s geographies has evolved into an important field of research, in which a wide range of issues related to children are explored. Key areas of inquiry include children’s identity (Aitken, 2001; Gagen, 2000); mobility (Fyhri & Hjorthol, 2009; Skelton, 2013); and everyday geographies (Valentine, 2003). Further, researchers have been concerned with how gender (Costello & Duncan, 2006; Janssen, 2009), class (Gough & Franch, 2005), race (Thomas, 2009; Van Ingen & Halal, 2006), disability (Holt, 2004; Skelton & Valentine, 2003), and sexuality (Thomas, 2004; van Blerk, 2008) affect children’s everyday lives. Considering how geographic location influences experiences has also been a focus of research (see, for example, Abebe, 2007; Chawla, 2001; Katz, 2004). Within these works, the experiences and identities of children in the Global North and other privileged groups often dominate. In a parallel stream of research within and beyond children’s geographies, there is a strong research focus on understanding how poverty and disadvantage, based on socio-economic position, affects children (see, for example, Attree, 2006; Evans, 2004; Wager et al., 2010). However, there has been limited engagement to explicitly acknowledge and explore what privilege means within the context of childhood. Unpacking the conceptual dimensions of privilege, rather than seeing it as a taken for granted factor shaping young people’s experiences is critical (Sparks, 2016). There is a need to better understand privilege as a
key social discourse and practice because privilege is critical to examining experiences of inequality and the pluralities of childhood. To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies which explicitly explore intersections of privilege and childhood in New Zealand. However, an analysis of privilege can be situated within extant understandings of young people’s experiences in New Zealand compiled in texts such as Higgins and Freeman’s (2013) *Childhoods: Growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand* and Brickell’s (2017) *Teenagers: The rise of youth culture in New Zealand*. This thesis therefore contributes to understanding the social construction of diverse childhoods as much of the work in children’s geographies has paid limited explicit attention to privilege.

Much of the children’s geographies research and wider social science literature focused on children and young people has adopted and adapted the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach. Drawing on this approach allows researchers to discuss how young people’s lives are shaped by social and spatial processes, contextualised by wider economic, political, historical, and geographic practices embedded in place (Ergler et al., 2017; Smith & Ansell, 2009). Key principles of this approach provide boundaries for this thesis and guide methodological decision-making. The first fundamental principle of this approach is an acknowledgement that experiences of childhood are not uniform, but diverse and unique. This acknowledgement has resulted in research moving beyond a singular notion of childhood to examine the pluralities of childhood (James et al., 1998). However, Qvortrup (2005) cautions researchers to not overlook the significance of structural conditions that shape childhood. Bringing together both individual and structural perspectives, this thesis examines the micro and macro level of young people’s experiences by exploring individual identities alongside institutional structures. The influence of privilege as a constraining and enabling social system becomes apparent by recording and narrating the diverse experiences of young people who attend elite private schools.

Secondly, children are understood to be beings in their own right; social actors who play a significant role in the making and remaking of their lives (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Children’s experiences are often cast in relation to adults, a claim which is typified by the common perception that children are in a state of ‘becoming’ and everything that an adult is not. However, the new social studies approach to childhood challenges assumptions that children lack independence, rationality, intelligence, and autonomy (Higgins & Freeman, 2013). In this sense, childhood is described by Prout and James (1997, p. 7) to be a social construction: “the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in
which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture”. Therefore, the ways in which growing up in privileged settings influences childhood are worthy of further investigation. Young people are regarded by Uprichard (2008) as both being and becoming to reflect how childhoods do not follow a linear trajectory but evolve within the constraints of broader social structures. Conceptualising children and young people as beings with agency to influence their lives, while noting that processes of becoming are constrained by social structures, provides a basis for understanding and exploring the lives of young people growing up in different social and educational settings. Therefore, to understand the pluralities of childhood and how systems of privilege operate to shape everyday experiences, young people’s voices must be privileged. The inclusion of their voices is key to the narration of this thesis, and emphasised by retelling young people’s stories in the preface.

Precise demarcations of where childhood ends and where adolescence and adulthood begin are problematic. The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines a child as “a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority”. Similarly, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as anybody below the age of 18 years. Within both popular and academic conversations, terms used to label young people are loaded with socially constructed connotations. For example, the term ‘child’ is often used when referring to younger children, toddlers, and primary school aged children, while youth is often employed when discussing negative events young people are involved in. As Cieslik and Simpson (2013) explain, meanings of youth depend on the positionality of those producing definitions, and the characterisations which have emerged are often at variance with how youth see themselves. While by formal definition the participants in this research are children, for the purposes of this research the phrase ‘young people’ is used. Using the term child may come across as disparaging to the participants, who at the age of 13 and 14 years are unlikely to consider themselves a child, but rather a teenager or young person.

1.2.2 Privilege and education

Privilege has recently become the focus of a significant body of research. In public imaginaries, the term privilege conjures ideas of wealth. However, academic conceptualisations of privilege emphasise more than wealth; rather privilege is understood as paradoxical and socially constructed through psychological and social processes (Pease,
Privilege is conceptualised as a social and collective discourse which structures individuals’ and groups’ lived realities. McIntosh’s (1989) foundational text explains how privilege consists of two dominant forms of advantage: unearned entitlements and conferred dominance. These components highlight the main premise of privilege understood through an academic lens, in that privilege exists “when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do” (Johnson, 2006, p. 21). It is therefore not the individual who is privileged, but the social categories that they are ascribed membership to which are privileged. Discourses of privilege which are perpetuated and enacted by individuals and groups provide social power and historical, cultural, and social capital. In this way, privilege constitutes an aspect of identity that shapes how people see each other in relation to the world (Ballard et al., 2014; Howard, 2008). This conception emphasises that privilege is something that reveals who people are, or who they have become (Howard, 2008). Identities are therefore relationally constituted, created through personal and social practices, and always performed and enacted (Butler, 1990). Many, including Ferber (2003) question the intense research focus on the ‘culture of poverty’, and call for further analysis of the ‘culture of privilege’ which arguably has a more significant, if unmarked and less well understood influence on identity and everyday life. This thesis therefore goes some way to examining how systems of privilege operate and shape everyday life.

Privilege can be attributed on the basis of belonging to dominant social categories, but is also learnt, reproduced, and performed. Elite schools are one context where young people learn and perform privileged identities (Howard, 2008; Howard et al., 2014; Khan, 2011; Koh and Kenway, 2016). Socialisation and enculturation are key processes through which young people learn privileged ways of knowing and doing, and therefore construct an identity. Multiple active agents operate within these processes, as both structural and agentic factors are involved in the construction and negotiation of socialised identity (Hopkins, 2010). However, it is difficult to explore what is normalised within the taken for granted advantages of belonging to particular social categories. Central to the reproduction of privilege is how it is produced and reproduced through everyday actions and practices. Therefore, the ways in which young people construct ideologically mediated identities through encounters in privileged spaces can aid in understanding how embodied social discourses and collective identities such as privilege shape young people’s experiences.
Considering institutional perspectives when examining how privilege is learnt is important. However, it is critical to look beyond the classroom to illustrate how students construct their own privileged identities. Literature exploring the relationship between privilege and elite education has tended to focus on experiences within the school gates (for example, Howard, 2008; Koh & Kenway, 2016). Howard et al.’s (2014) work does look beyond the school by narrating the stories of young people who attend an elite school. Examining experiences beyond the school gates is critical to extending children’s geographies, as these encounters are connected to and complement knowledge of the lives of privileged young people captured by existing research. Looking beyond the classroom in this research sits parallel to other work at the intersection of children’s geographies and education which examines how the influence of the school extends beyond the gates (for example, Kearns & Collins, 2003). The boundaries of material space inside and outside the school gates become blurred as outside experiences are an extension of school encounters. The trend toward moving beyond the institution reveals a central contention of this research and highlights a gap in understanding the geographies of privileged young people. Therefore, it is imperative to consider how socially produced identities such as privilege influence the ways young people experience life beyond the school gates.

The notion of intersectionality is critical to this research in two key ways. Firstly, intersectionality is important in the sense of social categories contributing to the construction of identities. There are multiple axes of social difference which determine the extent to which privilege influences everyday life, including race, gender, sexuality, class, and age. Social categories cannot be considered in isolation, but the intersections between categories are critical (Ferber et al., 2009; Prout & James, 1997). This idea is captured in the notion of a matrix of domination which provides an impetus in this research to analyse how systems of privilege structure everyday practices and encounters. Secondly, the intersection of practices at different scales ranging from the individual to institutions shapes experiences of privilege. In the context of this research, elite private schools are the key institution being examined. Ballard et al. (2014) describes schools as mediating institutions where the rules and norms of society are interpreted, recreated, and developed. In this way, elite schools are key settings where privilege is learnt, reproduced, and negotiated, where children acquire understandings of how their social world is organised and operates. The focus on structure is intentional in this thesis, and addresses Holt’s (2011) suggestion that there is frequently an under emphasis on structural aspects which implicitly results from
the focus on children’s agency promoted through the new social studies approach to childhood. Examining how structures intersect with agency in this thesis highlights how the reproduction of systems of privilege is embedded in reflexive individual actions and behaviours which intersect and are mediated by wider social structures. These ideas are further examined through the thesis to show how privilege is an active construction which is relational and contextually specific.

1.3 Research objectives and methodology

This research builds on existing literature examining privilege within the context of elite education (Howard, 2008; Howard et al., 2014; Khan, 2011; Koh and Kenway, 2016; Soares, 2007). Moving beyond focusing on how the privileged and elite status of schools can influence young people’s identities, this thesis takes the view that it is equally important to consider how systems of privilege operate to shape young people’s lived realities outside the school gates. Thus, I argue that understandings of the plurality of childhood can be extended by thinking critically about privilege as a key factor shaping young people’s everyday experiences. The overall objective of this research is to examine the everyday lives and identities of young people who attend elite private schools in Auckland, New Zealand. This empirical examination aims to contribute to the development of a critical understanding of privilege as a social discourse which is simultaneously unmarked but visible through material manifestations in people and places. The more specific research questions addressed are:

1. How are the social discourses which structure society produced and reproduced in the lives and futures of young people?
2. What do the everyday experiences of young people reveal about discourses of privilege and childhood?
3. How do practices of privilege shape young people’s identities and everyday experiences?
4. In what ways does the embodied performance of social difference influence privately educated young people’s construction of their identities?

To address these research objectives and questions, a mixed methods, qualitative, and inductive approach has been employed. This includes focus groups, incorporating interactive activities, and online dialogic diaries. The methods are consistent with the principles of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach, by acknowledging that young
people are a diverse group and experts on their own lives. Further, the methods fit with moves to engage with children to develop nuanced understandings of their emplaced experiences. Focus groups and online dialogic diaries have been employed in this research as they provide a means for young people to voice (metaphorically and literally) their own ideas and explore their experiences in novel and interesting ways. Furthermore, knowledge is created through interaction in both methods, as this information and understanding does not exist per se. As another attempt to promote inclusion in this research, the methods also draw on distinct skill sets which allow young people to express themselves in different ways. For example, to complement the questions asked in the focus groups, interactive group activities including brainstorming, identity worksheets, and photo prompts were used. The online dialogic diaries were a form of elicited diary writing, whereby participants responded to prompts focusing on narrating autobiographies, travel memories, hobbies and interests, consumption habits, and future aspirations. The private, individual nature of interaction (as opposed to the group setting) through the dialogic diaries allows young people to express ideas that they may not feel comfortable discussing elsewhere. Thus, the diaries complemented the focus groups, with opportunities for innovation offering possibilities to capture data on a wide array of everyday scenarios. To explore the institutional component of privilege, school websites and media texts were analysed. These methods and the specific approaches taken are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Two elite private schools in Auckland agreed to be involved in the research, with a total of 31 students volunteering to participate. At the request of the schools, and given the small number of elite private schools in Auckland, the participating schools cannot be named in this thesis to ensure anonymity. This does not hinder analysis as the differences between the schools are not the focus of the research, but it is the fact that the young people attend an elite private school which is significant. The young people who participated were aged 13-15 (in Year 9 and 10). The schools are classified as private schools by the Ministry of Education (2017a), governed by their own independent boards, but registered with the Ministry. The choice to focus on elite private schools in this research is twofold. Firstly, relative socio-economic privilege can be accessed through engagement with young people who attend elite private schools. Secondly, young people who attend elite private schools are often popularly constructed as fitting a particular privileged imaginary, however, there is little critical interrogation of this construction based on empirical evidence. Indeed, young people attend elite private schools under a range of circumstances, including those
on full scholarship. In order to capture some of this diversity, this study also included participants who hold scholarships to attend elite private schools, which adds a further layer to the understanding of young people whose everyday lives, at least during the school day, are embedded in a privileged setting. This context enables an examination of how the normalisation of privilege can be destabilised, providing insights into how privilege and oppression simultaneously shape everyday experiences.

1.4 Research context

1.4.1 Egalitarianism and privilege in New Zealand

Social ideologies embedded in place have a significant influence on everyday practices and encounters. Therefore, it is critical to set the scene for the empirical element of this research, as Auckland, New Zealand provides a specific situation within which to examine how systems of privilege operate. The colonisation of New Zealand and convergence of indigenous and settler cultures has contributed to the construction of a unique sense of identity. New Zealand has for a long time been widely perceived to be an egalitarian society, a perception reinforced by the perpetuation of discourses of a classless society (Nolan, 2007). The notion of a level playing field, an egalitarian society in which everybody has the same opportunities to succeed dominate imaginaries of New Zealand society. As a result, New Zealanders tend to value modesty and are often reticent about celebrating success on an individual scale (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). However, countering this dominant attitude which seems to be changing, there are instances in which individual success is publicised such as the public release of the Annual Rich List (Parker, 2017). Notions of a classless society can be critiqued as the reality of social inequalities permeate through all aspects of life, including health, employment, housing, and education. There is particular concern about widening inequalities on the basis of wealth and ethnicity as New Zealand has one of the fastest-growing income gaps between the rich and the poor (Rashbrooke, 2013). As Higgins and Freeman (2013) note, in 1986 an estimated 11% of children lived in poverty, but by 2015 this figure was 28% (Simpson et al., 2016). Therefore, notions of egalitarianism and a level playing field are perpetuated, but there are strong social structures which shape everyday life in New Zealand.

Given the dominance of these social ideologies, notions of class and privilege are not often explicitly discussed in New Zealand. In fact, the language of class and privilege
invokes uneasy reaction. However, when overt references to hierarchies associated with class are removed, New Zealanders acknowledge that society is divided and structured by different social identities (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). Privilege is often discussed implicitly which contributes to the naturalisation and normalisation of privilege. This absence of explicit discussion does not mean that privilege is not a significant determinant influencing the practices and encounters of everyday life. Instead, coded expressions and signs of privilege are embedded in narratives, and generated through education. From a privilege perspective, the multiplicity of childhoods in New Zealand is not fully captured through existing research. Questions need to be asked to explore what it means to be a child growing up in a privileged context in New Zealand. Extending beyond the local context, it is critical to consider what this situation tells us about how systems of privilege operate to shape everyday practices, experiences, and encounters. Overall, giving young people who attend an elite private school an opportunity to voice stories about their everyday lives allows for critical insights into: the coded expressions of privilege at different scales; the lived realities for young people being educated in a privileged setting; and more nuanced understandings of childhood in New Zealand.

1.4.2 Elite private education in New Zealand

Distinctions between public and private education in New Zealand are linked to social hierarchies and changing political ideologies. The institutionalisation of education in New Zealand was significantly informed by British colonial influences. With state involvement at the level of provincial governments, educational opportunities available to children reflected parental income, residence, and religion (Pitt, 1977; Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Therefore, since the early 20th century, secondary schools have been a medium through which privilege and differentiated educational experiences are reinforced (Thrupp, 2007). A series of educational reforms have culminated to produce the current educational landscape, whereby most children are educated at state and state-integrated schools (Sweetman, 2002). These reforms, stemming from the Education Act 1887 and the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975, resulted in the inclusion of previously private schools into the state system and reduced the number of private schools. The schools that remained private can largely be described as elite institutions and a more focused site of privilege emerged.
The most recent statistics indicate that only 3.64% of all enrolled students in New Zealand attend private schools (Ministry of Education, 2017d). However, the role of private education providers is growing in New Zealand reflecting changing social dynamics. Within the official category of private schools classified by the Ministry of Education, there is a range of different types of institutions. These include elite schools, as well as those schools operated on the basis of specific religious affiliations (that are not state-integrated), and those educating international students. It is the elite private schools which are the focus of this research. Elite private schools in New Zealand are usually characterised as exclusive, well-resourced, with strong leadership, and successful academic, sports, and arts programmes. The built environment also reflects this prestige, incorporating modern facilities and architecture, alongside historic buildings and symbols of tradition which are strongly embraced through school uniforms and celebratory ceremonies. These markers of distinction signify the elite status of private education which is also reinforced through the costs of sending children to school in New Zealand. It reportedly costs approximately $38,000 for 13 years of state education for a child born in 2017, while 13 years of private education will cost approximately $345,000 (Dougan, 2017). This distinction emphasises the ways in which schools can be interpreted “as key sites for the reproduction and reinforcement of hegemonic social identities” (Collins & Coleman 2008, p. 295), and are therefore central to the social geographies of everyday life.

1.5 Thesis overview

The remainder of this thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 2 and 3 provide the main review of literature concerned with childhood and privilege. The pluralities of childhood and changing understandings of childhood over space and time are examined in Chapter 2. This examination highlights a key gap in the literature, whereby there is a relative absence of explicit discussion of the intersections of privilege and childhood, especially in relation to class. Building on the details provided in this introduction, the notion of privilege is explored in more detail. The multiple axes and dimensions of privilege are examined to provide the context for two key arguments advanced in Chapter 3. Firstly, it is contended that privilege is actively produced and reproduced through processes of socialisation and enculturation. In particular, there is a

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3 This cost represents the donations parents are asked to pay, as well as costs for extra-curricular activities, uniforms if required, and other resources needed for children’s education not covered by the school.
focus on how privilege is reproduced through elite schools, drawing on Bourdieu’s ideas of education, power, and privilege. Secondly, manifestations and practices of privilege are discussed to show how systems of privilege are enacted in place. The construction and performance of privileged identities is also discussed. Together, these arguments provide a framework for explaining how privilege structures society and therefore influences the everyday experiences of young people.

Chapter 4 introduces the context for this research. New Zealand provides a distinctive setting to examine the influence of social dynamics on children’s geographies. A brief review of social history is provided to highlight the construction and performance of dominant notions of New Zealand as a classless society. This detail is important as prevailing social ideologies permeating the materiality, meanings, and practices embedded in places have a significant influence on individuals’ experiences. The notion of a classless society is critiqued to reveal that while class is not often discussed in New Zealand, underlying social differences can have a significant influence on everyday experiences. Following this, coded signifiers for privilege including settler culture and whiteness are examined to show how privilege is a significant but hidden component of wider social systems. Moving to a core component of the social fabric, a brief history of education in New Zealand, focusing on the place of private education is outlined. Current perspectives on private education are also reviewed.

Given the identified gap in the literature and the context of this research, Chapter 5 introduces the methodology. To begin, I position myself in the research, further extending the brief personal anecdote at the beginning of this introductory chapter. The multi-method research design, including focus groups, online dialogic diaries, and content analysis of school websites and media texts is discussed. Rationales for the research methods are outlined, before the research process from point of contact with schools through to data analysis is described.

The next three chapters work together to discuss the empirical findings of the research. Translating and building on a framework to examine oppression outlined by Patricia Hill Collins (1993), these chapters are divided based on the institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions of privilege. A funnel approach is taken to structure these chapters, moving from the broad institutional scale, through to the social, and individual level. Chapter 6 focuses on the institutional dimensions of privilege. Working from the
premise that institutions are key sites for the reproduction and performance of privilege, this chapter explores what these sites are like as places, and the meanings and practices embedded within them. Specific examples from a range of elite private schools across New Zealand are used throughout this chapter. Exploring the situated geographies of elite private schools in New Zealand highlights the spatiality of privilege and the ways in which young people learn a privileged way of knowing and being. The symbolic dimensions of privilege are discussed in Chapter 7. Taking the symbolic dimensions beyond the categorisation of subjects, this chapter explores how stereotypes and codes associated with practices of movement and consumption have a similar effect of perpetuating a culture of privilege. The argument that making visible the unmarked discourses of privilege to emphasise how the symbolic dimensions of privilege are a critical cog in systems of privilege is advanced through this discussion. Finally, the individual dimensions of privilege are examined in Chapter 8. This chapter explores narratives of young people’s identities, examining how everyday practices and experiences influence the identities young people perform. The construction, performance, and negotiation of such identities are examined and insights into the way social structures and collective identities intersect are discussed. The tensions and contradictions of privilege are weaved through this discussion, allowing for nuanced understandings of privilege.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, through reflections on the findings and what they say about how systems of privilege operate to shape everyday experiences. Five key messages are discussed, drawing together empirical and theoretical details from the preceding chapters around a central theme of embracing uncertainty. These messages centre on conceptualising privilege as a system; intersectionality; elite education and understanding the social fabric; the contextual specificities of privilege; and the risks and rewards of innovative methodology. Possibilities for additional research are also outlined to note how future research could continue to explore privilege. This provides the basis for concluding remarks which summarise how the operation of systems of privilege in place can be examined through institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions.
In recent years, somewhat discrete research endeavours have sought to critically consider discourses of privilege and childhood. However, within this body of literature, there has been limited attention to explicitly explore the intersection of privilege and childhood. This gap exists despite general agreement that the experience of growing up is not uniform for all children as social, economic, and political processes influence their everyday experiences. The title of this chapter reflects the dual purpose of the forthcoming discussion. Firstly, the term childhood is unpacked to demonstrate how conceptualisations and discourses which inform lived experiences change over space and time. Of particular interest to this research is how everyday experiences are shaped by inclusion and exclusion along multiple axes of social difference such as socio-economic status. This discussion emphasises the plurality of childhood and a gap in understanding: where examination of the everyday lives and identities of groups of children, defined by their relative access to privilege, remains relatively limited. Distinctions between the expressions ‘children’, ‘young people’, and ‘youth’ are also teased out to provide further insights into understandings of childhood experiences. Secondly, the chapter examines the notion of privilege as a social and collective identity which structures individuals’ and groups’ lived realities. The intersectional nature of privilege is emphasised to highlight the dynamic between the multiple dimensions of privilege and oppression. This chapter therefore sets the context for examining how systems of privilege operate to shape the construction and
performance of identity, as well as structure everyday experiences of young people who attend elite private schools.

2.1 Pluralities of childhood

Conceptualisations of childhood and understandings of children, have varied throughout history and in different geographical contexts. Horschelmann and van Blerk (2012) explain that it is important to unpack assumptions about essentialised, universally applicable characteristics of age which become tied to identities. Age emerges from specific social interactions, institutional structures, scientific knowledge, and material living conditions (Hopkins & Pain, 2007). Thus, it is contended that diverse conceptualisations of children and childhood are linked to wider social, economic, environmental, and political processes embedded in place. Further, current understandings of childhood are informed by historical conceptualisations of children and young people. It is important to consider how conceptualisations of childhood change across space and over time, as well as the implications of this knowledge for the categorisations and identities applied when exploring children’s lives. The plurality of childhood is also discussed in terms of trends in social science research on, and with, children. This review provides the context for a discussion of privilege and childhood, to explore the plurality of childhood and young people’s everyday lived experiences.

2.1.1 Childhood: Changing understandings over time and across space

Conceptualisations of age as a social category have varied over time as dominant approaches to the study of difference have been adapted and adopted. Child and childhood most obviously appear to be biological categories, marked by chronological age. However, this approach suggests that children display certain behaviours, use specific places, and express particular values and attitudes at a particular age (Hopkins, 2010). Pain (2001) differentiates between chronological, physiological, and social approaches to age. Essentialist understandings of age encompass chronological and physiological approaches which focus on associating age categories with the number of years a person has lived, and one’s physiology and bodily appearance (Hopkins, 2010). This approach results in numerous assumptions being attached to categories such as childhood, middle age, and elderly based on assumed health, wellbeing, and appearance. Consequently, the complexity of the maturation process is not always captured in conceptions of child development which
link identifiable stages to chronological age (Matthews, 1996). Evaluating development in this way is problematic, as physical, social, economic, political, and environmental factors are widely understood to affect a child’s development. Matthews (1996) presents a philosophy of childhood, which considers how children think, and how adults think about children, challenging the models of development which have, he argues, shaped children and conceptualisations of childhood. Similarly, the ‘new social studies of childhood’ paradigm critiques essentialist understandings, suggesting that categories of age are socially constructed. For example, Alanen (2001) conceptualises childhood as a generation. However, there have also been critiques of this approach, as despite acknowledging the social construction of childhood, Narvanen and Nasman (2004) contend that a generational approach masks the differentiation of diverse phases of childhood which are characterised by social meanings and practices.

Comparatively, a relational perspective on age recognises that lives are not lived in isolation, but are instead mediated by social, spatial, and temporal dynamics (Horchelmann & van Blerk, 2012). Similarly, Hopkins and Pain (2007) propose that rather than following a chronological timeline of age, applying a lifecourse approach recognises that lives are dynamic, and each life stage has different situated meanings. For example, in the New Zealand context, Brickell (2017) explains how processes of modernity, mobility, social distinction, and identity making shaped the meaning of being young. In particular, the rise of the middle class with industrialisation meant that young people’s worlds became fractured along lines of class and subculture (Brickell, 2017). Exploring the lifecourse through interdisciplinary study, in this sense, provides a greater appreciation of how considering spaces of everyday life can help expand knowledge of childhood (Bailey, 2008). For example, Vanderbeck (2005) reveals narratives of British Traveller children’s school experiences, questioning the parents’ ability to meet their children’s developmental needs and therefore reworking the meaning of an idealised childhood at a community and national scale. Conceptualising childhood as a social construction does not suggest that children’s lives are devoid of a biological dimension, but rather emphasises how definitions of childhood are conditioned by the society from which they emerge (Hendrick, 1997; James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1997; Valentine, 1996). Heywood (2001) suggests that understandings of childhood have been shaped primarily by economic, demographic, and political factors. Further, Cunningham (2005), drawing on a range of seminal texts about childhood, including the work of Aries (1962) and de Mause (1974), demonstrates how
public action has shaped the lives of children in Western society since the 1500s. This work complements previous thinking about childhood, which focused on the private sphere and family-child interactions to reflect on childhood and what it means to be a child. It is therefore apparent that age categories based on biological and developmental stages only partially capture the complexity of discourses of childhood, as intersections with wider social structures shape the material contexts that young people grow up in, and thus, their identities and wellbeing.

Despite geographers’ apparent interest in the lifecourse, informed by the approaches outlined above, the focus has tended to be on those at both younger and older ends of the age spectrum (children and seniors). In particular, there has been considerable focus on children and childhood, within geography as well as other social science disciplines such as sociology. Part of this research has been understanding discourses of childhood. Cunningham (2005) distinguishes between children as individuals, and childhood as a shifting set of ideas about how children live. It is this distinction which frames the use of each term throughout this discussion. Children are commonly assumed to be those individuals who are yet to reach biological and social maturity; they are younger than adults and yet to develop the range of competencies possessed by most adults (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Therefore, children’s experiences and descriptions of childhood are often cast in relation to adults, a claim typified by the common perception that children are in a state of ‘becoming’, and a child is everything that an adult is not. This binary with adults implies that children need to develop and be educated, through the institution of schooling, but also through family and wider social life (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Prout and James (1997, p. 7) astutely explain how childhood is a social construction: “the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture”. Moreover, a particular set of ideas about childhood frame perceptions of who can be considered a child and who is not (Cunningham, 2005; Hendrick, 1997; James & Prout, 1997; Medforth et al., 2000). For example, Cunningham (2005, p. 1) describes the ingredients of childhood as “innocence, school, fun, games, friends, nature, [and] sweets”. Understanding how thinking and conceptualisations of childhood have changed over time and in different spaces often emerges from letters, diaries, parenting handbooks, and biographies. These ideas about children and childhood, which have developed over time and permeate public imaginaries, act as a framework within which adults and children negotiate and determine ways of living
(Cunningham, 2005). Thus, it is critical to consider how conceptualisations of children and childhood have changed over space and time to provide a context for current understanding of the plurality of childhood. Such a consideration can form the basis for considering the lived realities of privileged childhoods.

Historical and geographical approaches have been used to review how childhood, as a component of the life course through which most people pass, has been conceptualised. Children have been constructed and reconstructed over time as natural, romantic, evangelical, as a source of labour, as delinquent, and as subjects to be schooled (Hendrick, 1997). Aries (1962) controversially argued that childhood was once non-existent, as children were regarded as miniature adults, but not conceptually different from adults in medieval times. Children were recognised as ‘little people’, but their behaviours and abilities were not thought to differ from adults within the context of the kinds of tasks assigned, and the ways children think or behave (Matthews, 1996). However, perceptions of children as different to adults have dominated accounts of childhood since this time. Jenks (2005) contends that during the period of Enlightenment, children ‘escaped into difference’ as the category of the child came to be viewed as inherently different to that of an adult. Drawing on a range of historical and cross-cultural literature, Jenks (2005) summarises this trajectory of understanding childhood by identifying two discourses: Dionysian and Apollonian views of childhood. Dionysian understandings portrayed children as little devils, inherently naughty, unruly, and unsocialised beings (Jenks, 2005). For example, prior to the 17th century, historians argue that children were conceived of as savage, whose sinful nature could be redeemed through education and parents’ efforts (Hendrick, 1997; Valentine, 1996). The 18th century was a time of debate, where on the one hand children’s rights were challenged, but on the other hand, there was a romanticisation of the innocence of children. This period is said to mark the transition from the time of children as demonised, to a period of enlightenment when children came to be seen as innocent, neutral, and without morals (Hendrick, 1997; Heywood, 2001). Apollonian views thus emerged, based on the work of Rousseau who celebrated children’s natural talents. In this view, children are considered an ontology in their own right, represented as little angels, innocent, and untainted (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Jenks, 2005). These views underpin rationales for the provision of education as children’s natural tendencies can be shaped by adults through education and welfare (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Hendrick (1997) explains that while each reconstruction of childhood is often
discussed as a distinct stage, occurring in a particular moment in time, there is some overlap among the changing perceptions which are ideologically and politically motivated. Therefore, Holloway and Valentine (2000) remind readers that these conceptualisations are not distinct, and that the view of children as devils was not replaced by the view of children as angels. Instead, both of these apparently contradictory understandings continue to be mobilised in contemporary Western society.

Emerging from these initial conceptualisations, Hendrick (1997) suggests that from the early 20th century, a modern childhood identity emerged and became institutionalised. Education is central to defining modern conceptualisations of childhood. The introduction of compulsory schooling is identified as a key change in political and social ideology which instigated the spread of the idea that all children should have a ‘proper’ childhood (Cunningham, 2005). Modern childhood, while variably defined in different contexts, can be described as a time of innocence, happiness, resilience, dependence, protection, freedom from adult responsibilities, and naivety. Children are argued to be qualitatively different from adults and worth educating and investing in so as to further develop their mental and physical ability. However, Cunningham (2005) contends that the ideal childhood is considerably different to the reality faced by many children in ‘western’ countries in the 20th and 21st centuries. For example, children are now subject to considerable parental control (Den Besten, 2011; Jones, 2002; Valentine, 1999), which is in turn mediated by legal, commercial, and psychological factors. Kraftl (2006) argues that many studies of childhood largely ignore the importance of local, banal, and material practices involved in the constitution and performances of space, which also significantly influence the construction of categories and ideals such as childhood. Drawing on developments at a Steiner school in West Wales, Kraftl (2006) shows how evocations of childhood are represented and reproduced in seemingly simple, mundane, material practices such as nature tables and the process of learning the alphabet. This emphasises the importance of considering both the banal and spectacular, local and national practices which shape contemporary constructions of childhood.

Constructs of children as pure, innocent, dependent, and vulnerable, of childhood as a happy and free time without responsibilities is the dominant imaginary in many Western societies. As Valentine (1996) contends, dominant constructions of childhood in the United Kingdom are informed by the binary of children being represented as devils or innocent angels. While there is limited research on the construction of children and
childhood in New Zealand, similar imaginaries are also prevalent (Higgins & Freeman, 2013). However, these dominant Western imaginaries do not represent a universal reality: apparently normal assumptions about childhood in the West are far from normal in other contexts. Holloway and Valentine’s (2000) collection of research emphasises the different constructions of childhood in different places. For example, caring for elders is not often a task attributed to children in the Western context, but in most developing countries, this is part of daily life for young people. For instance, Robson and Ansell (2000) explored children’s involvement in caring work in Zimbabwe, highlighting how stories of care reinforce that the activity was separate from the ordinary, but not an exploitative or negative experience for the young people as is often presented in Northern representations of ‘young carers’. Katz’s (2004) work within the contexts of Sudan and New York, provides an additional example which recognises that what it means to be a child, and the boundaries of childhood vary in diverse cultural and geographical settings. These examples reinforce how children are individuals with unique identities, associations, and realities, influenced by individual characteristics as well as the wider social context (Leverett, 2011). Historical and spatial accounts provide a sound basis for understanding modern childhood through this thesis, and the ways in which everyday experiences of young people attending elite private school are mediated and shaped by understandings of children’s lives situated in the broader social context.

2.1.2 Children, Young People, Teenagers, or Youth?

Alongside the critical attention paid to understandings of childhood, there has also been significant debate around the language used to describe and label groups. What is a child? At what age is someone considered a teenager? Who are young people? Child, children, and childhood are common, everyday words, but their meanings are diverse and contested. Precise demarcations of where childhood ends and where adolescence and adulthood begins are problematic. The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines a child as “a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority”. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as anybody below the age of 18 years. Extending conceptions of childhood beyond demarcations based on age and physiological development, notions of being and becoming are also relevant. Holloway and Valentine (2000) argue that children tend to be represented as human ‘becomings’, rather than human beings, who, through a process of socialisation, are to be
shaped into adult human beings. Engagement with the concept of becoming allows understandings to move beyond linear conceptions of childhood and youth to account for the changeable and unstable nature of childhood transitions as evolving experiences (Worth, 2009). Uprichard (2008) extends debates around notions of children by considering how children and childhood are both being and becoming. This approach simultaneously extends dominant notions of agency, by considering “the child as a social actor constructing his or her everyday life and the world around them, both in the present and the future” (Uprichard, 2008, p. 311). Conceptualising children and young people as both beings in their own right, with agency to influence their lives, but noting that the process of becoming is constrained by social structures, provides a basis for understanding and exploring the lives of young people in different social and educational settings in this thesis. Research with both children and young people, considering them as both being and becoming, is increasingly common within the sub-discipline of children’s geographies. However, Evans (2008) and Weller (2006) raise concerns that using the terms children and young people interchangeably may be problematic and that this trend has influenced the focus of children’s geographies being on younger children rather than youth. The notions of children and childhood, therefore encapsulate a number of subgroups, which each have a unique range of social and physiological needs and competencies. Given that the current research with young people attending elite private schools is taking place in a secondary school setting, it is important to explore academic and popular conceptions of labels used to distinguish sub-categories of childhood, notably youth.

Other commonly used synonyms for stages in the life course include youth and teenagers. The concept of youth as understood in Western societies is a recent phenomenon (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013), with the idea of a liminal stage between childhood and adulthood associated with Western modernity. This view is reflected in the Oxford English Dictionary (2017) definition of youth as “the period between childhood and adult age”. In an academic context, the notion of youth is also used when discussing those who are seen to be in-between childhood and adulthood. For example, youth is popularly used to refer to those aged 16-25 (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). Holt (2009) identifies an increasing uncertainty around the distinction between ‘childhood’, ‘youth’ and ‘adulthood,’ with transitions between different stages of the lifecourse being difficult to identify. For example, transitions between youth and adulthood can be differentiated based on socio-economic grounds. In this way youth is described by Holt (2009) as an embodied social
construction attached to young people. Skelton (2002, p. 105) conceptualised youth as a “time of knowing”, when young people are actively “living the present and making the most of the time they have”. This perspective is not specific to youth, but the changing economic and social circumstances young people are navigating reinforce the importance of young people’s agency in the process of becoming. Thus, the label ‘teenager’ emerged in the 1950s, to also describe individuals between childhood and adulthood (Valentine, 1996). Teenager and youth are synonymous terms and often used interchangeably. However, O’Connor (2004) advocates for critical reflection on the use of categories and discourses of young people and youth. Semantically, the term youth is used as a label for both a person (in the same way as child) and as a part of the lifecourse (in the same way as childhood) (Jones, 2009). However, just as children are understood as human beings, and childhood as a set of ideas, the phrase young people could be argued to best represent the group of individuals, and youth as a particular stage of the life course.

Generational boundaries drawn around the vital conjuncture between childhood and adulthood have been considered through academic research, but this has been limited (Skelton, 2000; Valentine, 2003; Weller, 2006). Bourdieu (1993) refutes the idea that ‘youth is just a word’ signalling that youth is an evolving concept with meanings reflecting moral, political, and social anxieties. For example, popular representations of teenagers and youth often distort imaginaries, as teenagers are sometimes represented as innocent and in need of protection, and at other times characterised as troublesome and dangerous, susceptible to adult vices of drink and drugs (Aitken & Marchant, 2003; Buckingham & Kehily, 2014; White & Wyn, 2008). A common thread in representations of youth is that they are ‘trouble-makers’ and need to be controlled. Thus, there are many negative connotations associated with the term youth, more often categorised by Dionysian (devil like) discourses, rather than Apollonian frameworks. Anderson (2010) notes that these constructions of youth culture can often be reproduced in marginal and public spaces, thus the representations are often visible and widely read as a direct threat to the mainstream. For example, young people’s presence in the street, as a key space to congregate becomes surveilled, both informally by others inhabiting the space, and formally through law enforcement (Gough & Franch, 2005). Placing a spotlight on the aberrant behaviour of a small group of young people has influenced conceptions and perceptions of youth as a group and a term, as examples are taken as representative of youth more generally (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013). Thus, linguistic markers such as ‘youth’ have wider implications as
young people’s opportunities for employment, education, leisure, and relationships can be enabled and constrained by the operation of power through ideas and language (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013). While youth are often demonised by the media, research also shows that young people have the power to resist adult definitions of their lives (Skelton & Valentine, 1998). For example, Wyn and Harris (2004) note how research with youth from New Zealand and Australia seeks to challenge and disrupt dominant perceptions and the universality of growing up (see, for example, Brickell, 2017). This thesis also seeks to further disrupt universalised understandings of young people, by focusing on those who are privileged by virtue of the elite private schools they attend.

Conceptualisations of age can also be extended by acknowledging the temporal aspect of becoming. This idea of conceptualising understandings of youth futures has garnered considerable attention from geographers (see, for example, Horton & Kraftl, 2006a; Valentine, 2003; Worth, 2009). This work often examines notions of becoming introduced earlier to understand transitions across the life course. The process of youth transition can be described as a process of becoming (Worth, 2009). Therefore, there is an inherent temporal element which Worth (2009) suggests is not attended to as research focuses on the influence of the past. Looking at childhood experiences alongside aspirations of young people can help to understand how future experiences are mediated by wider social dynamics. For example, McDowell (2003) explains how classed and gendered relations can influence occupational aspirations for working-class boys. Worth (2009) emphasises the need to focus research on youth transitions by looking to the future, rather than the past. Horton and Kraftl (2006b) also suggest that in critiquing childhood as a process of growing up, more attention needs to be paid to childhood conceptualised as ‘going on’. This work moves away from linear, chronological understandings of temporality as it relates to childhood and youth. In this way, youth transitions can be theorised as open to the future through a fluid understanding of time and identity (Worth, 2009). The influence of disability on youth transitions emphasises this, as explained by Worth (2009) who worked with visually impaired young people, and Skelton and Valentine (2003) who explored transitions to independence with deaf youth. As this thesis seeks to reflect, the dynamic process of growing up is therefore shaped by embodied differences, but the influence of external factors also highlights the complexity of youth futures.
While the agency of young people to shape their futures is acknowledged, young people’s futures and aspirations are also in part shaped by parents’ and others’ behaviours and values (Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). Education is one arena where future forward thinking affects youth experiences. The fears, hopes, and desires from both young people and their families about their future educational pursuits have been explored in a number of contexts and in relation to a range of social classes (see, for example, the special issues of *Children’s Geographies*, ‘Geographies of Education and Aspiration’, 2011). For example, linked to ideas of privilege, some parents invest in young people’s futures through sending children to elite institutions, and having them engage in specific extra-curricular activities (Howard et al., 2014; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2014). The advantages associated with attending these elite institutions are widely regarded and perceived to provide young people with advantages as they transition into tertiary education and employment (Waters, 2006). In summary, it can be argued that there are ‘multiple becomings’ (Worth, 2009) which are encountered through the lifecourse. By focusing on the future temporal aspect of becoming, an additional conceptualisation of youth and young people emerges. This approach provides opportunities to further extend understandings of the geographies of children and young people’s lived realities, in the present and their aspirations for the future.

2.1.3 Exploring the geographies of children and young people

Understanding the plurality of childhood relates to more than just considering conceptualisations, labels, and categories used when discussing the lives of children. Both within and across space, children have vastly different experiences and identities. Geographic examinations of spatio-temporal variations in these experiences and identities has contributed to challenging the assumed homogeneity of essentialised definitions and experiences of children and childhood (Evans, 2008). The ways in which age is lived out vary according to different markers of social difference, thus everyday experiences of children are heterogeneous. Exploring the diversity of young people’s encounters constitutes a significant proportion of children’s geographies research. Researchers have been concerned with how gender (Costello & Duncan, 2006; Janssen, 2009), class (Gough & Franch, 2005), race (Thomas, 2009; Van Ingen & Halal, 2006), disability (Holt, 2004; Skelton & Valentine, 2003), and sexuality (Thomas, 2004; van Blerk, 2008) affect children’s everyday lives. For example, Dwyer (1999) explored how religious, ethnic, age, and gendered identities intersect and influence the experiences of young Muslim women in
Britain. Considering how geographic location influences experiences has also been a focus of research (see, for example, Abebe, 2007; Chawla, 2001; Katz, 2004; Punch, 2001). This range of research highlights the plurality of childhoods experienced both within and across spaces. However, it is observed through reading these texts that the research focuses on the disadvantaged side of the binary for each social category, with very little explicit consideration of those whose lives are relatively privileged. By explicitly highlighting privilege, this thesis therefore extends understandings of the geographies of children and young people.

Further emphasising this trend is the significant body of literature which considers how socio-economic position explicitly affects children’s everyday lives. Given the focus of this research, it is important to briefly review studies which examine how underlying social structures influence children’s lives. This review provides the context for exploring the experiences and identities of young people who attend elite private schools. Fuelled by rising rates of child poverty globally, the experiences of children and young people living in poverty, both relative and absolute, have received considerable attention by many researchers (see, for example, Attree, 2006; Evans, 2004). While quantitative research has dominated, qualitative studies have also emerged, seeking to understand child poverty as grounded in the realities of children’s everyday experiences (Wager et al., 2010).

Children’s narratives of living in poverty reviewed by Attree (2006) signal that costs of poverty for children are both physical and social. Similarly, Evans (2004) highlights several negative consequences which contribute to the pathogenic nature of childhood poverty, related to experiences including increased exposure to family turmoil, violence, separation from their families, authoritative parenting, and reduced access to books and technology. The setting within which children grow up is also influenced by poverty, as children living in poverty experience degraded air and water quality, and live in more dangerous neighbourhoods that offer fewer municipal services (Evans, 2004). This range of effects emphasises how poverty can influence all aspects of a child’s life, including emotional, social, and environmental relationships. For example, Leverett (2011) discusses how parents’ social class and family income helps to explain variations between children’s access to, use of, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion in social spaces. Wager et al. (2010) also explain how constraints associated with affordability and limited mobility hinder young people’s use of leisure, retail, and health services. Physiological and mental health concerns, difficulties participating in social activities and accessing transport are also
commonly articulated in children’s narratives of the daily experiences of living in poverty (Attree, 2006; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In the British context, Bradshaw (2002) notes that poverty affects physical, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional outcomes for children. The toxic effects of violence in Palestine are also shown to have significant effects on young people’s health and wellbeing (Akesson, 2017). However, it is evident that children are not passive victims of poverty, but rather they can develop coping strategies to deal with its effects (Attree, 2006; Wager et al., 2010). Children can be resourceful in their management of limited material resources, for instance saving money to buy clothes, or borrowing clothes from others. Critical insights into the lived experiences of children living in disadvantaged settings, as well as the tactics children use in negotiating obstacles are significant. However, oppression and disadvantage continue to shape lives, in part due to the perpetuation and normalisation of socio-economic privilege which similarly has significant, but less well understood, effects on everyday lived realities.

In contrast to the vast amount of empirical research conducted with children who are socio-economically disadvantaged, little is known about the situated life experiences, identities, and wellbeing of young people whose lives play out in more privileged settings. Several key themes linked to mental health and education run through the small body of literature on privilege and childhood which has emerged from psychology and sociology. For instance, Luthar and Becker (2002) identified pressures to succeed, and isolation from parents as contributing to distress and substance abuse experienced by children living in an affluent, suburban community. Thus, research suggests that there is a need for further support for this group who are typically perceived to be ‘low risk’ (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005). A paradox is identified by Freeman and Tranter (2011) who reveal that with privilege often comes a loss of freedom and independent mobility, as well as increased pressure to succeed. Some of the saddest children are also known to often come from affluent homes (Gleeson, 2006). Thus, children’s lives can be simultaneously richer, but more deprived. Privileged children are argued to have an awareness of class positioning, but do not necessarily always see themselves as privileged (Johnson & Hagerman, 2006). Seider (2011) identified a resistance to an educational intervention for privileged adolescents to explore social justice issues, which he argues impedes their development of civic responsibility. This insight has implications for young people’s future participation in society and their ability to comprehend wider social issues such as poverty and homelessness. Contrastingly, Ballard
et al. (2014) reveal that a culture of privilege developed in private high schools promoted community orientation and positive civic attitudes. This thesis provides an opportunity to further evaluate the social construction of childhood and explore how ingrained social structures imbue privileged collective identities and shape young people’s lives.

The preceding review provides a framework for examining young people’s lived realities, and illustrates how there is a gap in explicit understanding of how systems of privilege operate in childhood. Geographers’ contributions to enhancing understandings of children’s lives have been extensive. Some theoretically and empirically informed investigations have considered the experiences and identities of children in the Global North and other privileged groups. However, there has been limited engagement to explicitly acknowledge and explore what privilege means within the context of childhood. Unpacking the conceptual dimensions of privilege, rather than seeing it as a taken for granted factor shaping young people’s experiences is critical. Before examining how privilege is reproduced and manifests through childhood, it is critical to unpack the geographies of privilege, providing a clear conceptualisation of privilege as an intersectional, normative, and socially constructed discourse.

2.2 Unpacking the geographies of privilege

Systems of privilege and oppression structure social power dynamics and the everyday lived experiences of all groups and individuals. Until recently, research has focused on seeking to better understand discourses of oppression and deprivation, rather than privilege and advantage. As a result, privilege has become further normalised, through material, social, political, and economic manifestations in people and places. Drawing on the body of emerging and extant literature on privilege the following section firstly explores what the notion of privilege means. Secondly, the multiple and intersectional axes of privilege are discussed to highlight how privilege concerns more than wealth as is commonly constructed in public imaginaries.

2.2.1 What is privilege?

Attempts to define the notion of privilege have resulted in an array of conceptualisations. Public and academic interpretations of the notion of privilege add further layers to complex understandings which have emerged. Privilege is defined by the
Oxford English Dictionary (2017) as: “a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group”. Legal, economic, and social applications of the notion of privilege are evident, with each use of the term relying on variations of the general premise of privilege: that those who are privileged have particular advantages over those who are not privileged. Identifying synonyms for privilege also reinforces the complexity of the term, with language such as advantage, authority, benefit, entitlement, freedom, immunity, and opportunity demonstrating the considerable scope in meanings associated with privilege. Definitions and synonyms of privilege which permeate through popular understandings of the term highlight the narrow focus of privilege as being linked to wealth. However, as will become apparent, privilege concerns more than wealth: privilege is paradoxical and dynamic in nature and is socially constructed through psychological and social processes (Pease, 2010; Twine & Gardener, 2013). Moreover, privilege is not an empty discourse or rhetoric, but is arguably a term which, when spoken or written, brings to mind various connotations, invariably by those who are not privileged.

Popular and, to a certain extent, academic framings of privilege focus on privilege as a resource, as something which an individual possesses or experiences. Academic engagement with conceptualisations of privilege re-emerged with Peggy McIntosh’s (1988) seminal text ‘White Privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women’s studies’. Drawing on McIntosh’s work, Johnson (2006, p. 21) describes privilege as existing “when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do”. Similarly, Black and Stone (2005) introduce the notion of social privilege, defining the concept as any entitlement and advantage granted to an individual or group based on membership to prescribed identities. Importantly, it must be noted that individuals experience privilege, but the individuals themselves are not what are privileged (Johnson, 2006). This idea is known as the paradox of privilege as it is the social category to which an individual belongs to that is privileged, rather than the individual themselves. Focusing on macro-level, structural systems that create and maintain privilege contradicts the belief that only an elite few are privileged (Case et al., 2012). Social, cultural, and economic positionality affords some individuals different types of privilege, which become embedded in the social fabric and therefore influence everyday lived experiences.
Understandings of privilege are extended by considering privilege as consisting of two dominant forms of entitlement and advantage. McIntosh (1989) identifies the idea of unearned entitlements, which are valued and should be accessible to all. These include individuals feeling safe in public spaces and valued for their contributions (Johnson, 2006). However, when an unearned entitlement is restricted to certain groups, it becomes a form of privilege that McIntosh (1989) labels an ‘unearned advantage’. In this way, discourses of privilege, which are perpetuated and enacted by individuals and groups belonging to particular social categories, provide power and historical, cultural, and social capital. Accordingly, privilege is synonymous with power and unearned psychological, material, and economic benefits (Twine & Gardener, 2013; Wildman & Davis, 2008). When one group has power over another, McIntosh (1989) regards this as a second form of privilege labelled ‘conferred dominance’. As a result, resources become unevenly distributed in favour of the dominant groups. Privilege is thus, in essence, defined in terms of individual characteristics, linked to social categories that give some people advantages over others (Johnson, 2006; Kimmel, 2003). These categories are socially constructed to simplify complex realities and identities. Therefore, central to the perpetuation of privilege is the ways it is produced and reproduced through everyday actions and practices.

Moving beyond the conception of privilege as commodified, alternative understandings have emerged. Howard (2008, p. 23) acknowledges the importance of a commodified conception of privilege as something individuals have or possess, but also critiques this approach, suggesting that the pervasive nature of privilege “as it is woven into the fabric of peoples’ lived experiences” is not acknowledged. This conception seeks to emphasise that privilege is something that reveals who people are, or who they have become (Howard, 2008). As such, identities are relationally constituted, created through personal and social practices, and always performed and enacted (Butler, 1990; Howard, 2008). Kenway et al. (2017, p. 200) also emphasise the importance of practices and action to conceptualisations of privilege, describing ‘privilege as praxis’, a form of action. These views stress that both structural and agency factors are involved in the construction and negotiation of individual identities. Privilege therefore constitutes an aspect of identity that shapes how people see each other in relation to the world (Ballard et al., 2014; Howard, 2008). Thus, values, perceptions, and actions are shaped, created, recreated, and maintained through a lens of privilege. Literature which explores identity formation and education illustrates that identities are reproductive of social discourses, embedded in wider social
contexts and reflected in the school context (Apple, 1995; Howard, 2008). As Apple (1995) argues, hegemonic ideologies are imposed on people in schooling and society as a whole. Further discussion of the ways in which education and the reproduction of privilege are connected will follow later in this review. Ideology and identity are critically linked, influencing the maintenance, reinforcement, and reproduction of social dynamics: uneven power relations, privilege, and oppression (Howard, 2008). Thus, Howard (2008) argues that young people construct ideologically mediated identities, which embody aspects of privilege through attendance at elite private schools. This conception of privilege as identity is a useful framework to help understand how embodied social dynamics and collective identities such as privilege shape young people’s lived experiences and identities.

The foundations laid by McIntosh and others have been built on and extended by other scholars seeking to understand how those at the top of social hierarchies experience everyday life (see, for example, Beynon, 2001; Connell, 2005; Frankenburg, 2001; Hill & Winegar, 2009; Pease, 2010; Rothenberg, 2012; Squires & Kubrin, 2005; Twine & Gardener, 2013). Within this body of work, there has been a distinct focus on privilege within the context of race and gender, whiteness and masculinity. For example, Squires and Kubrin (2005) explain how segregation in the American housing market is based on race, with privileged neighbourhoods made up of predominately white population cohorts. Home ownership, health, education, and employment opportunities are greater for white people, who predominately live in suburban neighbourhoods. Research also often focuses on the gendered roles of women, but Flood and Pease (2005) suggest that there are also masculinised occupations which remain unmarked, structuring employment opportunities and relations. These and other studies demonstrate the importance of examining and reflecting on dominant identities, rather than subordinate identities such as ‘black’ and ‘women’ which become coded signifiers for broader categories of race and gender. These studies also illustrate how socially constructed categories and associated group identities, which afford individuals a degree of privilege, are linked to personal traits and visual appearance. While there has been considerable focus on privilege as it relates to whiteness and masculinity, Black and Stone (2005) contend that dichotomous categorisations of privilege diminish an understanding of the complex intersection and intricacies of the concept. Therefore, it is argued that there are multiple axes of privilege, which are not isolated, but interact to shape power relations and everyday lived realities. This review now
turns to the matrix of domination and the notion of intersectionality which will underpin discussions of privilege in this thesis.

2.2.2 The Matrix of domination: The multiple axes of privilege

Privilege can be ascribed to an individual on the basis of a number of axes of social difference. These include race (whiteness); gender (male); sexuality (heterosexual); class (upper class); and age (middle-age). Building on these categories, Black and Stone’s (2005) research participants identified 20 additional categories of privilege, including nationality, body size, regional differences, and religious denominations. The extent to which some of these categories are a privilege or a social preference can be debated (Black & Stone, 2005). However, belonging to or being perceived to belong to these categories does confer advantage in some contexts. This work highlights the vast array of factors which can influence the extent to which an individual is privileged. This idea is captured in the notion of a matrix of domination which reinforces the need to employ an intersectional approach to understand systems of privilege and oppression. Hierarchies of domination, and social systems attached to individual personal qualities, are associated with axes of oppression and privilege and therefore affect lived experiences. Wyn and Harris (2004) suggest that while there is a focus on inequalities, young people’s understandings of their social position introduces a complexity which needs to be unpacked, taking into account both historical and contemporary practices. For example, children from affluent socio-economic backgrounds, which have allowed them the opportunity to attend elite and private schools, may experience privilege based on that marker. However, their everyday experience is also going to be influenced by other social categories they belong to (either ascribed membership based on other’s perceptions; or membership based on visual ties to a particular group, for example, skin colour). The endorsement and recognition of the perceived privileged status of an individual is not a result of the individual’s personal qualities, but it is social systems and discourses which shape experiences and therefore systems of oppression and privilege in society (Ferber et al., 2009). Thus, one’s social location, and therefore the degree to which they are privileged and oppressed, can always be positioned within a matrix of domination (Ferber et al., 2009). Privilege is an active construction which is relational and contextually specific. This complexity is critical to understanding systems of privilege in this thesis, as young people seek to negotiate the norms and expectations associated with class and age. Conceptualisations of the
Intersectionality of difference through the matrix of domination provide a framework to help explore how daily life is embedded in socially constructed systems of privilege and oppression, and the ways these systems operate to shape young people’s lived realities.

Intersectionality is a key concept used to explain how social categories interact and constitute multiple systems of privilege experienced by individuals and groups. Ferber et al. (2009) describe intersectionality as the interaction of social categories which shape one’s social location. Intersectionality can help reveal privilege, as intersections of identity and categorisation are multi-dimensional and include experiences of subordination and privilege (Case et al., 2012; Pease, 2010; Wildman & Davis, 1995). Ferree (2009) contends that an intersectional approach is critical to understanding the complexity of political power and social inequality. Domains such as gender and race are to be understood as organisational fields in which multiple forms of inequality are experienced, contested, and reproduced. Therefore, all people experience some degree of both privilege and oppression, resulting from their multiple positions in the social divisions of inequality (Pease, 2010).

As Ferree (2009) suggests this ‘interactive intersectionality’ approach emphasises the importance of structure and agency within the ongoing multilevel process of inequality. Hopkins (2010) highlights several examples of how the intersection of identities shapes young people’s lives, including how race, class, religion, and disability shape embodied experiences. An intersectional approach also highlights hierarchies that exist within, across, and between privileged groups (Pease, 2010). Kimmel & Ferber’s (2003) collection uses an intersectional approach to explore the ways in which race, gender, class, and sexuality interact in the lives of those who are privileged by one or more of these identities. For example, Foner (2003) discusses the intersectionality of gender and race in the context of employment. Further, intersections of dominant class, and marginalised racial categories are shown by hooks (2003) to shape the experience of racial injustices for the black elite.

The notion of intersectionality is therefore critical to exploring how collective differences associated with categories of socio-economic status and age play out within the privileged social setting of elite private schools.

Class is a key axis of privilege which is significant to examining the privilege associated with elite education. While there are numerous conceptualisations of class with strong theoretical backgrounds (Duncan, 2009), in this thesis the term is understood through a cultural studies lens. The focus is on how those in similar political positions strategically employ institutional and ideological resources to construct class cultures.
Configurations of class also vary over time and place, shaped by the organisation and operation of the economy (Kenway et al., 2017). Connections to economic positionality and occupational categories are important, as is considering how class is subjectively experienced and reproduced (Pease, 2010). Kenway et al. (2017) suggest that conscious and unconscious efforts contribute to the ways class is constantly in the making. Therefore, classes can be described as complex and organic processes rather than simply categories of difference which can be examined to help understand social and economic inequalities. This fits with the way class has been theorised more generally in recent decades, as lived, multiple, and intersectional rather than pre-determined. Critiquing Marxist geographies of class and capitalism, Gibson-Graham (1996) suggest that class processes are influenced by more than just economic factors. Instead, it is argued that class can be understood “as overdetermined, or constituted, by every other aspect of social life” (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 55). This approach emphasises how critical geographies of class highlight how multiple, intersectional axes of social difference shape classed experiences which are rooted in material realities and culturally based expectations.

Research with youth reveals how class relations are shaped and negotiated through institutional and cultural forms (Wyn & Harris, 2004). As Bourdieu (1984) posits, cultural capital affords individuals skills and abilities to achieve in the education system and therefore obtain more privileged employment. This claim highlights how class advantages are sustained not only through economic capital, but also through the relationship between cultural capital, the education system, and employment. In this way, history, geography, and the relationships between social classes are key to understanding class inequalities in education, and how they are enacted and experienced on an everyday basis. Harris (2004) reinforces the need to move away from older understandings of class to examine the role of class in the construction of youth identities in Australia. Therefore, to understand the cultural construction of class, habits, aspirations, consumption practices, symbols, dress, language, and everyday behaviour need to be examined (McDowell, 2013). For example, in the British context, strategies of spatial separation are employed by the middle and upper class through enrolment of children at private schools to distance themselves from the lower and working class, in turn contributing to the reproduction of class differences (Skeggs, 2004). Consequently, as Weis (2009) explains, the embodiment of class-related practices by parents and schools has flow on effects for children’s socio-economic outcomes, both
during childhood and as they transition through adolescence into adulthood. Classed experiences are therefore rooted in material realities and culturally based expectations.

Individuals and groups will have different experiences depending on whether underlying notions of privilege are enacted or whether they are left dormant in the background of one’s experiences. McIntosh (2012) contends that nobody is only privileged or disadvantaged; everybody has plural experiences situated within social hierarchies. However, understanding intersections of domination and subordination is complex. Collins (1993) seeks to develop a new vision of oppression which moves beyond an additive analysis of categories such as race, class, and gender which structure experiences of privilege and oppression. To assess connections between categories which contribute to oppression, Collins (1993), drawing on the work of Harding (1986), explores three key dimensions: the institutional, the symbolic, and the individual. Systemic relationships of domination and subordination are argued to be structured through social institutions (institutional), social ideologies and stereotypes (symbolic), and individual biographies (individual) (Collins, 1993). The institutional dimension of oppression highlights how, for example, racism and elitism have concrete institutional locations. These include schools, businesses, and government agencies which may seem to work under visions of equal opportunity, but do overtly and covertly render some groups subordinate (Collins, 1993). A symbolic dimension of oppression operates through social norms, ideologies, and stereotypes. Symbolic images appear as a universal language, but Collins (1993) argues that there are interlocking gender, race, and class specific stereotypes which shape lived realities. Members of dominant groups control the institutional and symbolic apparatuses of oppression, which form the structural backdrop for individuals’ everyday lived experiences (Collins, 1993). This view leads into the final dimension of oppression, individual, which represents how individual biographies and opportunities are framed (Collins, 1993). Experiences of oppression shaped by the intersections of gender, race, and class can be understood as relations of domination and subordination. This framework can be translated to understand how systems of privilege operate to shape everyday experience. Thus, the institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions of privilege are the key themes used to frame discussions of the operation of systems of privilege in young people’s lives through this thesis.

Using privilege as an analytical concept to uncover advantages which are considered normal and invisible, is a relatively recent approach to understanding how social
inequalities affect everyday lived experiences. This research sits alongside a significant body of work on those who are disadvantaged. However, poverty and disadvantage constitute only one component of systems of inequality. Kimmel (2003) and Johnson and Hagerman (2006) reflect on how inequality is always considered from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged, and not those who are advantaged. All individuals and groups are implicated in the logic of privilege, as oppression only exists because privilege exists (Ferber, 2003; Twine & Gardener, 2013). Regardless of which end of the spectrum an individual is located, their lives are going to be shaped by the privileges afforded to others. Consequently, it is contended by many, including Kimmel (2003), Twine and Gardener (2013), and McIntosh (1989; 2012), that an inquiry into the culture of privilege will enable a better understanding of how social dynamics and structures operate. However, it is difficult to acknowledge and explore what is normal, the taken for granted advantages of belonging to, or being perceived to belong to a particular race, class, gender, or sexuality. McIntosh (2012) notes that ideology, media, and institutions in the United States continue to deny the existence of systems of privilege which powerfully shape individual identities and societal institutions. The relative invisibility and continued perpetuation of privilege can be contended to reflect the privilege of invisibility, which therefore needs to be made visible, through both popular and academic forums. This research with young people attending elite private schools takes one step toward marking privilege, by considering how complex systems of privilege operate to shape practices, encounters, and identities through institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions.

2.3 Summary

While there has been limited explicit acknowledgement of privilege in academic and public forums, the experiences of privileged children have been explored. Whether examined on the basis of class, race, gender, geographic location, or sexuality, privilege is difficult to access because it has become an ingrained component of the fabric of everyday life. As such, inequalities are often viewed from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged. Kimmel (2003) questions the intense focus on the ‘culture of poverty’, and call for further analysis of the ‘culture of privilege’ which arguably has a more significant, but less well understood influence on everyday life. Consequently, it is contended by the prominent scholars on privilege that an inquiry into the cultures of privilege will enable a better understanding of how social structures operate (see, for example, McIntosh, 2012;
Recognising how social dynamics operate to shape the production, reproduction, and maintenance of privilege is critical to comprehending broader socio-economic realities and the pervasive nature of inequalities.

Discourses of privilege are constructed, internalised, and performed in different spaces and change over time through lived experiences. Thus, discourses of privilege cannot be disentangled from lived realities, as privilege is experiential and reproduced through everyday actions and practices. Characteristics of those who are considered privileged come to be constructed as social norms and therefore often remain unchallenged. However, it can be argued that the extent to which privilege is always everywhere assumed to be natural can be contested. Unpacking how discourses of privilege can be contested and extended, by exploring privileged childhoods in a range of places, can contribute to enhancing understandings of children’s geographies, as well as examining privilege as a key component of social differences embedded in the processes shaping lived realities. The following chapter explores the reproduction, performance, and manifestations of privilege. This examination will aid in nuancing understandings of how systems of privilege operate to influence the experiences and identities of young people whose childhoods play out in privileged settings.
(Re)producing and enacting privilege

Having identified a gap in understanding of the plurality of childhood and conceptualising privilege in the context of this research, the ways in which systems of privilege are reproduced and enacted in everyday life must now be examined. This chapter begins by discussing the reproduction of privilege through the processes of socialisation and enculturation. The binary between structure and agency is critically explored to contend that it is necessary to examine how young people’s lives are situated within wider social structures. This leads into a discussion of literature examining privilege in the context of elite education. From a theoretical perspective, Bourdieu’s insights on education, power, and privilege fit within the discussion as concepts of capital and habitus help to explain how privilege is reproduced. The second half of the chapter focuses on how manifestations of privilege are enacted. Awareness that young people learn a privileged way of living provides the basis of a key argument in this thesis: that privilege is enacted and reproduced by ‘doing’, rather than solely by ‘being’. In this way, performances and manifestations of privilege are discussed in the routine and taken for granted practices of everyday life, enacted in the home, school, leisure, and virtual spaces. The construction and performance of identity is also discussed as part of the enactment of privilege at an individual level, structured by wider discourses and power relations. Overall, I contend that a more nuanced
understanding of the pluralities of childhood (and) privilege can be ascertained by exploring the reproduction, enactment, and manifestations of privilege.

3.1 (re)producing privilege: Structure and agency

If privilege is understood to be the affordance of advantages because of social categories to which an individual is ascribed membership, it is critical to consider how privilege is produced and reproduced. In this way, privilege associated with dominant social groups, whether based on race, class, gender, sexuality, or age, is not innate, but socially constructed and maintained. Discussions of the reproduction of privilege can be situated within a wider theoretical framework of structure and agency. This dichotomy sustains a central debate in accounts of the social world, which centres on the process of socialisation: do individuals act autonomously, or in a manner dictated by social structure? Structure and agency factors are both widely acknowledged to influence everyday experiences, but the primacy of either factor in shaping human behaviour is contested. The dichotomy highlights the place of individual and institutional dimensions in the reproduction of privilege, allowing space to examine how and where the practices of learning and reproducing privilege play out. Drawing together notions of structure and agency, Bourdieu's triad of capital, habitus, and field is relevant for understanding the reproduction of privilege. In particular, social and cultural capital, as well as habitus help to reveal how ideas of privilege become normalised. Rather than an innate quality of an individual, it is critical to acknowledge and examine how privilege is actively constructed and reproduced through individual actions which are influenced by wider social structures.

As part of their paradigm for childhood sociology, Prout and James (1997, p. 8), note that “children are and must be seen as active agents in the construction and determination of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live”. Researchers working within the framework of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ challenge contemporary constructions of children as less able and competent than adults, insisting that children are active beings whose agency is important in the creation of their own lived experiences (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). However, it is critical to note that recognising children’s agency does not lead to a rejection of considering the ways in which children’s lives are shaped by wider social processes. Rather, Coffey and Farrugia (2014) argue that the nature and conceptual meaning of the notion of agency remains ambiguous, providing the analogy that agency is a ‘black box’ which remains
unpacked. While it is widely understood that agency functions at an individual and collective level, agents’ practices affect, challenge, and are subsumed by wider discourses, relations of power, and the resources people operate with (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013b). For instance, structural determinants such as education systems have a significant influence on children and young people’s lives. However, Holt (2011) suggests that there is frequently an under-emphasis on structural constraints, which implicitly results from the focus often being on children’s agency. In response to the identified gap between structure and agency as heuristic tools to examine how qualities and structures influence lived experiences, Evans (2007) introduced the concept of ‘bounded agency’. This concept allows for the examination of the relative contributions of both structure and agency. Within the context of young people’s lived experiences, Coffey and Farrugia (2014) propose that young people possess agency, but this agency is bounded by social processes which can restrict young people’s identities and biographies. The role of systems of privilege in shaping and bounding young people’s agency is explored through this thesis, thus emphasising the importance of structure and agency to everyday practices and the construction of identity.

3.1.1 Bourdieu: Understanding the social world

Pierre Bourdieu was a key theorist of the dichotomous understanding of structure and agency, attempting to reconcile these factors in key texts, including Outline of the theory of practice (1977) and Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste (1984). Bourdieu contends that structure and agency are complementary forces in that structures do influence human behaviour, but humans can change the social structures they inhabit. He also sought to show how individuals embody social positions, enacting this embodiment through movement and social practices which, in turn, reproduces social difference. Building on these contentions, young people attending elite private schools embody their privileged social position, enacting and contesting the practices embedded in wider social structures (Howard, 2008). Understanding how these practices are constructed and reproduced, fluid and situated is central to examining the multiple dimensions of privilege in young people’s lives. In developing his ‘theory of practice’ one of Bourdieu’s (1977; 1984) most significant contributions is the triad of capital, habitus, and field that can be used to unpack how social power relations are reproduced and experienced (Alanen et al., 2015). The relationship between the concepts can be summarised as follows: Individuals
are socialised in fields, where a range of capitals can be acquired as individuals participate and position themselves in the field, internalising relationships and expectations which form a habitus (Maton, 2008). The influence of structure and agency is apparent in this triad, as external structures of fields become internalised in the habitus, shaping the acquisition of capital by individuals and groups. The field is the setting in which social agents, their social positions and practices are located. The notion of a field is important because as Bourdieu (1977) notes, to understand social interactions and phenomena, it is critical to examine the social space within which the transactions and events occur. The social setting of this research includes the elite private schools as well as spaces outside the school gates which young people inhabit. This triad of key concepts is critical to understanding the social world from a Bourdieusian perspective, however, the focus of the following discussion turns to capital and habitus as these are most relevant to examining the operation of systems of privilege in young people’s everyday lives.

The notion of capital has received much attention and is useful for examining the reproduction and enactment of privilege. Bourdieu’s notion of capital is rooted in the processes and practices of everyday life (Morrow, 1999). Moving beyond the idea of economic assets as capital, Bourdieu (1986) contributed a typology of different forms of capital including social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Capital is fundamentally the resources individuals and groups draw upon to maintain and enhance their position in society: those groups with high levels of capital accumulation use their resources to maintain and reproduce social relations of power (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997). As described by Bourdieu (1986), economic capital encompasses money and assets; cultural capital relates to forms of knowing, taste, aesthetics, and cultural preferences which are valued and worthy; social capital refers to affiliations and networks; while symbolic capital is the resources afforded to individuals on the basis of honor and prestige, often the outcome of the conversion of other forms of capital. In this way, Bourdieu did not consider each form of capital as independent. Economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital all play critical roles in social practice, but importantly, each type of capital can be transformed into other forms (Painter, 2000). For instance, Bourdieu (1986) explains how children in privileged positions have social networks and competencies which mean they are more likely than working class children to succeed academically and in the labour market (see also, Willis, 1977). This insight highlights links between different forms of capital, as educational success results in better job remuneration, as social and cultural capital converts
to higher levels of economic capital. For Bourdieu, this is how the intergenerational reproduction of class differences are maintained (Bourdieu, 1986). Different forms of capital therefore have distinct effects in different contexts, and the accumulation of capital is clearly related to one’s social position. Thus, the lives of young people are likely to be influenced by their own social and cultural capital, as well as their parents’ accumulation of capital, as is reflected in research exploring young people’s capital.

Research with young people has made significant contributions to understandings of social capital. Social capital has multiple definitions, but broadly refers to “a set of relations, processes, practices and subjectivities that affect, and are affected by, the contexts and spaces in which they operate” (Naughton, 2014, p. 11). This definition highlights the role of place in the production and reproduction of privilege in young people’s lives and the ways in which privilege manifests socially, materially, and in terms of their identity. Considering young people’s agency is therefore key to understanding how social capital structures and shapes lived realities. Bourdieu (1986), along with others such as Putnam (2000), have, however, been criticised for discussing children as passive recipients of parental social capital rather than active producers and consumers (Holland et al., 2007; Morrow, 1999). Holland et al.’s (2007) study demonstrates that children develop social capital and use it to negotiate important transitions and construct their identity. The broad social context, including friends, social networks, and out-of-school activities, as well as family and school contribute to social capital accumulation (Morrow, 1999). Thus, previous perspectives have begun to change, with children’s experiences used to frame and demonstrate aspects of their social capital (see, for example, Bassani, 2007; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). For instance, Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) identified three components of young people’s social capital, including social networks, trust, and a sense of belonging. While this work has been critiqued (Naughton, 2014), these components highlight the links between social capital and place, emphasising how young people’s social relations are governed by the demands of parents and institutions such as schools. Privilege can thus be reproduced through education and the acquisition of social capital. For example, links between transnational education, social and cultural capital, and class reproduction are examined by Waters (2006) within the context of Hong Kong and Canada. The international accumulation of cultural capital, particularly through improved English language ability is considered a strong strategy of the middle-class to reinforce class boundaries (Waters 2006). However, Waters & Leung (2013) also suggest that embodied
experiences of transnational education through attendance at British named Universities in international settings (Hong Kong) can curtail the accumulation of institutional social capital. Spatial and temporal factors such as a lack of mobility and the fast-paced nature of the programmes offered mean that students find it difficult to build and maintain strong social networks (Waters & Leung, 2013). Thus, using the notion of social capital as a framework, it is evident that privilege is not existential per se, but can be produced, reproduced, and disrupted through multiple active agents and practices.

Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital can also be employed to explain how class status is reproduced. Cultural capital is the knowledge that helps navigate culture, confers social status, and therefore alters the experiences and opportunities available to groups and individuals. There are three forms of cultural capital — embodied, objectified, and institutional (Bourdieu, 1986). Embodied capital displays social and cultural status through attributes of the body, including dress, accent, posture, language, and ‘know how’. On the other hand, objectified cultural capital is afforded through cultural artefacts, the possession of material objects which confer status. Finally, institutional cultural capital is about capital invested in educational qualifications gained from particular institutions. These different forms of cultural capital are significant when given meaning/value by wider society. For example, Bourdieu (1984) was interested in the role of education in facilitating membership to privileged groups through the provision of cultural competences. However, the role of inherited cultural capital on educational outcomes is not always elaborated on in his work (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Lareau and Weininger (2003) suggest that much research on cultural capital has interpreted the concept as being related to ‘highbrow’ cultural aesthetics. This was not Bourdieu’s original intent; rather he argued that any competence can function as cultural capital if it is unequally distributed amongst society and engenders the possibility of exclusive advantages (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). A key contention is that conveying knowledge of high-status cultural forms is beneficial for students gaining favourable recognition within educational institutions. Kaufman and Gabler’s (2004) study suggests that engagement with cultural forms such as museums and classical music concerts does not necessarily influence admission to elite colleges. However, it is noted that having parents who go to art museums, either with or without their children, does improve students’ chances of gaining admission to an elite college (Kaufman & Gabler, 2004). This confirms Bourdieu’s (1984) claim that children ‘inherit’ parents’ cultural capital. Different forms of cultural capital can be differentially acquired through young
people’s positionality in elite social networks, thus highlighting the role of structural and agency factors in the reproduction of privilege through capital.

Linked to the notion of capital, is the idea of habitus: an individual’s disposition characterised by the socialised norms that guide behaviours and thinking (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus is central to Bourdieu’s work and understanding of social practices, as individuals embody and internalise the culture of a particular social group. Dispositions are structured, generative, exchangeable, and acquired through a gradual process. Bourdieu (1984) hypothesised that children internalise aesthetic dispositions (which reflect how an individual chooses to present themselves to the world) at an early age. In turn, Bourdieu (1984) noted that these dispositions guide children toward appropriate social positions, suitable behaviours, and influence their understandings of others’ behaviours. These socialised norms are created through the interplay of structure and agency, as early socialisation experiences result in the internalisation of external structures (Swartz, 1997).

The concept of habitus is therefore the link between objective social structures and individual action, as individuals embody systems of social norms and understandings of behaviours which ensure that individuals are disposed to act in particular ways (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus is structured by past and present circumstances such as family upbringing and educational experiences, while at the same time structures present and future practices. This is emphasised by Forbes and Lingard (2014) who examine how the institutional habitus of a private girls’ school in Scotland influences the reproduction of a privileged habitus for students. Consequently, habitus influences practices, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in relation to its structure (Maton, 2008). As Bourdieu (1990, p. 63) explains “society is written into the body, into the biological individual”. This embodied culture acts as the foundation of dispositions, such as ways of acting, seeing, and making sense of the world. Through his studies, Bourdieu emphasises how habitus is relational. With this understanding, the shaping of habitus provides a practical mastery or “feel for the game”, but importantly, not for all games equally (Maton, 2008). Past and ongoing circumstances and experiences enable an individual a greater ability to participate in some games than others. Habitus, which is developed as children grow up and the process of socialisation continues, operates as a form of tacit knowledge to allow individuals to carry out everyday routines. This links to the idea that privilege is relational and that those who are privileged may be able to act appropriately in some contexts, but not have access to all worlds.
3.2.1 Socialised education: Learning privilege at home and school

The perpetuation of privilege is centrally reliant on its reproduction through multiple guises which can be economically, politically, socially, and historically motivated. I maintain that it is particularly important to acknowledge the ways in which privilege is reproduced through the process of socialisation. The notion of socialisation is used to refer to this continual process by which individuals learn and adapt to the ways a society functions in order to be able to adequately participate (Boocock & Scott, 2005; Handel et al., 2007). In this sense, the socialisation of children affects not only their understanding of privileged life, but also reproduces systems of privilege in which their parents’ lives are embedded. Understood through a lens of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach, socialisation is regarded as a significant process that should be understood in terms of interaction between children and the environment (Narvanen & Nasman, 2004). The process of socialisation is also tailored by those participating to help ensure desirable and acceptable outcomes (Handel et al., 2007). Outcomes of the process of socialisation are going to be influenced by the social categories which parents and other agents belong to, the medium through which the process evolves, and the levels of interaction children have with others. Therefore, a child growing up in a privileged setting is going to experience different outcomes to a child growing up in a setting characterised by poverty or disadvantage. Thus, privilege is “not something one is passively given or possesses but instead, something one actively constructs and cultivates” within certain conditions (Howard et al., 2014, p. 190). Socialisation must be considered, alongside notions of agency to highlight how the reproduction of privilege is embedded in reflexive individual actions and behaviours, mediated by wider social structures.

The socialisation of young people is considered a parents’ means to provide children with experiences and skills, relevant in everyday and extraordinary contexts, which reinforce their privileged position in the social hierarchy. Early emphasis on socialisation is argued to have reduced children to passive receptacles of adult teaching (Heywood, 2001). However, Prout and James (1997) argue that relations between adults and children can be depicted as a form of interaction. Through this interaction between parents and children, Handel et al. (2007) explain how children are socialised into class cultures that dominate the home, school, and social settings they live in. At home and at school, children are taught important lessons about what it means to be successful and how they should go about gaining this success (Howard, 2008). Over time, children acquire
understandings of how social environments are organised, the skills necessary to participate in society, the values ascribed to visual and non-visual markers of difference, the ability to communicate successfully with others, to interpret their surroundings, and to act appropriately. Knowledge of the world is created by individuals, and also results from our encounters with things (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). However, raising children is a socially constructed process in that changing, and competing ideas about the nature of children and the appropriate place for them in society is a critical component (Boocock & Scott, 2005). Implicit in this is the reproduction of privilege. Therefore, the process of socialisation is not uniform, but is rather dependent on the characteristics of the agents, contexts, and means through which children are learning about their place in the world.

As well as being bestowed by parents, privilege is also invested through institutions. Scholarship on the geographies of education emphasises how schools are critical spaces in the fabric of everyday life, wherein social differences, norms, and identities are reproduced (Collins & Coleman, 2008). For example, Kraftl’s (2013) work examines how alternative education spaces can operate as autonomous learning spaces, and be constitutive of broader social and economic processes. Education is therefore a fundamental vector of privilege, and schools, especially elite schools, are key arenas where children learn privilege (Howard, 2008; Howard et al., 2014; Khan, 2011; Maxwell and Aggleton, 2014). In this way, education is implicated in the reproduction of unequal power relations (Apple, 1995). It is important to recognise that education encompasses more than the process of formal education and schooling. Rather, education encompasses all the processes and actions through which people learn (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). One of Bourdieu’s primary research settings was education, which he considers critical to understanding the concepts of cultural capital, habitus, and field. The framework of ‘fields of power’ developed in the text The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power (Bourdieu, 1996) is argued to be potentially portable to help understand social structures outside of France. Kenway and Koh (2013), for example, transposed this theoretical framework through attempts to understand how systems of power and privilege perpetuate in the context of an elite secondary school in Singapore. This research concluded that the conceptual framework does not fully capture the complexities of fields of power outside of the nation state, something that is particularly important in a highly globalised context like Singapore (Kenway & Koh, 2013). Thus, the idiosyncrasies of specific places need to be considered to understand how power and privilege is transposed throughout society. By
acknowledging the relationship between people and place, geographic research has the potential to paint more nuanced pictures of how educational institutions are implicated in the reproduction of privilege.

A burgeoning body of literature examines notions of privilege within the context of elite education. Much of the focus is on how elite education spaces reproduce privilege (see, for example, Howard, 2008; Khan, 2011; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2014; Tomlinson, 2000). As Kenway et al. (2017, p. 209) indicate, “elite schools are exclusive places that become so through exclusionary practices”. In this way, social cocooning works to reproduce advantages and elite status. Van Zanten (2010) describes elite schools as total institutions that provide the formal and ‘hidden’ curricula as a secondary socialisation model for students that decisively and distinctively influence their public and private adult life. Through education at private schools, young people may learn how to secure entry to relatively exclusive worlds. While not every individual who attends a private school experiences all aspects of privilege, private schools nonetheless tend to constitute “privileged developmental contexts” (Ballard et al., 2014, p. 5). Empirical research in affluent schools by Howard (2008) highlights the role of schools in reproducing and maintaining social structures by working to reinforce the privilege of students. By investing in children’s education, parents and school staff are also reproducing economic and social relations, which consequently shapes lived experiences. Through education, young people ‘learn’ privilege: acceptable actions, behaviours, and social skills, often different to those norms for students attending public schools (Howard, 2008). The social skills and capital children learn is expected to be beneficial to them in their future, providing advantages within contexts such as tertiary education, employment, and housing. The acquired structures, routines, understandings, and practices influence their everyday experiences, what they know about their place in the world, their relationships with others, and a sense of self (Howard, 2008). Critically, then, formative experiences often occur inside the school gates, and influence the construction of young people’s social selves. It is concluded that elite private schools and dominant social agents have the power to reproduce privilege in young people’s lives, which can affect how they experience places and construct personal identities (Howard, 2008; Khan, 2011; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2014). This research offers a sound discussion of how schools reinforce and regenerate privilege. Yet, it tends to focus on events, interactions, and phenomena in the classroom, to illustrate how affluent students construct their own privileged identities. The boundaries of material space, inside, and
outside, the school gates become blurred as experiences outside the school gates are an extension of school encounters. Therefore, it is imperative to consider how collective identities such as privilege influence how young people interact, identify, and experience life beyond the school gates in this thesis. These experiences are critical to extending understandings of children’s geographies, as experiences beyond school life are connected to, and complement, knowledge of the lives of young people captured by existing research.

In sum, privilege is actively produced and reproduced, with both structural and agentic factors contributing to the process. It is therefore important to examine how both wider social structures as well as individuals’ agency influences the reproduction of privilege. The ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach emphasises the importance of acknowledging young people’s agency, but this also needs to be fused with investigating how agency is shaped by wider social structures. Bourdieu’s concepts of social and cultural capital, as well as habitus provide a frame to do this. Capital is acquired and specific dispositions are created through the process of socialisation. This process operates through multiple media and agents, including families and peers. The institutional component of socialisation is also important to consider – in this case, the role of elite schools for the reproduction of privilege. The performances and manifestations of privilege are critical to the process of reproduction, but also provide insights into how privilege shapes the everyday lived realities of groups and individuals.

3.2 Manifestations of privilege: Practices and performances

As privilege is reproduced and normalised through individuals and institutions, manifestations of privilege are expressed in the routine practices of everyday life. Privileged ways of knowing and being are enacted in the home, school, leisure, and virtual spaces, through processes of constructing, negotiating, and performing identity, and through practices of consumption and mobility. It is often argued that privilege is invisible. Twine and Gardener (2013) attribute the popularity of this argument to McIntosh’s (1989) conceptualisation of an invisible knapsack which contains the advantages and benefits associated with belonging to a group. This invisibility is often premised on the observations that privilege has become normalised and taken for granted by those who are privileged. Therefore, the argument that privilege is invisible can be supported only when discussing privilege from the perspective of those who are privileged: whether that is because they are white, male, middle-aged, heterosexual, or upper class (Ferber et al., 2009). The invisibility
of privilege strengthens the power it creates and maintains. In this respect, privilege is difficult to access and see because it has become a normalised, ingrained component of the fabric of everyday life reproduced through space (Twine & Gardener, 2013). As a result, it is easier to talk about the underprivileged: people feel more comfortable discussing how they are disadvantaged, rather than how they are advantaged. Discussing privilege forces individuals and groups to reflect on the advantages they benefit from daily, while recognising what others do not have. Thus, privilege is hidden to those who experience unearned advantages, while those who are disadvantaged can clearly identify instances of privilege through manifestations in people and places. Overall, privilege is argued to be both simultaneously visible and invisible. As Kimmel (2003, p. 2) emphasises, “privilege needs to be made visible”. Seeking to understand how privilege impacts on the geographies of everyday life for young people attending elite private schools is one means to make privilege visible. The following section examines how everyday experiences and practices reveal the ways in which systems of privilege are performed in place.

3.2.1 Constructing and performing identity

Identity is developed through interaction with society and social classifications of difference. Axes of social identity in turn influence the discursive construction of childhood and children’s experiences. Therefore, privilege is a critical component of individual and collective identities, influencing the dynamics of society and young people’s experiences. The notion of performativity is discussed in relation to young people’s identities, as well as discourses of privilege. Thus, through the construction, reproduction, and performance of identity, privilege is enacted by doing and acquiring, and not just by being.

White and Wyn (2008) explain how identity is a product of discourses or sets of practices that are part of the fabric of everyday life. Identities, which affect current and future social relationships, are constructed in relation to social norms and expectations reproduced through everyday sociability. Goffman (1963) identifies three forms of identity: personal identity (the unique characteristics of a person), social identity (identity ascribed to somebody based on their membership to social categories), and ego identity (a subjective sense of who we are). Personal and social identities, which clearly intersect, are of critical interest to examining young people’s identities. These identities, as Holt (2008) argues, can be understood as embodied social capital, in that individuals’ identities offer diverse abilities to convert capital as well as signal individuals’ positionality in the complex web.
of social power relations. It also links to the importance of exploring the context within which individuals are positioned as this has a critical impact on the production and reproduction of individuals’ identities. An individual’s identity is shaped by both internal, individual characteristics (for example, race, gender, ethnicity, age, physical ability, and sexual orientation), and external factors (such as education, income, geographic location, and employment) (Johnson, 2006). Further, a range of dynamics, including family structure, material living conditions, cultural rites, social relations, and perceptions and imaginations, influence understandings of age and children’s identities (Horschelmann & van Blerk, 2012). These intersecting factors, the social values ascribed to each category, and the wider context influence an individual’s identity and therefore, mediate their social location and everyday experiences (Ferber et al., 2009). Thus, identity is a social and collective process, not a unique or individual possession.

Places imbued with personal, social, and cultural meaning provide a framework within which personal identity is constructed. It is therefore essential to consider the social, economic, cultural, ethnic, and environmental conditions that affect the formation of social categories and thus, the construction of individuals and group’s identities. For Hopkins (2010), identity is about establishing a sense of difference and similarity between individuals, across and within different social groups. Individuals construct narratives of identity based partially on their position within wider social structures (Valentine, 2008). Encounters with other social actors, Valentine (2008, p. 332) argues, are “systematically embedded within intersecting grids of power”. Encounters in a diverse range of spaces between different individuals are important components of the process of identification and becoming. The process of identity formation and performance is thus clearly influenced by power and social systems of inequality. Valentine (2000, p. 257) suggests that children are “located in narratives of identity not of their own making”, and also considers the ways that individuals construct narratives of identity based in part on their social position. By taking a social constructivist perspective examining the concept of intersectionality, the ways different axes of social identity and wider socio-spatial processes impact on the formation and performances of collective and personal identities can be examined. It is important to explore group identities such as privilege, and the ways that identity affects young people’s experiences, behaviours, interactions, abilities, and opportunities in different contexts.
3.2.2 Performativity and identity

During the 1980s and 1990s, geographers began to examine the construction and politics of the identity of people and places. The notion of performativity, and the work of Judith Butler (1988; 1993) was central to these studies. Butler’s conceptualisation of performativity stems from the perceived need to disturb the apparent essentialised, fixity of a subject’s identity. Using Foucault’s idea of discourse as a reference, identity is understood to be constructed through discursive practices, rather than pre-existing such practices (Butler & Parr, 1999). For example, within the context of gender identity, Butler’s Foucauldian reading of the notion of performativity suggests that identity is constructed through speech, through individuals being addressed as ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ (McCormack, 2009). Thus, Butler (1990) suggests that the distinction between sex and gender is misleading as discourses ‘perform’ the subject and result in the active construction of an individual’s identity. In this way, the performativity of the subject is entangled with the generation of difference in the world. These ideas, while related to the performativity of gendered identity, can also be used in this thesis to think through the identities of young people attending elite private schools.

Central to Butler’s work is an understanding that identity is an outcome of discursive practices, rather than being fixed or given based on a foundational event or moment (Butler, 1988; 1993). In essence, discourses ‘perform’ the subject, as performativity is conceptualised as a function of the repetition of representational practices within discourses. Nash (2000) suggests that Butler encourages us to consider more critically the relationship between agency, identity, and discourse. For Butler and Parr (1999), bodies come to matter through the stylisation of its features and gestures. In other words, the body and associated identities are performed through ways of behaving, talking, gesturing, dressing, and interacting. For example, branded clothing purchased from high-end designer stores acts as a sign of exclusivity and wealth when worn. By wearing clothing that conveys these messages, individuals are contributing to the performance of their identity, which is read by others they interact with. Similarly, a well-spoken, intelligent conversation signals signs of privilege, as does knowing how to act in privileged spaces such as exclusive restaurants. Knowing which knife and fork to use, which glasses are used for particular beverages, how to greet others appropriately, and the subjects of appropriate conversation at the dining table are skills and knowledge which are learnt from others who possess that knowledge and embody those skills. It is often those who are privileged.
However, it is also important to note that it is not the individual who is performative, but the discursive practices and representations through which the individual finds their identity articulated which is performed (Butler, 1988). Further, Butler emphasises performativity and performance in terms of ritualised practices, habitually repeated and working to pre-given codes (Carlson, 2013). Butler (1993, p. 2) suggests that “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act’, but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practices by which discourse produces the effects that it names”. It is also recognised, however, that relations within particular contexts can be reconfigured, negotiated, or broken, thus, highlighting the importance of acknowledging the context within which an individual performs their identity (Crouch, 2003). As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, these ideas can be teased out within the context of children’s geographies, highlighting the everyday practices and performances which young people enact and embody as part of the process of becoming, and developing their own personal identity, influenced by the context within which they act.

It is important to note that while Butler’s ideas of performativity are valuable, other conceptualisations of the notion of performativity have been put forward. It is also critical to recognise that these critiques of Butler’s ideas have been further debated for apparent misinterpretation of the original idea (see, for example, Crouch, 2003; Dewsbury, 2000; Gregson & Rose, 2000; Nelson, 1999). This process of developing knowledge around the ideas of performativity and identity highlights the complexity of the ideas and the multifaceted, flexible nature of analytical concepts used to explore human behaviour, interactions, and experiences. Deleuze’s (1994) work has been influential in developing further understandings of performativity, drawing attention to the importance of difference by conceptualising difference as independent of repetitive practices. Drawing on this influential work, Dewsbury (2000) problematises the notion of subject, highlighting the importance of events to performativity and contending that the performativity of space (spacing) requires individuals to acknowledge conceptions of difference as “ongoing differentiation without representations” (McCormack, 2009, p. 135). Performativity, and the connected concept of embodied practice, is strongly related to the body (Dewsbury, 2000). Drawing on the work of Giddens (1991), Budgeon (2003) also emphasises the relationship between the body, performativity, and context. The body is described as a project which is open to human intervention and subject to constant revision (Budgeon, 2003). It is important, however, to note that bodies are not the passive foundations or
canvases on which cultural and social meaning is overlaid. Instead, as Budgeon (2003) argues, social structures and discourses shape bodies, which should be conceptualised as an event, rather than an object. Performances and encounters are critical components of the process where the body and embodied identity are transformed and produced. Spacing is a term used to identify subjective and practical ways that an individual handles their material surroundings (Crouch, 2003). Comprehending how an individual ‘spaces’ themselves in relation to others, materially and metaphorically, is therefore critical to their performance of identity and the notion of performativity.

Through critical discussions of performativity, it has emerged that spatiality and properties of space and place are produced and reproduced through a range of practices, in which subjects and the negotiation of difference play a key role. Butler’s focus on subjects and the repetition of practices, combined with Dewsbury’s emphasis on performativity as an event, whereby subjects negotiate difference, is a useful starting point to further explore young people’s identities. Acknowledging the ways in which performances of identity are not a matter of individual creation, but are instead embedded in a complex web of social relations between bodies, texts, events, and technologies is critical. This involves considering not only the individual’s actions, behaviours, and experiences, but also the ways in which these are embedded in wider social dynamics and influence individual identity. A child growing up in a privileged setting will have a different stage (spaces, fields, places), and different embodied learnt ‘lines and actions’ (capital, practices, expressions, and gestures) which are influenced by different cultural codes and social interactions that influence the performance of their identity.

3.2.3 Symbols and practices of privilege: Consumption, mobility, and space

Signs of privilege are discussed and implicitly evident through markers of affluence, whiteness, heteronormativity, and masculinity. Social, spatial, and cultural manifestations of privilege subsequently emerge as the notion is deployed materially and discursively. Cope (2013) contends that developing understandings of how power is exercised and maintained requires a review of the material and social landscapes that have been constructed to reinforce and reproduce social relations of power. Further, privilege is embedded in the social and built architecture that surrounds us (Kimmel, 2003). Centner (2008) articulates a spatial dimension of capital through the notion of spatial capital, by examining how the spatialised consumption practices of dot-com workers in San Francisco
formed exclusionary places of privilege. The development of these places has flow-on effects which help to maintain the perpetuation of privilege as an important element of social dynamics and structures. The ways in which urban spaces are framed and influenced by discourses of privilege are evident in many aspects of the city, including housing, leisure spaces, entertainment opportunities, and green spaces for example. Affluent housing is a clear example of material manifestations of privilege, as well as highlighting the visibility of privilege. Paris (2013) discusses how the super-rich often own more than one house, in different international jurisdictions. Luxurious mansions in London and New York, palaces in the French Riviera, and exclusive Caribbean retreats are examples of visible manifestations of wealth and privilege (Paris, 2013). In a local context, the neighbouring Auckland suburbs of St Heliers and Glen Innes highlight the stark differences in housing (a material manifestation of privilege) of those who are privileged and those who are not. A state house in Glen Innes is as suggestive of poverty as a large, contemporary, architecturally designed home on the cliff tops of St Heliers is a visible signal of privilege. The experiences of children living in these two suburbs will be distinctly different, with the encounters of those living in poverty widely understood through research and media (Gordon et al., 2017), while the experiences of those who are privileged are less critically understood. Children arguably do not have the same ability as the adults discussed in Centner’s (2008) research to shape the reproduction of space, but as Leverett (2011) acknowledges, the actions and behaviours of young people can influence space. The ways in which parents and teachers enact their capital affects young people’s wellbeing, everyday experiences, and identities is clearly important understandings of space and social relations.

Symbolic manifestations of privilege often involve the consumption of material products such as the latest technology, clothing from a particular brand or designer, and travel to the latest holiday destinations. Bourdieu (1984) notes that one’s location in society can result in particular consumption practices. Cultural consumption, thus serves as a way to perpetuate social class distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). In a cultural sense, individuals are what they wear, hear, see, and experience (Shipman, 2004). By purchasing products and services which signify status, privileged individuals are performing their identity. As Shipman (2004) explains, individuals consume products and brands as much for their symbolic properties as for their functional benefit. Contained within, and sometimes displayed on products that people conspicuously consume, are messages that an individual wants to transmit to other socially significant people (Mansvelt, 2005; Shipman, 2004).
Piacentini and Mailer’s (2004) study suggests that conspicuous consumption is relevant for young people, as clothing can be seen as a critical social tool. The clothes choices made by young people can be closely bound to their self-understanding and used both as a means of self-expression and as a way of judging the people and situations they face. For example, branded clothing is often bought by teenagers to signal their social position and product knowledge. Within their study, young people explained how if they did buy clothes from a cheaper chain store, they would not tell their friends where they went shopping (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Most people, whether privileged or not will be able to read the ‘signs’ being displayed by individuals and groups through their clothing, accessories, car, home, and travel and dining habits, which emphasise their position in society and thus the visibility of privilege in some contexts. Young people are no different, they want to be seen wearing the latest designer clothing, have the latest technology, and to be ‘cool’ or ‘in fashion’. Through these practices and performances, young people (either consciously or unconsciously) embody privilege, presenting visual manifestations of privilege either on their body or through their actions, and as a result have different everyday experiences in comparison to children not in a privileged social position.

As well as consumption of clothing, the consumption of travel and other goods and services is also differentiated by social class and therefore signal manifestations of privilege. Ying et al.’s (2016) research shows how social class influence tourists’ consumption of destinations and products. For example, activities such as visiting historic sites and museums, attending a live theatre show or performance, and attending cultural events and festivals required a certain level of cultural capital to be enjoyed and were therefore appreciated most by those deemed to be upper class (Ying et al., 2016). Food is also packed with social, cultural, and symbolic meanings (Bell & Valentine, 1997). Dining at an internationally acclaimed Michelin Star restaurant displays higher levels of capital and privilege, than dining at a McDonald’s restaurant for example. The consumption of education is also related to privilege, with one’s ability to attend particular schools or universities dependent on levels of capital (Waters, 2006). For example, Larew (2003) discusses educational privilege and the ability for children of Harvard and Yale alumni to gain admission into the Ivy League Universities regardless of whether they meet other admission criteria. Overwhelmingly, these children are from white, affluent families, reinforcing the way in which privilege is reproduced in society (Larew, 2003). Another manifestation of privilege is evident in children’s mobility patterns and therefore use of
space. Hopkins (2010) observes that there are divisions in young people’s use of spaces and places based on children’s social position and position in relation to categories of class, race, gender, and sexuality. Enhanced mobility and freedom is not solely a result of greater access to resources (financial and material), but also a result of the friendships and relationships with others in similar social positions (Hopkins, 2010). Privilege may be invisible to those who benefit the most, as their experiences, actions, behaviours, and attitudes become normalised through childhood and the process of socialisation. However, as has become evident, there are multiple visible manifestations of privilege, linked to the configuration and volume of different types of capital which highlight how privilege is not necessarily invisible.

The social geographies of young people’s experiences can also be captured by exploring the key spaces they navigate in their everyday lives: home, school, the street, and cyberspace (Hopkins, 2010). Firstly, it is widely noted that the home is the most important setting in a child’s life (Christensen et al., 2000; Harloff et al., 1998). However, home spaces hold diverse meanings for young people, which are shaped by individual experiences and material conditions (Christensen et al., 2000). Secondly, educational spaces are fundamental lived spaces which form a critical element of young people’s lives (Holt, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2000). Hopkins (2011) identified two separate but connected worlds within the school gates: the world of the institution, and the informal world of friendships and social experiences. Power relations vary in intensity between schools, resulting in differential outcomes in terms of how young people learn about the ways in which power and control operate in society (Hopkins, 2011). Therefore, it is important to reflect on the nature of the schools’ young people attend in order to understand how this lived space, and the different activities which take place within the school gates, influence young people’s lives. Thirdly, the street in the city is another important lived space in young people’s lives (Freeman, 2010; Spilsbury, 2005; Valentine, 1999). Malone (2002) considers the street to be a stage for young people, where they construct and perform their identity in relation to their peers and other members of society. Consequently, it is important to not only consider the immediate spaces young people frequent on a daily basis, but also the wider context and spaces young people utilise. Lastly, engagement with cyberspace is an everyday experience for most young people, as their access to and use of information and communications technology increases (Ergler et al., 2016; White & Wyn, 2008). Research on young people’s interactions with cyberspace often focuses on the associated risks and
parental concerns (Valentine & Holloway, 2001). However, Ergler et al. (2016) argue that cyberspace is also an important resource for young people to utilise as they conduct their social lives and construct their social selves. Young people’s experiences within each of these four lived spaces will be taken into account in this thesis to understand the power of imbedded collective identities such as privilege to shape young people’s everyday lives.

Young people's use of space is mediated by public and parental discourses, which are in turn influenced by parents’ social position. This emphasises how young people’s use of specific spaces such as the home and school does not exist in isolation, but are shaped in relation to other social processes and the identities of people who occupy these spaces. Through adult mediated environments, young people learn values and ways of living that reproduce social and cultural relations (Katz, 2004). Hengst (2007) notes that the processes of domestication, insularisation, and institutionalisation collectively shape the lives of young people. These processes operate at a range of spatial scales, from the home, to school, and the city. Educational spaces are identified as exemplifying the process of institutionalisation, the imposition of boundaries, rules, and regulation on children and their use of space (Prout, 2005). The focus on processes also helps to explore the ways spaces create, shape, and reproduce the social order (Leverett, 2011). Linked to social discourses which influence the range and nature of children’s engagement with lived spaces, are multiple social processes and phenomena that also influence young people’s experiences. Therefore, as this thesis demonstrates, examining the experiences of young people who attend elite private schools can provide insights into the taken-for granted practices of everyday life.

3.4 Reproducing and enacting privilege: A conceptual framework

Intersections of childhood and privilege, while not often explored within single research endeavours, are clearly linked, with systems of privilege having significant implications for children’s identities and lived experiences. A key theme threaded throughout the two literature review chapters is the plurality of childhood: both in socially constructed conceptions of childhood as well as the experiences of childhood. Both of these phenomena are shaped not only by historical and contextually specific conceptions of childhood, but also by wider social dynamics such as privilege and oppression. Lived experiences are widely understood to be shaped, mediated, and negotiated within the broader social context, and the complex web of social, political, economic, environmental,
and material and discursive frameworks and effects. However, much more is known about the lived experiences, identities and wellbeing of young people who are disadvantaged in some way (see, for example, Evans, 2004; Leverett, 2011; Wager et al., 2010), than the lived realities of young people whose lives play out in privileged settings. Geographical contributions to understanding children’s lives have provided rich accounts of the experiences of diverse groups, emphasising the socially constructed nature of childhood, and therefore the plurality of lived experiences for young people. However, gaining insight into, and considering the power of social dynamics to influence the experiences and identities of privately educated young people through this thesis, is a critical part of developing a more nuanced understanding of children’s geographies. Exploring the triad of habitus, capital, and field is key to interpreting and conceptualising the actions and behaviours of social actors and their position in the social world (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, Bourdieu’s work provides a theoretical backdrop for this research, and these ideas are extended by observing and reflecting on the everyday practices and interactions to develop narratives of the lives of privately educated young people.

Privilege has become a normalising structural force which shapes lived experiences of all, not just those who are privileged. In seeking to better understand the effects of privilege through this thesis, there are several key ideas to emphasise. Firstly, there are multiple constituting identities which intersect and influence the degree to which an individual experiences the effects of privileged or oppressive forces acting on social agents. Secondly, while privilege is tied to group differences that become a part of individual identities, privilege is acquired and enacted by doing, and not just by being per se. This draws attention to the process of socialisation, and forces consideration of not only structural factors, but also the degree to which young people have agency to influence lived experiences. Thirdly, while privilege is often considered invisible, it is argued that privilege is simultaneously visible and invisible. Manifestations of privilege, while often discussed implicitly through an inequalities framework, are evident and emerge through multiple aspects of the social world, including identity, urban places, leisure endeavours, future aspirations, consumption habits, and travel patterns.

Both structural and agency factors demonstrate how socialisation and the subsequent reproduction of privilege in a young person’s life is a complex and interactive process. The mundane and spectacular, local and global elements of the social world are teased out in this thesis to fully understand the geographies of young people who are
relatively privileged. In this way young people are recognised as subjects and social actors, but at the same time it is acknowledged that they are influenced by structural forces beyond their control. Socio-spatial dynamics shape and influence behaviour, sociability, opportunities, wellbeing, independence, and accessibility to material and non-material resources. The particularities of the social and spatial practices which shape the everyday life of relatively privileged young people are contended to be situated within contexts which are yet to be fully understood. Beginning with the lived experiences of children, and combining analysis of structural components which shaped lived experiences to understand childhoods is critical to examining a key question of this thesis: How is the reproduction of privilege through elite education spaces reflected in young people’s narratives of their experiences and identities? Exposing contours of privilege through this research with young people at elite private schools contributes to understanding processes that reinforce and regenerate privilege.
Class, privilege, and education in New Zealand

Social ideologies which permeate the materiality, meanings, and practices embedded in places have a significant influence on individuals’ experiences. Undertaking this research with young people attending elite private schools in a New Zealand context, presents a unique landscape within which to examine the influence of social dynamics on children’s geographies. To provide background detail, a brief historical review of the New Zealand social context is provided. Firstly, dominant notions of New Zealand as a classless society are critiqued to reveal that while class is not often discussed in New Zealand, inequalities have a significant influence on everyday experiences. Coded signifiers of privilege in New Zealand, including settler culture and whiteness, are then examined to explore how privilege is a significant but hidden component of wider social dynamics. Secondly, to provide context for the place of private education in contemporary society, a brief history of the New Zealand education system and changes in the development of private education is outlined.

4.1 New Zealand as a classless society?

The colonisation of New Zealand by Britain in the 19th century dramatically altered the nation’s social composition and economic systems. Indigenous Maori communities came to be dominated socially, politically, numerically, and economically by Pakeha
settlers. The convergence of different social identities and understandings of belonging created tension, but also contributed to the unique sense of identity which developed in New Zealand. Initial attempts to develop a New Zealand identity can be linked to the endeavours of James Busby, a consular representative of Britain, who initiated the representation of New Zealand with the United Tribes flag in 1834 (Phillips, 2012). This decision, along with the Declaration of Independence of New Zealand in 1835, are considered attempts to differentiate the nation from British identity, while highlighting the bicultural nature of changing social structures. With these changes, social ideologies influenced the development of unique identities and structures for how New Zealand society would work. Of interest to this research is the social construction of the myth of New Zealand as a classless, egalitarian society which is explored in the following section. It is argued that while class as understood in a British or American context may be less relevant in New Zealand, there are strong social dynamics and structures that influence everyday life. As such, the reality of social inequalities provides evidence to question the claim that New Zealand is and was a classless society.

4.1.1 ‘The land of milk and honey’: The social construction of a classless society

Throughout New Zealand’s history, there has been the production and reproduction of the myth of New Zealand as a classless society. Nolan (2007) suggests that a dominant thread in New Zealand’s history has been the belief that urban, industrial, and class models are not applicable. Those immigrating to New Zealand brought with them class expectations based on the social organisation of their homeland, and their family’s position within the hierarchy. For example, some rich settlers had expectations based on British aristocratic culture, while poorer immigrants brought working class beliefs from their experiences in industry (Philips, 2012). However, while there were important distinctions of wealth, occupation, and property ownership in colonial New Zealand, many commentators argue that it was difficult to use this as the basis of tightly demarcated class. Oliver (1969) contends that constant mobility, limited industrialisation, and capital accumulation experienced in New Zealand renders nineteenth century European ideas of class ineffective in describing and analysing class relations in New Zealand (cited in McAloon, 2004, p. 4). Further, New Zealand’s economy was primarily a function of rural activities, as opposed to industrial manufacturing that dominated elsewhere, and social hierarchies in rural settings are different from urban hierarchies (Philips, 2012). In this way, traditional conceptualisations of class derived by Marx and Weber (Panelli, 2004) which
focus on individuals’ market position and economic life chances to explain differences between groups of people are not necessarily universally applicable. Bourdieu (1977) also theorised class relations, arguing that cultural capital is the basis through which economic and social status is acquired and class distinctions drawn. Thinking beyond the role of economic capital is critical as social and cultural factors bound up in New Zealand’s colonial history influence social relations and therefore the reality of class hierarchies and class consciousness in public imaginaries.

The perpetuation of the idea that New Zealand is a classless society is the result of a range of factors related to the social, economic, and geographical context. The founding document of New Zealand, The Treaty of Waitangi, is based on aspirational equality between the indigenous Maori population and the British settlers, and is contended to have influenced the construction of a national identity and perceptions of social hierarchies (Liu et al., 1999). The small range of wealth; the lack of defence authorities; a relatively high standard of working class living; progressive labour laws; broad property ownership; state housing; and a welfare state which was developed in New Zealand before most other countries, are some of the factors which are put forward to support the claim that New Zealand is a classless society (Crothers, 2013). McAloon (2004) also suggests that the relationship between attitudes settlers brought with them, the modification of attitudes in the colonial setting, and the occupational and economic opportunities available in New Zealand as a small isolated colony also contributed to levels of class consciousness. Additionally, Phillips (2012) outlines the ways in which the social structure of New Zealand was more complicated than the demarcations based on owner and worker. In rural and small-town communities, there was often considerable camaraderie and interaction between groups. For example, research in Ohakune, a small rural town in the Central North Island, concluded that “the store manager and his assistant salesman, or the school teacher and the farm labourer will often share the same gossip, the same yard of bar space, or the same lottery ticket” (Pearson and Thorns, 1983, p. 236, cited in Philips, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, separations between members of different social groups were not as stringent as class differences in a British context, and the notion of class was not consciously applied in a New Zealand context. This emphasises how “psychological processes may be conditioned, created or constrained by political or economic circumstances” (Liu et al., 1999, p. 1022), particularly in relation to articulations of class identity. Thus, the unique
geography and social history of New Zealand contributes to the social construction of the understanding of the belief in a classless society.

Historian Keith Sinclair (1969, p. 276, cited in Philips, 2012) concluded that while New Zealand was not classless “it must be nearly more classless, however, than any other society in the world.” Influenced by the factors discussed above, class is not a word commonly associated with a New Zealand vernacular. Old fashioned and judgemental connotations are linked with notions of class, and the language of class invokes uneasy reaction amongst New Zealanders. For example, public responses to Bridgeman’s (2013) newspaper article about being labelled ‘middle class’ as an insult emphasises New Zealanders avoidance of classed categories. The meanings attached to class and general dislike of the idea have contributed to the perpetuation of the myth of New Zealand as a classless society. However, when one removes the overt references to hierarchy that class carries, and use a language that does not include class terms, New Zealanders acknowledge that society is divided and structured by different social identities (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). Thus, it is argued that New Zealand is a classless society only in the language used to speak about difference, rather than the reality of inequality based on class or socio-economic status being a factor in the construction of social hierarchies.

Frustrated with the myth of New Zealanders living in a classless society, Caldwell and Brown (2007) explored the social structure of New Zealand, identifying eight distinctive social identities, or ‘tribes’⁴. Differences in attitudes and lifestyles associated with each tribe are argued to highlight the diversity inherent in New Zealand society, and therefore go some way to dismiss the notion of a classless society. Of particular relevance to discussions of class and privilege are the characteristics, attitudes, and idiosyncrasies of the Remuera ‘tribe’⁵, New Zealand’s self-declared upper-class (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). Affluence is the basis of this tribe, but does not guarantee access to the tribe as there is a complex ‘social dance’ to learn, which is predicated only when appropriate social and cultural capital and habitus is acquired, afforded, or earned. Signature attitudes of the Remuera tribe identified by Caldwell and Brown (2007) are associated with pedigree,

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⁴ Caldwell and Brown (2007) outline a system of eight tribes to understand different social identities and underlying values. The book was written as a reaction to the myth that there is a “typical New Zealander” The use of the term ‘tribe’ has connections to indigenous Maori culture whereby tribes (iwi) are demarcated through geographical boundaries.

⁵ Remuera is an affluent inner city residential suburb of Auckland. The exclusive nature of this area is highlighted by the average median house price (3-bedroom house) of $1.7 million in the 3rd quarter of 2017 (Quotable Value, 2017).
The question ‘Where did you go to school?’ is often asked, with answers signifying the ‘right’ to membership in the tribe. The lifestyle and attitudes of the Remuera tribe thus highlight the links between capital, privilege, schooling, and social identity. Further, the Remuera tribe is highly networked through webs of relationships with influential people, where connections are often formed at elite schools (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). This identity is instilled in children of the Remuera tribe from a young age, which therefore strengthens the reproduction of privilege. The sense of social hierarchy understood by those in the Remuera tribe is not universal. For example, the Raglan tribe, which encompasses those who do not belong in the mainstream, and take pleasure through experiences rather than things, are said to have no real sense of a class structure or hierarchy which can limit who one can be (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). While distinctions are therefore evident, the demarcations of tribes by Caldwell and Brown (2007) is one of the few examinations which seek to analyse the social hierarchy which has developed in New Zealand. The distinct decline and absence of class consciousness is paralleled by the diminishing consideration of class analysis by sociologists in historical and contemporary accounts of New Zealand society (Crothers, 2013; Nolan, 2007). However, McAloon (2004) suggests that considering the nuances of social realities, which may not match abstract models and theories of class, should not result in the denial of class existence in New Zealand.

Rather than considering class per se, discussions of New Zealand social structure tend to focus on examining social ideologies such as egalitarianism. The notion of a level playing field, an egalitarian society where everybody has the same opportunities to succeed dominate imaginaries of New Zealand society (Nolan, 2007). The prevalence of a historical myth of egalitarianism is likened by Skilling (2013) to contemporary prominence of the notion of equality of opportunity in political discourse. Origins of the dominance of egalitarian ideals are linked to the desire of immigrants to denaturalise class structures from their homeland. References to the notion of egalitarian society are evident in New Zealand Official Year-Books, first published by the New Zealand Government in 1893. These publications framed New Zealand as a country of natural abundance, that provided opportunities for independence, where society naturally created a high level of order, and that the simple life guaranteed middle-class freedom from anxieties associated with class status (Fairburn, 1989). Thus, settlers arrived in New Zealand with a particular imaginary and expectation of New Zealand as Arcadian, which came to be reproduced through their
attitudes and actions upon arrival. Arcadian societies are contended to be natural societies, where innate moderation displaces government institutions and voluntary bodies (Fairburn, 1989). Colonial rhetoric did not deny that government and judicial structures, schools, and networks existed in New Zealand, but these structures were largely ignored and their value downplayed (Fairburn, 1989). Thus, notions of egalitarianism are a prominent part of the New Zealand national identity, which is reflected in discussions of class and the reluctance of New Zealanders to speak of success.

New Zealanders tend to value modesty and are reticent about celebrating successes. Associated with this is the idea of ‘tall poppy syndrome’. Mouly and Sankaran (2000) describe tall poppy syndrome as an Australasian reference to the politics of envy, jealousy, and greed. Typical New Zealanders are often characterised as hard-working, resourceful, and down to earth, with a pioneering spirit and a desire to achieve a better life (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). Many people are quietly successful but do not advertise their success to others, dismayed at the likelihood that others will think they are ‘showing off’ or ‘skiting’. The presence of this syndrome is particularly evident in the Papatoetoe tribe identified by Caldwell and Brown (2007), whereby the unspoken rules state that you should not stand out too far or go around acting like you are superior. Most New Zealanders strive to achieve and ‘punch above the weight’ of expectations associated with a small island nation in the Pacific. However, these achievements are often not publicised by the individuals involved. This approach is evident in a sporting context as those who excel are expected to divert the praise away from themselves and credit teamwork for their success. Caldwell and Brown (2007) note the different reactions to success and thus the presence of tall poppy syndrome of the different tribes identified. For example, amongst the Balclutha tribe, practical, down-to-earth, conservative people from the provinces are quietly successful and understate their success so as not to seem too ‘flashy’ and pompous (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). Comparatively, the Cuba Street tribe does not suffer from tall poppy syndrome, as those who are different and ‘stick their necks out’ are congratulated (Caldwell & Brown, 2007). While there are exceptions, discussing privilege, which inherently involves discussion of those who are successful and experience advantage (whether success and advantage is earned or unearned), is an uncomfortable proposition for many New Zealanders.

Notions of tall poppy syndrome, egalitarianism, and the myth of a classless society are arguably linked to the absence of discussions of class, which further perpetuates and reproduces the lack of class consciousness. Social differences continue to be evident in
New Zealand, but the differences do not necessarily conform to traditional conceptualisations of class. Imaginaries of an egalitarian society influence individuals’ choice to not promote their success and the uneasiness around being seen to be better than everybody else. This approach in turn renders invisible public displays of success and advantage associated with privilege and class. There are obvious exceptions as material and institutional displays of privilege are evident, however, these become accepted and part of the landscape of the privileged. Despite these ideals, social inequalities are an ever-present force which structure New Zealand society and can be analysed to examine the diverse realities of everyday life.

4.1.2 The social realities of inequality

To illustrate the mythical status of the imaginary of New Zealand as a classless society, many examples, both past and present, can be considered. Arguably, social inequalities have existed in New Zealand since interactions between the British and indigenous Maori populations. These events have contributed in substantive ways to the production and reproduction of social inequalities. Clear distinctions are evident between diverse groups, categorised based on several social markers such as ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. The Depression of the 1930s is spoken about as a classed experience, which resulted in a gulf between the unemployed and employed, between workers and the privileged (Mein-Smith, 2012). Further, the relatively rapid urbanisation of New Zealand is a critical factor in the growth of disparities over time. The trajectory of economic inequality in New Zealand is summarised by Skilling (2013) as a rapid increase in inequality between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s occurred, before a levelling off after the mid-1990s, and then a slight decrease since the early-mid 2000s. These events and historical inequalities have contributed to current inequalities which continue to plague New Zealand society, impacting on the everyday lives of those who are disadvantaged.

Figure 4.1 highlights significant statistics which emphasise the growing inequalities within key contexts of everyday life in New Zealand. Considering income, wealth in New Zealand is disproportionately distributed, with the top 10% of New Zealand households accounting for approximately 50%, while the bottom 40% held only 3% of wealth in 2015 (Statistics New Zealand, 2016). While income is only one measure of inequality, this statistic provides evidence of the large gap between the rich and poor, which has flow on effects in other domains of everyday life. It is also evident that ethnicity is a significant
variable which influences health, housing, and educational experiences in New Zealand. For example, Maori have a lower life expectancy than the total population (Ministry of Social Development, 2016), and Maori and Pacific adults are less likely than European and Asian adults to report being in good health (Ministry of Health, 2015). Further, unequal opportunities available to different social groups are entrenching disproportionate outcomes, in terms of housing, health, education, wealth, and imprisonment. For example, Maori and Pasifika students have the lowest NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) pass rates at Level 2 or above (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017), and also have the highest levels of unemployment (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). While many factors influence rates of unemployment, education is a particularly significant determinant for employment. Further links are evident between income, health, and housing. For instance, poverty rates for Maori and Pacific children are also consistently higher than for European children (Simpson et al., 2016). Additionally, a disproportionate burden of illness and death is experienced by Maori and Pacific children, and those living in more deprived areas (Ministry of Health, 2015). Children living in poverty also experience higher hospital admissions for infectious and respiratory diseases associated with overcrowding and poor-quality housing (Simpson et al., 2016). These statistics further reinforce the ways in which, for many, disadvantage and inequality are key dynamics that influence everyday lives.

**Figure 4.1:** Evidence of inequalities in New Zealand

<table>
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<th>Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The life expectancies for all males and females (based on death rates in 2012-2014) were 79.5 and 83.2 years respectively. There are distinct ethnic differences in life expectancy, with Maori male and female life expectancy at birth 73.0 and 77.1 years, respectively (Ministry of Social Development, 2016).</td>
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<th>Housing</th>
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<tr>
<td>• In 2016, 28% of New Zealand households spent more than 30% of their disposable income on housing (Perry, 2016).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 70% of poor children in New Zealand live in rental accommodation (Perry, 2016).</td>
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<th>Education</th>
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<td>• The percentage of students who had attained NCEA Level 3 in 2016 has an ethnic gradient: 79.2% of Asian students, 70.1% of European students, 60.4% of Pasifika students and 54.4% of Maori students achieved to this level (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over the period 2008-2011, 31% of students in Decile 1 and 2 schools achieved on average or higher maths score on the national maths test, compared to 78% of children achieving at the same level at Decile 9 and 10 schools (Rashbrooke, 2013).</td>
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Inequality and the growing gap between the rich and poor is the subject of much debate in New Zealand. Journalist and author of the newest collection of work discussing inequalities in New Zealand, Max Rashbrooke, notes that “the gap between the rich and the rest has widened faster in New Zealand than in any other developed country” (cited in, Collins, 2013). The title for Collins’ (2013) piece “Paradise for a few” summarises the reality that while New Zealand is considered a great place to live and raise a family, this perception and ideology of ‘paradise’ is only a reality for some. An important component of Rashbrooke’s (2013) argument, however, is that the ‘crisis’ of inequality in New Zealand is not only about poverty, but also about the fact that so much income has been captured by so few people. While the term privilege is not used in this case, there is clearly an argument that the factors and outcomes contributing to the perpetuation of inequality in New Zealand include discourses of both poverty and privilege. This argument, therefore distinctly highlights the need to consider the everyday experiences and identities of not just disadvantaged individuals, but also those who are privileged.

4.2 Privilege in New Zealand

Given social ideologies of egalitarianism and a level playing field, it is unsurprising that discussions and research examining privilege in New Zealand are rare. Searches using keyword terms such as “privilege” and “New Zealand” reveal very few relevant resources, with many references focusing on legal and political privileges. One exception is a study by Borell et al. (2009) which explores discourses of privilege through a health lens. It is interesting to note that the lead author of this self-conscious privilege scholarship is a Maori academic. Key themes related to the construct of privilege in New Zealand were identified, including privilege as invisible, multi-layered, and performed; as individual versus group privilege; privilege and class; and links between privilege and Pakeha culture (Borell et al., 2009). These themes highlight the “multifaceted complexity and discursive ambiguities” of privilege and provide insights into the ways in which privilege remains invisible and unscrutinised, particularly by those who benefit from it the most (Borell et al., 2009). Linked to ideas of performativity, Borell et al. (2009) suggest that privilege is performed for individual or collective benefit, challenging the notion that privilege is a passive phenomenon, and highlighting the active reproduction of privilege which has marked and unmarked, intended and unintended benefits on all individuals and groups. Statistics (such as those highlighted in Figure 4.1) which draw attention to inequalities are most often
discussed from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged. Borell et al. (2009),

drawing on the work of Robson and Harris (2007), reflect on how Pakeha experience

advantageous outcomes in education, employment, health and income, but are

underrepresented in negative statistics such as poverty, and justice. Considering social

statistics through a lens of privilege would highlight how Pakeha in New Zealand are

privileged. While issues of poverty and disadvantage are critical and need to be addressed,

rather than always exploring these issues through a lens of deprivation and reproducing
discourses about the ‘poor’, implementing a privilege framework to explore these issues

will help to highlight the normalisation of privilege.

References to, and discussions of privilege are occasionally evident in the popular

media. For example, a somewhat controversial opinion piece appeared in the New Zealand

Herald with the title “Being a New Zealander opens door to life of privilege” (Durney,

2012). Peter Durney depicted New Zealand as clean, green, and isolated, a place where

everybody has equal rights and opportunity. The privileges that Durney experiences in
different contexts of everyday life, ranging from religion, education, family, and health, to
retirement, safety and crime, freedom of speech, and the environment were articulated. For
example, “With my wife, I was able to raise a family, comfortably housed, healthy and
well educated. Not everybody is so fortunate” (Durney, 2012). While it is acknowledged
that not everybody is as fortunate, the tone of the piece, and other references to overseas
contexts, suggests that Durney’s acknowledgement of the ‘other’ and those who are less
fortunate, refers to those outside of New Zealand. Through the article’s title, as well as the
final sentence “I only know that by sheer accident of birth, I am a Kiwi. What a priceless,
undeserved privilege that is”, Durney is claiming a universal experience of privilege, solely
by virtue of being a New Zealander. However, in reality, the privileges (earned and
unearned advantages) observed are not universally experienced.

While very few studies explicitly discuss privilege in a New Zealand context, there
is an array of studies which implicitly discuss the privileges afforded to some people at the
detriment to others in society. These studies relate to health and education, often setting
out to discuss inequalities. Thus, the inequalities noted in the above Figure 4.1 have been
the subject of much academic research from many different perspectives and disciplines in
New Zealand (Pearce & Dorling, 2006; Rashbrooke, 2013; Tobias et al., 2009). This focus
may be related to the long shadow of the egalitarian myth that has been reproduced in New
Zealand, such that to speak of privilege contests the purported level playing field. The focus
on disadvantage and attempting to reduce inequality by working with those who are disadvantaged also arguably reinforces the normalisation and denial of privilege. A small amount of research has indirectly examined privilege, focusing on the more exclusive aspects of society. For example, private health care (Crampton et al., 2004; Kearns et al., 2003), elite and private schooling (Thrupp, 2007), wealth networks, and elite sports (Godber, 2012) have been explored in a New Zealand context. This work, while not using the language of privilege, highlights visible manifestations of privilege which are evident in society. Metaphors of a level playing field and tall poppy syndrome mitigate and reduce explicit mentions and discussions of privilege. Instead, settler culture and whiteness have become coded signifiers of privilege.

3.2.1 Coded signifiers of privilege: Settler culture and whiteness

The absence of explicit discussion of privilege does not mean that privilege is not a significant determinant influencing the processes, practices, and events of everyday life. Instead, there are coded expressions, references, and signs of privilege in narratives which discuss and critically explore the social fabric of New Zealand. Borell et al. (2009) note that the rise of studies of whiteness and settler culture in New Zealand is evidence of the growing attention paid to privilege in the context of wellbeing. Manifestations of these coded signifiers of privilege appear in a range of material and discursive ways, including sport, cars, clothing, and accent (see Kearns & Berg, 2002 for an example of pronunciation as a tool to signal a political position). However, the idea of privilege is often unspoken and implicit in these narratives. A binary of privilege and oppression in a New Zealand context has been characterised and socially constructed to associate privilege with signifiers of whiteness, settler culture, and education. Research exploring these discourses (see, for example, Bell, 2009; Gordon, 2003; Gray et al., 2013; Nash, 2003) contributes to the small but limited discussion on privilege in New Zealand.

Cultural identity politics in New Zealand are complex. Despite Maori presence before colonisation, the particularities of New Zealand culture and identity developed as colonisers and migrants began to arrive from Britain, and ‘stamp their mark’ on the land and people. Thus, notions of biculturalism have dominated rhetoric of New Zealand nationalism with two founding groups, Maori (indigenous) and Pakeha (settler) (Bell, 2006). Consequently, there has long been debate on Pakeha culture in New Zealand, an identity which has been contested, resisted, and embraced (King, 1999). Moving beyond
biculturalism, Spoonley (2015) also discusses the emergence of a more complex identity politics with superdiversity in contemporary times. The dominance of notions of biculturalism developed from the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori aspirations for greater recognition and autonomy as indigenous people of the land. However, Bell (2006) argues that biculturalism is problematic, and paradoxically perpetuates the difficulties faced by Pakeha New Zealanders in constructing and understanding their identity and culture. This difficulty is symbolic of wider social relations as Pakeha is the dominant social group in New Zealand and therefore considered normal (Borell et al., 2009). It is claimed that Pakeha identify in relation to boundaries, in that Pakeha know who they are not, rather than what they are. For example, Pakeha identify as not Maori, but who Pakeha are remains an ‘empty alterity’ (Bell, 2006, p. 265). For King (1999), to be Pakeha is to be a non-Maori New Zealander who identifies intimately with the land. The relative ‘emptiness’ of Pakeha identity is not problematic for social status, but is in fact arguably an advantage as being invisible is how universal claims about particular ways of being become normalised (Bell, 2006; Matthewman, 2017). Settler culture and Pakeha identity have thus become normalised as manifestations of the power of privilege.

Another coded signifier of privilege in New Zealand is the notion of whiteness. While recognition of the social construction of dominant social categories has been gradual, it is important to consider majority groups and identities such as whiteness as these groups traditionally exercise the power of definition (Jackson, 1998). In a New Zealand context, whiteness is privileged over other minority ethnic identities. Whiteness and the advantages afforded to individuals and groups on the basis of their skin colour are often invisible to those who are white, but simultaneously clearly visible to those who are not (Grey et al., 2013). Literature considering the place and nature of whiteness in New Zealand is limited (Matthewman, 2017). However, research states that while those who belong to the dominant white majority experience advantage, this privilege is disguised and reinforced by its invisibility (Borell et al., 2009). Gray et al. (2013) draw attention to the intersection of privilege and whiteness, suggesting that identifying as Pakeha may allow individuals to obscure privileges afforded by cultural capital. This idea is emphasised by Bell (2004) in that critical self-reflection is required, as the avoidance responsibility sustains the continued dominance of whiteness in New Zealand. It is proposed that colonisation and the emergence of settler cultures has contributed to the development of societies whereby whiteness affords individuals a capacity to attain advantages more easily.
than those who are not white (Ahmed, 2007). In other words, whiteness affords a type of capital that can be exploited and expended to gain access to further resources, power, and privilege. Interestingly, despite acknowledging the prevalence of white privilege, individuals are often unable to articulate how white privilege benefits them (Gray et al., 2013). Failing to acknowledge the links between whiteness, privilege, and power in a New Zealand context can pose a risk as privilege can become defined as an individual status, rather than resulting from structural inequities embedded and reproduced in institutions (Gray et al., 2013). People feel more comfortable discussing how they and others are marginalised, rather than discussing how privilege manifests socially, materially, and in relation to identity. As a result, this tendency further reinforces the normalisation of privilege in New Zealand, which can be linked to the way that conscious understandings of social distinction have been constructed since colonisation. Significantly for this research, education is one context where the manifestations of coded signifiers of privilege play out to shape everyday experiences and identities.

4.3 Education and the role of private schooling

Education has also become a coded signifier of privilege in New Zealand. Examining the history of education in New Zealand provides insights into the development of distinctions between public and private education. These distinctions were, and continue to be linked to social hierarchies. The history of education in New Zealand is complex, with policy and material changes in the landscape of education clearly linked to changing political ideologies and developments in social structures. Many facets of the education system have been contested and reformed as debates around an appropriate balance of public and private, and the question of what skills and values should be taught to whom and for whose benefit, have ensued (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Further, education is never socially or politically neutral as the system presents knowledge to students within a framework which reflects the attitudes and values of the dominant group in society. As Lewis (2009) explains, schools become expressions of their communities and education a product of place. Thus, to understand how the current education system operates, it is critical to examine how the education system has changed since the establishment of original missionary schools to educate Maori. The following section provides an historical review of the New Zealand education system, highlighting reforms which have resulted in
the inclusion of state and private schools that have come to provide education for particular cohorts of New Zealand children.

4.3.1 Educational reform: State and private schools

The New Zealand education system has undergone several significant reforms since the original missionary schools were established. The first mission school was established in Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands in 1816 (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Missionaries were concerned that Maori needed to be better equipped to deal with the colonisation process, and wanted to convert Maori to Christianity (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Thus, while initial interest in schooling was minimal, Maori began to embrace the Missionaries offering and engaged with settlers to enhance their knowledge. The colonial government also recognised the importance of education and saw the missionary schools as being central to the protection and civilisation of the indigenous people. However, the emerging state was focused on issues of land acquisition and settlement, had limited financial resources, and embraced the missionary education system, so did not immediately become involved in education (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). State influence in schooling continued to be minimal as more immigrants arrived in New Zealand and began settling in the provinces. Significant differences in the education available to children in New Zealand thus emerged. For example, private schools educated the elite and wealthy, and the poor attended schools run by the church and charity organisations (Pitt, 1977). Education reflected parental income, residence, or religion and it tended to socialise young people into existing groups rather than across boundaries. There was no real organisation to the education system of the mid-19th century, however, and those who were educated were likely to be either socially privileged or disadvantaged.

By the 1870s, New Zealand was beginning to ‘find its feet’ as an emerging independent nation. However, political, social, and cultural problems continued to be experienced. From 1875, central government became responsible for the funding, regulation, and administration of schools nationally (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). This required legislation and in 1877, The Education Act, was passed which legislated for universal national education. As a result of this statute, education became free, secular, and compulsory (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Prior to the passing of the Education Act, there were three forms of secondary providers operating in New Zealand. A small number of institutions were elite schools established by The New Zealand Company or Governor
Grey (Auckland Grammar and Wellington College), but entry to these schools was primarily by fees so the schools were socially selective and reflected the British public schooling influence (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). There were also a small number of Maori denominational boarding schools which began as missionary schools (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). Attempts were made to broaden the scope of secondary schooling in the early 20th century, however, the schools remained a means by which social privilege and differentiated educational experiences were reinforced.

Up until this point, Catholic and other religious based schools were considered private schools and not integrated into the State education system. Sweetman (2002) explains the history of private schooling in New Zealand, and considers the way in which government reforms have impacted on private schools. Private schools have generally only made up a small proportion of education providers (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). *The Education Act 1877* denied state assistance to those schools outside of the network until 1970 (Sweetman, 2002). Thus, it is argued that there was little sign that the right to equal education opportunities for the 12.5% of children who attended private schools was of much concern to the Department of Education (Sweetman, 2002). Attempts were made to develop a system of state education funding whereby perceived disadvantaged pupils benefited, while further grants to private schools deemed to be ‘over-privileged’ were avoided (Sweetman, 2002). After much debate, agreement was reached, and private schools initially received grants, equivalent to 20% of the salary bill of an equal size state school (Sweetman, 2002). This increase in aid was welcomed by Catholic schools. However, despite receiving increased aid, private schools were still considered separate entities to state schools.

Private schools could enter the state system in New Zealand in 1975, a move which is said to have reshaped the country’s educational landscape. The *Private Schools Conditional Integration Act* allowed for the conditional and voluntary “integration of private schools into the state system on a basis which would preserve and safeguard the ‘special character’ of the education they provided” (Sweetman, 2002, p. 15). Most integrated, former private schools are Catholic schools. Debates on the nature of integration are evident, with some dismissing the word as a ‘promotional slogan’ which concealed its real nature ‘segregation with privilege’ (Sweetman, 2002, p. 198). Since the introduction of this opportunity for integration, the number of private schools in New Zealand has reduced, thus resulting in a relatively small number of private schools embedded in the
current educational landscape of New Zealand. Sweetman (2002) suggests that non-Catholic private schools’ decisions to opt out of the integration process was critical to their success. After the integration of private schools, a more focused site of privilege and class emerged, and elite private schools now perceptually dominate the landscape of private education in New Zealand. Some of these schools were established in the early colonial period, however, most of those which remain today were founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Sweetman, 2002). There is a link between the English upper class and the elite private schools, as schools consciously attempted to recreate the English class system. Some private schools continue to do this in the present day, with material and symbolic emulations evident in building architecture and school uniforms. Private schools are often considered in the public imaginary to be private solely based on the high level of fees paid by parents for their children to attend. Indeed, private school fees are significantly more than state school fees. However, private schools are labelled as private and high fees charged, as outcomes of the history of the education system in New Zealand.

Since the 1930s, governments have commissioned multiple reports on the state of the education system and provided recommendations to develop a more equitable system. The Thomas Report (1944) introduced a common core curriculum, implemented so that all children received the same basic education irrespective of their perceived ability (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). The Currie Report, published in 1962 also reinforced that the overarching goal of the education system was equality of opportunity. However, despite these attempts, there was a growing base of evidence that the goal of education to develop a socially just society was not being met, but rather that schools were reproducing inequalities (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). In response, the fourth Labour Government (1984-1990), whose legacy is strongly associated with state-led neoliberalisation, released the policy *Tomorrows Schools* in 1988. This policy was implemented to transform the education system through decentralisation, market principles, introducing institutional autonomy, and emphasising parental choice and competition which turned educational institutions into schools of choice (Carpenter, 2012; Gordon & Whitty, 1997). Significantly, this plan also transferred the operating responsibility of schools from the National Ministry, to an elected Board of Trustees at each school. The state moved away from being the sole provider of national educational services, affording greater responsibility to local communities to deliver education through a charter – a contract between the community, the school, and the state (Marshall & Peters, 1990; Rata & Sullivan, 2009). However, the impact of structural
inequalities once again becomes evident as serious concerns around equity arose. Marshall and Peters (1990, p. 143) contend that through Tomorrow’s Schools, “education has been commodified in the guise of administrative change”. The success of this policy is questioned, as the competitive school system created increased disparities between schools in terms of the ethnic and socio-economic status of the students (Gordon, 2003; Ladd & Fiske, 2003; Lewis, 2003). The embedding of neoliberal ideologies in policies has had a strong effect on New Zealand and arguably influenced the reproduction of dominant hegemonic social categories. This brief history of the reforms to New Zealand’s education system emphasises the distinct relationship between politics, society, and education.

Schools in New Zealand fall under a number of categories, however, the majority of students attend either state, state integrated, or private schools. According to The Ministry of Education, “Private schools get some government funding but are mostly funded through charging parents school fees. They develop their own learning programmes and do not have to follow the national curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Private schools are different to state and state integrated schools in that they receive only very limited funding from the government and charge a set tuition fee per year. The current education landscape in New Zealand can be characterised as follows: New Zealand has 2,529 schools, most of which are publicly owned and funded by the government (Ministry of Education, 2017b). In 2016, there were 86 private schools in New Zealand, 40 of these are in Auckland (Ministry of Education, 2017b). In 2016, only 3.64% of students in New Zealand attended private schools, and just over half (52%) did so in Auckland (Ministry of Education, 2017d). Of the total number of school children in Auckland, 5.5% attend private schools (Ministry of Education, 2017d). These statistics emphasise the exclusive nature of private schools, which educate niche cohorts of New Zealand children.

4.3.2 Current perspectives on private schooling

Discussions of private schools often focus on the perceived educational advantages associated with these environments. Harrison (2004) explains that there is evidence in many different countries, including New Zealand which suggest that there is a private school advantage. Academically, students in private schools significantly outperform those in public schools in both math and science (Carpenter, 2012). However, the reasons for this advantage over public schools are often disputed. An effective school is said to exhibit several characteristics associated with success, including: high expectations; a safe and
orderly environment; strong leadership; caring and motivated teachers; a collegial atmosphere; regular evaluation of student progress; small class sizes; and the delivery of an academic oriented curriculum (Harrison, 2004). Autonomy is similarly said to contribute to effective education in private schools, as there is limited external control over personnel and curriculum policies (Harrison, 2004; Whitty, 1997). This links to the fact that private schools in New Zealand are not subject to the same levels of bureaucratic control by central government agencies.

Further, Carpenter (2012, p. 476) argues that “the characteristic and capital among individuals and families can have a compounding effect when pooled in the structure of a school of choice”. Thus, the school community is contended to provide invaluable social capital that can in turn encourage greater achievement by young people (Carpenter, 2012). The cost of sending children to private schools in New Zealand influences the range of students who attend, with resources and the home learning environment factors which influence positive learning outcomes. Therefore, private school advantages are not just about the staff and learning environment created in schools, but also the mix of students attending, and the opportunities they have outside school. Private schools are more likely to have these characteristics. However, it is important to note that many public schools can also have these features and provide children with a high quality education, arguably also contributing to the reproduction of privilege. For example, several prominent state schools in New Zealand such as Auckland Grammar (an all-boys school) portray a paradoxical privileged-yet-public character. This may be linked to the history of these particular schools which historically enrolled children of upper-class families. Contemporary school zones for schools such as Auckland Grammar also restrict the enrolment of students, with upper-class, affluent suburbs encompassed in the school zones which further accentuates affluence. While differences between private and public schools are contested, public perceptions of private schools clearly emphasise many of the ideas associated with an effective school. This has resulted in a particular image of private schools being constructed, however the extent to which this image is mirrored in reality is unknown due to limited research on private schools in New Zealand.

Historical reforms which devolved the power of choice to parents has had a significant impact on the education landscape in New Zealand. Brown (1990) explores waves of education reforms which are evident in the socio-historical development of British education, highlighting distinct similarities to trends evident in New Zealand. Of
interest to this discussion is the ‘third wave’ which describes the period of time where a child’s education was meant to conform to “the wealth and wishes of parents rather than the abilities and efforts of pupils” (Brown, 1990, p. 65). This idea is captured in the notion of parentocracy, suggesting that education systems have become explicitly driven by parental beliefs (Brown, 1990). Hattie (2015) explains how a language of choice is promoted, but it is often only the most affluent who can exercise their power to choose. Choices are often made using proxies of success, which is commonly translated into socio-economic status (Hattie, 2015). The effects of this practice are significant, with implications for schools and students. For example, Jones (2014) explains how thousands of students travel long distances to other parts of Auckland as many parents are not confident that their children will get the ‘right’ education, or gain access to the ‘right’ social networks by attending local schools. This practice of ‘choosing up’ has been considered ‘white flight’ and has implications for schools as concentrations of high-needs students develop and inequalities become further entrenched (Johnston, 2015). Further, parental choice is influenced by a number of factors, some of which can be linked to Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and habitus. The resources available to parents (capital) and their preferences influence the choices made about where their children will be educated. As Nash (2003) notes, the production and reproduction of habitus and capital occurs in the lives of children throughout their schooling. This equation can influence the quality of schooling (perceived and real) and therefore the education outcomes for all children, as those parents with more resources choose to send their children to particular schools and the cycle continues. This cycle emphasises the ways in which schools can be interpreted as central sites in the social geographies of everyday life for both children and parents (Panelli, 2004). The actions of parents in choosing to send their children to certain schools, combined with processes of marketisation, further entrench perceptions of these schools. This situation contributes to the widening gap between perceptions of the ‘best’ and ‘worst’ schools and ultimately influencing the perpetuation of parentocracy as a factor structuring the New Zealand education system, as well as the reproduction of privilege.

Perceptions of schools in Auckland are also influenced by popular media representations. Annually, *Metro*, a lifestyle magazine which focuses on issues facing Auckland, produces a feature on the ‘Best Schools in Auckland’, ranking every high school based on educational achievement. University entrance is a valuable variable to examine when comparing schools’ student achievement as an appropriate pass level has been agreed
upon across different education programmes including NCEA, Cambridge (CIE) and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Table 4.1 lists the top ten schools in Auckland based on Metro’s University Entrance pass rate data averaged over the years 2012-2016. Based on this data, private schools nurture significant academic success for their students. However, these types of statistics need to be treated with caution, as academic achievement is not the only factor that should be considered when determining the quality of a school (Wilson, 2014). Rankings, using the same University entrance statistic, weighted relative to the school’s decile, paint a very different picture of school’s academic performance. In previous Metro articles, schools were ranked according to the academic success and decile, however, this is no longer part of Metro’s publication. The analysis presented by Wilson (2012) shows that private schools do not feature in the top 20 schools when considering University Entrance pass rates relative to school decile. These statistics of educational achievement highlight the complexity of the education landscape in Auckland.

Table 4.1: University Entrance pass rates in Auckland (weighted average 2012-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Decile</th>
<th>Education programmes offered</th>
<th>University Entrance (4 year average 2009-2012) % all school leavers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Cuthbert’s College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, IB</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACG Parnell</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, CIE</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan School for Girls</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, IB</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland International College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, IB</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen School</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, IB</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Kentigern College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, IB</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACG Senior College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, CIE</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>NCEA, CIE</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baradene College</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macleans College</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>NCEA, CIE</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCEA: National Certificate of Educational Achievement  
IB: International Baccalaureate  
CIE: Cambridge International Examination  

Source: Zwart (2017)

Commentaries featured alongside Metro’s statistical analysis of Auckland schools’ educational achievement data provide interesting insights. Debates around public and
private schooling are often refuelled when the articles are published. For example, it was noted in 2012 that “Aucklanders worry obsessively about all this (what makes a good school, where to send a child to school)…and a lot of the time that worry comes down to a single question: are we failing our kids if we don’t send them to a private school?” (Wilson, 2012, p. 44). Links between the socio-economic deprivation of an area, and school attendance are also noted: “kids from wealthy upper-middle-class homes are likely to do better than kids from poor homes. Private school students in Auckland are likely to come from Epsom, Remuera, Parnell and Mt Eden: the grammar zone” (Wilson, 2011, p. 56).

Despite Grammar schools (Auckland Grammar, Auckland Girls Grammar and Epsom Girls Grammar) being amongst the top-rated schools in Metro’s analysis, it is also evident that many students living in the ‘zone’ travel to private schools. This could be linked to many factors, including their parents being alumni of private schools, the overall allure of sending children to a prestigious private school, and scholarship opportunities. However, as Wilson (2011) acknowledges, academic achievement should not be among the reasons parents living in the grammar zone choose private schools. Therefore, while differences in the educational achievement of private schools and the top state and state integrated schools are negligible, private schools are perceived to provide a better education than state and state integrated schools. Of course, not everybody has this perception, but it is common and affects the current educational landscape which reflects the socio-economic gradients evident in Auckland’s social structure.

Education is arguably one of the most significant factors which influences the nature and structure of a nation’s social fabric. The previous discussion has focused on formal education systems in New Zealand. However, it is also acknowledged that education, and the acquisition of knowledge to help navigate the social world can also be experienced through many different vehicles. For example, parents, siblings, extended family, friends, local communities, and the media also play a critical role in educating young people. Lewis (2003) notes that schooling is too important to devolve all power to the market, thus neo-liberal states such as New Zealand continue to fund all schools and exert power over what they can do. Differences in control and funding of different types of schools in New Zealand have evolved since the state recognised the importance of education. Thus, cycles of reform implemented to alter the New Zealand education system have culminated to produce the current education landscape. State and state integrated schools dominate the education system numerically, while private schools are widely
recognised as elite landscapes where a much smaller number of children are educated. The process of determining which school children attend is shaped by many different factors, including parent’s education experiences, the geographic area of residence, the social status of parents, children’s abilities, and parents’ knowledge of schools. Public perceptions of schools are often based on inaccurate assumptions related to school decile, and elitist generalisations about private schools influence the perpetuation of stereotypes. This further reinforces the perceived gap between state and private schools, based on the quality of education provided. With understandings of private schools often based on anecdotes, assumptions, and perceptions, there is considerable scope to explore the ways that education at elite private schools provides a critical foundation for young people’s lives.

4.4 Summary

Examining the social history of a place provides important insights into current social relations and structures. The idea of New Zealand being a classless society has roots in settler colonialism and has been perpetuated as part of the national psyche. However, this idea, while popular, is also widely regarded as a myth. Class is an important axis of privilege, though the language of socio-economic status dominates in New Zealand. Avoiding notions of class is part of the perpetuation of the myth of New Zealand as a classless society. Linked to New Zealand’s national identity are strong connotations of egalitarianism and the notion of a level playing field. Yet, the realities of New Zealand social structures signal a strong hierarchical organisation. Inequalities associated with health, housing, income, and education emphasise the widening gap between the poorest and wealthiest New Zealanders. While inequalities are often discussed, conversations and debates often focus on those who are disadvantaged. Meanwhile, examining and discussing the notion of privilege is very rare. Privilege is indeed an influential and visible social dynamic which manifests in people and places, yet the effects on everyday life in New Zealand are poorly understood. Rather than explicitly marking privilege, privilege has become ingrained in society through coded signifiers, including settler culture, whiteness, and education. By examining these elements, the unmarked but significant effects of privilege on the social fabric can be denaturalised.

The types of schools embedded within the New Zealand education system and the proportions of children attending state, state-integrated, and private schools reflect the trajectory of educational reforms, and arguably reflect wider power relationships which
structure society. Thus, schools play an important role in the reproduction of social relations and hegemonic identities such as privilege. Despite egalitarian ideals, educational attainment in New Zealand is largely determined by socio-economic class position (Rata & Sullivan, 2009). This results in a contradiction between ideals and reality; while the ideal of education is to improve life chances for all children, the reality is that education is also a means for the reproduction of inequality. For example, private schools in New Zealand receive modest government subsidies, but significant tuition fees are still necessary. This means that some families are priced out of the private school market (Carpenter, 2012). As Collins and Coleman (2008) indicate, the organisation of school space is implicated in issues of power and the reproduction of preferred identities, thus emphasising the ways in which schools have considerable social and political significance. By working with young people who attend private schools to better understand the influence of systems of privilege, the nuances of children’s geographies and realities of growing up in New Zealand can be examined. This is a first step towards a wider and more critical discussion of the reality and discourses of privilege in the New Zealand context.
Doing research with young people in elite spaces

Young people are no longer regarded as passive subjects to be researched, but rather active participants in the research process. Drawing on the fundamental principles of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach, this research takes the perspective that young people are a diverse group, that childhood is a social/cultural construction, and that young people are experts on their own lives. When undertaking research with young people it is important to consider the range of skills and capabilities they bring, whilst not undermining their agency. It is also important to reflexively consider researcher positionality as this shapes the motivation and vision for the research, as well as the outcomes and interpretations of research material. This chapter provides a textual account of the research process. Firstly, building on the personal anecdote rationalising the motivation for the research outlined in the introduction, challenges associated with researcher positionality are outlined. Secondly, the methodological approaches employed in research with young people, as well as those used to explore privilege in elite spaces are discussed. Lastly, a multi-method research design was developed for this thesis to gain a thorough understanding of the everyday experiences of privately educated young people within and beyond the school gates. Accounts of each method used, and the issues encountered along the research journey are discussed, including recruitment, sampling, engagement, and analysis practices.
5.1 Researcher positionality

Embarking on research with young people attending elite private schools posed some challenges. The privileged position of the young people participating in this research is not one that I can claim. I did not attend an elite private school, and outside of the school gates neither did I experience the same privileged upbringing of many of the participants. On hearing stories of my childhood, many would suggest that indeed it was privileged. However, my experiences are in no way in the same realm as the participants. I have a less privileged background than my research population, but I am more privileged than many other young people in Auckland. The importance of education to social identity was emphasised when I first met with members of the management team at each participating school. I was always asked whether I had attended a private school, with the question ‘Where did you go to school?’ always following when I responded that I had not attended an elite or private school. Expressions of surprise and interest were shown when I mentioned the name of the high school I attended (a decile 1, state school in South Auckland). Interestingly, staff were quick to specify how key senior management team members and teachers (often including themselves) had come to work at their school from relatively low decile state schools.

In contrast, participants did not ask whether I had been to a private school. In preparing for the focus groups, I had considered what my response would be if they were to ask. I concluded that I would tell them that I attended a state high school in South Auckland, as there is no benefit in denying this fact. Reflecting on the focus groups, I wonder what the young people did think of me and whether they assumed, perhaps based on my visual appearance and the fact that I was doing research in an elite private school context, that I had attended a school like theirs. I also reflect on whether this assumption had any effect on the data collected – did the participants feel more comfortable discussing their experiences because they thought I was like them? Did they brush over details that they thought I would understand and recognise because they thought I was like them? From one perspective, my schooling experience and social position allows me to see signs of wealth and recognise the privileges that seem largely normal to participants, although I recognise that I cannot be fully immersed in these social settings for age and socio-economic differences.
5.2 Doing research with young people

During the past few decades, there has been an evident shift in approaches used when doing research with young people. There has been a shift to view children as the subject of research, acknowledging that young people are active agents in the world and have salient contributions to make. Early studies on issues concerning children from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology have been interpreted as research which treated children as objects rather than subjects (Greene & Hogan, 2005). Children’s views were often explored through adult proxies who claimed to speak for children. For example, Bowlby’s (1944) study of juvenile crime involved interviews with mothers and children, as well testing children’s intelligence and emotional attitudes. While there were acknowledged limitations of this research, the study’s methodology is symptomatic of psychological research with children in the mid-20th century in that the agency children bring to everyday situations was ignored (Mason & Hood, 2011). Oakley (1994, p. 25) notes that “the idea that children can constitute meaningful research data conflicts with adultist views of children as less than competent to make sense of the adult world”. Recently, though there have been moves within research communities to engage with children, resulting in more nuanced understandings of the emplaced experiences of children and young people.

Aries’ (1962) classic study is argued by Barker and Weller (2003) to signal the beginning of changing approaches. As Hopkins (2010) notes, it is important to hear from young people, and not merely their adult proxies to foster enhanced understandings of young people’s perspectives. The emergence of a greater appreciation and articulation of children’s rights, notably through the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has influenced this shift in research practice. Interpretations of this convention have fostered a realisation that young people have a right to have their voices heard, and be listened to, while services and facilities provided for them are designed, implemented, and managed with young people in mind (Darbyshire et al., 2005). This reorientation has prompted researchers to explore ways to actively and meaningfully engage young people. Valuing children’s perspectives and seeking to understand their lived experiences motivates researchers to explore further how young people understand and navigate daily life.
Adopting mixed-methods, participatory, and qualitative approaches is a common strategy amongst children’s geographers to capture the complexity and situatedness of young people’s lives and experiences as social actors (Hemming, 2008; Kesby, 2007). Moves to use multi-methods are not unique to children’s geographies. However, Kesby (2007) notes that those who do research with children are particularly aware of the complexity of young people’s lives. Further, using a multi-method approach when conducting research with children provides complementary insights that may not have been uncovered if only a single method was employed (Darbyshire et al., 2005). Cele (2006), for example, notes that the methods used to involve children in research need to bridge the social distance between adults and children so that children can communicate their experience. A collection of research methods have become popular in children’s geographies research, extending from re-invented traditional methods such as focus groups, surveys, observations, ethnography, and interviews, through to more novel methods involving photography, diaries, child-led interviews, drawings, and videos (Anderson & Jones, 2009; Cutter-MacKenzie et al., 2013; Horton and Kraftl, 2006b; Mitchell et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2002; Pyyry, 2015; Punch, 2001, 2002; Walshe, 2013; Woodyer, 2008). Rather than differentiating research methods on the basis of whether the methods are appropriate for adults or for children, Tisdall et al. (2009) suggest that it is more useful to think about the particular children involved in the research. For instance, many researchers seek to make research activities more ‘child-friendly,’ or ‘child centred.’ This does not dismiss the ability of young people to participate in research, but is simply an attempt to make research methodologies more suitable to young people’s abilities. Taking principles of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach as a foundation of this thesis, the adoption of a mixed methods approach, incorporating methods which actively engage young people’s voices is critical. Implementing this approach also allows for acknowledgment that an individual’s account varies with context, which is critical for this research examining the experiences of young people in elite, privileged spaces.

5.3 Researching privilege

It is widely contended that privilege is invisible to those who are privileged, which makes studying privilege a difficult task. Further, those who are privileged often feel uncomfortable discussing aspects of their lives which grant them privileges not experienced by others. This is particularly relevant in New Zealand, where the myth of a
classless, egalitarian society dominates. Researching elites thus poses different challenges to those encountered when ‘studying down’ (Desmond, 2004; England, 2002). McIntosh (2012, p. 204) suggests that a golden rule when researching privilege is “do not ask respondents anything you would have trouble answering yourself with the fullness of your experience”. Contributions focused on methodology associated with studying up have been limited, which arguably further entrenches the elite, mythical status of privileged groups. Early research (see, for example, Thomas, 1993, Ostrander, 1993) tended to emphasise perceptions of negative attributes of elite populations including hostility and exclusivity. However, as Aguiar (2012) notes, obstacles to access pose a challenge, but they should not provide an excuse to avoid conducting research with elite populations.

Studying up literature often focuses on research with adults in elite social positions, particularly, those working in business and political spaces. This research with young people attending elite private schools poses a complex situation in terms of ‘studying up and down’. Complexity arises when attempting to prioritise which element of the participant’s identity is regarded as the most prominent in the research. The participants have been chosen because they are young people and because they attend an elite private school – neither characteristic is more or less important than the other. My experiences therefore challenge a simple reading of the phrase ‘studying up’ which is often referred to when studying elites in the social sciences (see also, Gaztambide-Fernandez & Howard, 2012). Firstly, the young people attend elite private schools. From the perspective of the researcher, this is regarded as ‘studying up’ given their education experiences. Furthermore, research participants are 13-15 years old, which could be considered ‘studying down’ from the perspective of power imbalances between the researcher and participants. Yet, critiques of essentialised notions of chronological age provide an alternative perspective to this argument. Children are younger in terms of chronological age, but the experiences of participants go beyond the experiences of many adults. Reflecting on the positionality of researchers and participants it critical to enabling the implementation of effective methodological frameworks. This research values young people’s knowledge and the contributions they can make to understanding the enactment of social structures.

While academic research interest in privilege is relatively recent, distinct methodological trends have emerged. Given the hidden and unmarked nature of privilege, empirical research is often conducted in settings regarded as privileged, with a particular
focus on elite schools. Howard and Kenway (2015) note that engagement with methodological issues and inventiveness in studies of elites and elite education is often superficial. There are some reflections on methodology (for example, Howard et al., 2014; Khan, 2011), but these are rare, particularly in educational research. Ethnography and interviews are conventionally used (see, for example, Howard, 2008; Khan, 2011), however, less conventional methods are also gaining prominence. For example, Brooks and Waters (2015) analysed elite schools’ websites using content analysis techniques. Other less conventional methods being used include non-traditional ethnographic approaches such as sensory and virtual ethnography, as well as photography, videos, and collaborative action research (see, for example, Fahey et al., 2015). The range of methods being used in privilege studies helps to capture the complexity of systems of privilege, and have been incorporated into the mixed method framework utilised in this thesis.

5.4 Examining privileged childhoods: A mixed methods approach

To understand the experiences of young people attending elite schools, I developed a mixed methods approach, incorporating focus groups, online dialogic diaries, and thematic analysis of websites, news and social media. The research process, from the point where schools agreed to participate is illustrated in Figure 5.1. Each phase of the process offered opportunities for innovation as well as challenges which shaped the data collected. Ontologically, young people are regarded as competent agents whose everyday experiences are reciprocally influenced by wider social dynamics and processes. Ultimately, young people are viewed as experts in their own lives, and therefore, their voices form the basis of this research. It is often thought that adults understand the lives of children, because everybody was a child once. However, young people growing up in the 21st century can provide unique insights into their everyday lived realities, which adults may not be able to fully comprehend. This is particularly the case in this research, where I do not have the same childhood experiences as participants. Comprehending their lived realities, without having ‘walked in their shoes’, is impossible without interacting and engaging with young people directly.
5.4.1 Research sample

Consensus on what constitutes an elite school is rare (Fahey et al., 2015). Elite private schools are usually characterised as exclusive, well-resourced, with strong leadership and successful academic, sports, and arts programmes. The built environment also reflects this prestige. Modern architecture and facilities stand alongside historic buildings and accents of tradition strongly embraced through school uniforms and celebratory ceremonies in these schools. These markers of distinction signify the elite status of private education which is also reinforced through the high costs associated with sending children to private schools in New Zealand. Students who attend these schools are often from wealthy families, including high profile social, business, cultural, political, and sporting families. Based on these characteristics, it can be argued that private schools are not the only schools that can be classified as elite schools. There are notable state schools which also fit this description. However, the rationale to focus on elite private schools in
this research is that relative socio-economic privilege can be accessed through engagement with young people who attend elite private schools. These schools provide a location to meet those children most likely to be socio-economically privileged due to family circumstances. It is acknowledged that young people attend elite private schools under a range of circumstances, including those on full scholarship. Scholarship students’ participation in this research (two young people openly revealed that they attended school on scholarship/sponsorship) was not problematic, but rather added a further layer to the understanding of young people whose everyday lives, at least during the school day, are embedded in a privileged setting.

The key criteria for participants’ involvement in this research was that they attended an elite private school in Auckland. Recruiting participants through schools was identified as the most direct approach, however, this was reliant on representatives of schools being willing to participate. To gauge schools’ interest in participating in the research, letters were sent to members of Senior Management Teams at four elite private schools in Auckland. After follow-up emails and phone calls, two schools agreed to meet to discuss the research and confirm their participation. School Principals signed a consent form to say that they agree that the research could be undertaken with enrolled students, on the school grounds. To preserve the anonymity of schools and participants, the schools will simply be referred to as School A & B in this thesis. Both schools are in the Auckland region and have relatively long and prestigious histories of providing high quality education to Auckland’s elite population. Due to the limited number of elite private schools in Auckland, the provision of any further details describing the geographical location, or characteristics of the schools would allow the schools to be identified.

Following approval for this research from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, recruitment of participants began and selected students were provided with an information pack. The process of delivery, distribution, and collection of consent forms from students volunteering to participate in the research varied at each school. The research process, from initial contact with each school, through to the conducting of focus groups was deliberately designed as a flexible process to ensure that normal school activities were not disrupted. At School A, information packs were distributed to all Year 9 students. Students gathered in the school’s lecture theatre where I provided a brief presentation to introduce the research and outline what the students’ participation would involve. Students who were willing to participate, and whose parents
agreed to allow them to participate, then returned the signed assent and consent forms to school or to the researcher directly via email. At School B, two Year 9, and two Year 10 social science classes received the information packs. As at School A, students who agreed to participate returned the consent forms to school in the envelope provided, or directly to the researcher via email. Approximately 240 students (School A = 140; School B = 100) were given an information pack containing Participant Information Sheets (for parents and students); Parent Consent Form; Participant Assent Form, and a covering letter. Parental consent was required as participants are under 16 years of age. However, it is also important to ensure that young people are advised of the process that was to be followed, thus they all signed an assent form to signal that they were willing to volunteer to participate in the research and understood what they would be doing. Recruiting willing participants was a significant challenge of this research. This is reflected in the number of participants. After following up with each school, there were a total of 31 participants (School A = 5; School B = 26). The significant imbalance was not an issue in this research as I was not focused on the specific experiences at each school, but the key factor was that participants attended an elite private school. Approaching another school was considered, but I decided that, given the in-depth methods being used, sufficient data could be collected.

5.4.2 Focus groups

The first phase of the data collection involved focus groups. Focus group methodology was initially only used in market research settings, however, it became a notable methodology in geography from the 1980s (Secor, 2009). Krueger (1994, p. 6) explains that a focus group is “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment”. As well as providing insight into participants’ opinions, focus groups can facilitate access to tacit and experiential knowledge by allowing researchers to explore how people come to know their worlds and how such interpretations shape their actions (Hopkins, 2007). Health psychology and education research commonly employ focus groups, yet children’s geographers have also used the method with great success (see for example, Dixey et al., 2001; Heary & Hennessy, 2002; Valentine et al., 2001). Focus groups are considered a particularly useful method for engaging with children as they replicate the group settings children experience in the classroom, and acknowledge that the children are experts (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Children should not feel that they are being questioned by an
adult, but instead sharing experiences with peers. These factors were key rationales for using focus groups as part of this research with young people at elite private schools.

Careful planning for focus groups is critical as physical, temporal, social, cultural, psychological, and environmental factors influence group behaviour, and therefore focus group dynamics and outcomes (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). In terms of the number of participants in each focus group, there is a consensus that having 5-8 participants is optimal when undertaking focus groups with young people (Greene & Hogan, 2005). It is also widely noted that focus groups should be made up of homogenous people, with common characteristics and levels of understanding of a topic (Litosseliti, 2003; Punch, 2002). The focus groups in this research ranged in size from 3-9 participants, with numbers varying depending on how many students in each class agreed to participate and whether students were at school on the day of the focus group. Restricting the age range of participants is also shown to increase the cohesion of the group and facilitate discussion (Stewart & Shamadasani, 2015). Focus group participants were all 13-15 years old. The groups were also single-sex as this is how the classes are organised at each school. Some suggest that participants should be ‘strangers,’ while many researchers prefer to work with groups where participants know each other to ensure participants are comfortable. Participants in each focus group at School B were from the same class, and while those at School A were not from the same class, they all knew each other. Arguably, children feel more comfortable being with other children they know and when they outnumber adult researchers.

Critical reflection on the use of focus groups highlights that the location of the focus group is an important consideration as this can affect the comfort of the participants and the positioning of the researcher (Secor, 2009). Focus groups were held in meeting rooms on each school campus. Furniture was arranged so that all participants were sitting in a group and could interact and engage with each other during the activities. Each focus group lasted for 90min, and given the length of the focus group, refreshments were provided at the midway point. Due to the sample of students attending School A all being from different classes, each child was given permission to not attend two consecutive timetabled classes. However, at School B, to minimise disruption to timetabled classes, focus groups were composed of students from the same classes, and were given permission to miss two social studies classes. This meant that some focus groups were interrupted by morning breaks, or half the focus group was completed the following day in one case. These differences did not impact responses, and the flexibility built into the focus group plans meant that there
were two distinct ‘blocks’ of activities which could be facilitated. As Darbyshire et al. (2005) acknowledge, flexibility is not methodologically sloppy, but an important aspect of developing an effective research relationship with young people.

Each group of participants took part in two separate focus groups (before and after the online dialogic diaries). This approach had several benefits in that the participants got to know the research and felt comfortable engaging with the online dialogic diary methodology, as well as providing an opportunity to further discuss key ideas in light of the diaries produced. The plans for each session are outlined in Table 5.1 (and more specific details of each activity/question route are provided in Appendix A). The focus groups involved both questions and interactive activities. Confidentiality is a significant ethical concern as focus groups, by the very nature of the activity, can pose potential issues. Ground rules for the focus groups were discussed at the beginning of each session, with participants asked not to discuss the conversation outside of the focus group. Creating a comfortable and safe environment for young people to voice their opinions and discuss their experiences was key to the focus group being an effective method in this research.

Table 5.1: Focus group plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction to researcher, project and focus group</td>
<td>1. Introduction and update on project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participant introductions</td>
<td>2. Icebreaker – If you could…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Who Am I? (Worksheets and discussions)</td>
<td>3. My Auckland: Mental Map Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Discussion – child led questions (written) and visual vignettes.</td>
<td>4. Brainstorming activity and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Moving on: explaining diary exercise and how to use the website</td>
<td>5. Final discussion (Prompt set 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questioning route employed in focus groups is critical to achieving quality insights from participants. As Krueger (1994, p. 53) notes, “quality answers are directly related to quality questions”. In focus groups with children, it is important to tailor questions to children’s level of understanding, but they should not be too simple as to come across as discriminating or underestimating young people’s abilities to articulate their ideas (Hennessy & Heary, 2005; Punch, 2002). Questions in the focus group were designed to prompt discussion around childhood experiences and everyday lived realities, with
participants’ personal experiences, attitudes, and values contributing to responses. The questions were written on cards and placed in an envelope, with participants invited to read the questions aloud. Secor (2009) suggests that conversations in a focus group setting can decentre the researcher and destabilise unequal power relations inherent to the research process. By allowing young people to read the questions, this also went some way to disrupting unequal power relations between researcher and participants. The extent to which young people are being questioned by an adult was minimised as much as possible to create a sense of sharing experiences with a group of peers. Photo vignettes were also used in place of written questions as prompts for discussion. Leonard and McKnight (2015) explain that photos are useful for exploring the everyday and seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life, with prompted discussions providing insights that might otherwise remain hidden and unspoken. The photo vignettes were comprised of collages of images, sourced from the internet and the researcher’s own photos, focused on key themes such as mobility, leisure, consumption, food, education, travel destinations, and technology. Participants were initially shown the collages which immediately induced discussion of what was in the images. If silences materialised, which was not often, a number of questions (outlined in Appendix A) were used to prompt discussion about the vignettes. The prompts and questions were used to keep discussions on track, but the ultimate focus group narrative emerged from the young people’s contributions and responses.

Alongside the questions and photos, interactive activities were also incorporated. By focusing on children’s experiences these focus groups can also be regarded as experiential. Fern (2001) explains that experiential focus group tasks can be applied to allow participants to share life experiences; explore shared attitudes, preferences, intentions and behaviours; and to discuss language and knowledge. The interactive activities developed as part of this research design include worksheets, brainstorming, and drawing (further details are outlined in Appendix A). Creative activities were used to make the research more enjoyable and cater to diversity (Colucci, 2007). Given the age of participants, it was important to ensure that their concentration and interest was maintained and that they felt confident contributing to the discussion. The mapping exercise was particularly effective and involved participants drawing a mental map to the prompt ‘My Auckland’. Maps are described as human constructions, which encode messages and therefore provide a medium for participants to express their ideas and understandings (Lehman-Frisch et al., 2012). However, just as the real world cannot be reproduced on a
map sheet, the complexity of images and senses storied in memories cannot all be rendered onto paper for the external observer to ‘read’ (Halseth & Doddridge, 2000). This limitation reinforces the need to engage in discussions to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their drawings. The results of all activities were used as discussion prompts and provided a means to involve all participants. The ensuing discussions also provided participants the opportunity to give more detail than would be possible in a drawing or writing on a post-it note. After each interactive activity, the outcome, whether visual or written, was discussed to avoid inaccurate interpretations during analysis.

The main purpose of the focus groups was to provide a space for young people to discuss and articulate, in their own words, their perceptions, experiences, and understandings of their everyday lived realities. The use of interactive activities, alongside questions and discussions, provided different avenues for young people to participate and feel part of the group. The focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed to produce transcripts that sat alongside the worksheets and other visual material created during the activities. The resulting data set included visual and written material, with each activity providing insights which were distinct but complementary. The focus groups were effective in gathering material about a range of experiences and place based knowledge, with a comfortable, safe environment created. The visual and verbal vignettes and prompts were designed to explore both the banal and spectacular aspects of everyday life. They provided insights into young people’s presentation of self, their relationships, aspirations, consumption habits, role models, the spaces in which everyday life plays out, and their understanding of the world around them. There were also apparent limitations to the focus groups. For instance, each focus group had different numbers of participants depending on which students were at school on the day. Continuity of participants between the first and second focus group was also interrupted. In other words, some students who participated in focus group 1 were not present in focus group 2 and vice versa. This was not an issue in terms of numbers, but it means that not all participants contributed to each activity. While the focus groups provided a solid data set, further material was collected during the second phase of data collection using online dialogic diaries which is now discussed.

5.4.3 Online dialogic diaries

The second key method used in this research was online dialogic diaries. Diaries are a well explored and utilised qualitative research method, with Bolger et al. (2003, p.
explaining that diaries offer “a unique window on human phenomenology”. Diaries have been used to collect data in a range of settings, from exploring violence in the lives of South African women (Meth, 2003), through to the management of chronic health problems with older adults (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Diaries have also been used in research with children, to explore children’s journeys to school (Murray, 2009), the lives of street children (Young & Barrett, 2001), and childhood in rural Bolivia (Punch, 2001). Meth (2003) highlights how diaries are often used in conjunction with other methods and there is evidence that this approach is intellectually productive. Solicited diaries, where an account is produced by a research participant at the request of the researcher (Meth, 2003) were employed in this research. This more qualitative approach is used to record participants’ thoughts, feelings, views, and experiences and provide a researcher a window into individuals’ lives.

Taking the idea of using diaries as a medium for collecting data with children, Walshe (2013) implemented dialogic diaries to explore young people’s understandings of sustainable development. In this case, the diaries were a pedagogical tool with which to develop students’ understandings of a concept, but were at the same time also a research method to explore the nature of their geographical understanding. The use of dialogic diaries is also evident in the early work of Ghaye (1986, 1989 cited in Walshe, 2013), however, there appears to be little other research, or reporting of research which uses dialogic diaries. The basic premise is that the participants complete a diary entry, which the researcher then responds to with further comments, initiating dialogue (Walshe, 2013). Knowledge about children is not something that exists independently, but rather something that researchers and children create together through interaction. Thus, it is important that research methods do not create a ‘one-way tunnel’ between the researcher and participant, in which the participant is simply regarded as the source of information. Instead, the interaction between the participant and researcher helps to develop new knowledge. Recognition of the potential dialogue that could emerge through the diaries promoted the use of dialogic diaries in this thesis.

Given the group of young people involved in the research and the critical role that technology plays in everyday life, an opportunity for innovation was identified. Taking the use of diaries one step further, an online platform was used for the participants to write their journal entries, rather than asking them to complete them by hand. This medium was appropriate in the case of this research with privately educated young people as students
participating are required to have their own personal laptop or tablet for daily use at school. Internet-mediated research is a relatively new approach to conducting primary and secondary research, but the opportunities are many and varied (Hewson et al., 2003). Children’s geographies is one arena in which the uptake of these technologies has been considerable, and has resulted in enhanced understandings of children’s use of space (Ergler et al., 2016). For example, Pooley et al. (2010) used cameras, GPS tracking technologies, and text messaging services embedded in a mobile phone provided to each participant to explore the complexity of school journeys. These approaches can be distinguished from another cluster of methodologies more closely aligned with digital online spaces. For example, traditional research approaches such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observation have been translated into online spaces (Hewson, 2014). Hewson (2014) suggests these approaches can be considered ‘internet-mediated research.’ Thus, the internet can not only be identified as a source of data itself if already existing information is collected and analysed, but it can also be a tool and medium for the collection of new data (Dwyer & Davies, 2009; Markham, 2008). In the first case, approaches include online observation and analysis of existing webpages such as blogs, social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, and videos on YouTube (de Jong, 2015; Hookway 2008; Olive, 2013). When the internet is used as a tool to collect new data specifically for a particular study, focus groups, interviews, surveys, ethnography, and diaries can be conducted in online spaces (see, for example, Madge & O’Connor, 2005; Williams, 2007). It is this process of conducting internet mediated research, whereby an online space is used to collect data for this research, which is central to the online dialogic diary method.

In light of the technical requirements, methodological practicalities, and ethical concerns associated with this method, an online platform was designed specifically for this research activity. A website was developed by IT staff using a Wordpress platform which was hosted on a University of Auckland server. An example of the interface of the dialogic diaries website is shown in Figure 5.2. Each participant was given a unique username and password to log into the website where they would complete one diary entry per week for five weeks. A summary of the number of diaries submitted (from 31 participants) each week is presented in Figure 5.3. Retention rates were relatively high, although there is evidence of research fatigue as the weeks went by. Each week participants were given a prompt to respond to (see Figure 5.4). Reflecting on these prompts, most participants produced informative responses and interpreted the prompts as they were intended. In terms
of the dialogic component of the diary exercise, success in generating conversation was limited. I commented on every diary entry submitted, and in a few instances, young people responded to the comment. Interaction between the participant and researcher on a post was limited to one comment and a response. In the vast majority of cases, however, there was no response to the researcher’s comments. This result means that the claim of dialogic diaries enhancing interaction between participant and researcher did not materialise as expected. It is difficult to speculate on why dialogue was limited, particularly as participants seemed very engaged in the research. This is a limitation of the study, and more work to refine the process is required to ensure that dialogue occurs.

**Figure 5.2:** Snapshot of online platform for dialogic diaries and descriptions of functions

1. Participants write a title for their diary entry, or if researcher prompted, they can use the prompt as the title.
2. The text and any photos included appear here – the participant types their entry into a box similar to the comment box (5).
3. The researcher’s response to the entry is posted under the original entry and only visible to the participant and the researcher.
4. If the participant wants to respond to the researcher’s comment, they push reply and can enter text in the comment box (5).
Figure 5.3: Diary response rates

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Figure 5.4: Dialogic diary prompts

**Week 1**: If you had to write an autobiography (a story written about your life, by you), how would you tell your life story so far to a young person in another country?

**Week 2**: Write a diary entry which explains the best holiday you have ever been on. Imagine the audience is someone who has never been to the place you travelled to. Why was it the best holiday? Where did you go? Who did you go with?

**Week 3**:
1. Write about whatever interests you  
2. Respond to the following prompt: You have become friends with a young person in an overseas country and they are interested in what you do after school. Write a short story to explain to the person what you do after school and in your spare time.

**Week 4**: You want to surprise your family with dinner to celebrate their birthdays. What would you do? Where would you go?

**Week 5**: My dreams and aspirations after high school are to…

Online research promises new possibilities for accessing participants, for eliciting meanings of places, and for exploring the articulation of online and offline experiences in everyday life. However, in the words of Lee et al. (2012, p. 5) “new methods throw up unexpected challenges and opportunities, and place old problems in a new light”. The risks of undertaking research online became a reality in this study. The diary phase of the research was going well until about two thirds of the way through the process, when I was made aware of a flaw in the website. The basic premise of the website, and a reason for deciding to design a specific website rather than use a pre-existing online platform, was that the site could be set up so only the participant and researcher could view diary posts. Unfortunately, it became apparent that there was an error with the coding of the commissioned website which meant that confidentiality was breached. This adverse ethical event prompted a range of responses on the part of the researcher, supervisors, institutions, and participants. Initially, I arranged for the website to be shut down while IT staff plugged the gap. All participants were informed of the issue via a letter approved by The University of Auckland, and given the opportunity to withdraw from the research. Two participants
decided to withdraw – one as a direct result of the website error, while the other participant’s reason for withdrawing is somewhat more ambiguous. Both schools agreed to continue their involvement in the research, and participants continued to complete the two remaining diary entries after being informed of the problem. However, the implications of the event extend beyond the research outcomes as I have discussed elsewhere (Sparks et al., 2016). Issues related to the ethics of care, researcher wellbeing, and institutional responses provide insights into the risks researchers need to be cognisant of when implementing online research methods. Overall, despite the leakage of data and interruption to the research process, the dialogic diaries complemented the focus group discussions and activities, and provided an additional means of data collection to help comprehend the complexity of young people’s everyday experiences and identities.

5.4.4 Thematic analysis of websites, news and social media

To supplement the data collected through the focus groups and online diaries, an analysis of the websites and promotional material of a selection of private schools in New Zealand was conducted. The sample consisted of 24 private schools across New Zealand (see Appendix C). While identifying characteristics of eliteness is challenging as discussed previously, the schools in the sample were chosen based on anecdotal reputation as well as school fees which are one of the key factors reinforcing the elite nature of these schools. The schools are primarily located in the main centres of Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, and Christchurch. Three strands of data were collected from school websites, social media sites, and news media articles. Each of the data sets collected were subject to thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning which help to characterise elite private schools in New Zealand. Coding of key themes was an inductive process, with categories derived during familiarisation and analysis of the data.

Every school in the sample had an extensive website, with key information presented to current and prospective families. Each website was surveyed, and the following elements of the website were saved: school prospectuses’, mission statements, school values, fees and admissions schemes, school magazines, scholarships, curriculum booklets (outlining subject and extracurricular activity options), uniforms, newsletters, alumni organisations, boarding, education outside the classroom programmes, sport, and school facilities. This information was collated and analysed thematically to identify key motifs, and similarities and differences between the online representations of schools. Both
visual and textual data were important, with the professional presentation of the websites contributing to the messages being conveyed in the text. As a multimedia platform, the images and videos uploaded to the websites were also valuable sources of information.

To gain further insight into the public presentation of elite private schools by the institutions themselves, social media platforms were also examined for those schools who had them. Most schools in the sample had extensive Facebook pages which were regularly updated. Posts for the 2016 calendar year were downloaded and saved before thematic analysis was also undertaken, identifying key themes which represent the focus of posts across schools. Some schools also engaged with other social media including Instagram and Twitter, but the posts were replicated and not as extensive as the Facebook feeds so were not analysed separately.

Until this point, data collected during this phase was designed, developed, and presented by the schools themselves. To add another dimension to the data, newspaper articles which focused on elite private schools were also collected. A Newstext database was searched using key words such as private schools, independent schools, and the schools’ names. This resulted in a large number of articles, which had to be filtered further before analysis. For example, school sports results are published weekly in newspapers around New Zealand but were not included in the sample. Instead, results were filtered and only those articles directly focused on the schools, or associated with activities and events at the schools were saved. This filtering resulted in a large, but manageable data set which provided insights into issues which do not necessarily place elite private schools in the positive light signalled by the websites and self-produced social media. School marketing materials are posted to websites and social media, but are also published in mainstream print media. To frame the collection of advertisements published in newspapers, dates of school open days were identified. Advertisements printed in newspapers during the two months prior to school open days in 2016 were collected and saved. These three strands of data provided material to explore the institutional dimensions of privilege, complementing the more personal data collected through focus groups and online dialogic diaries.

4.4.5 Data analysis: Beyond the spoken word

Broadly speaking, the analysis of data was inductive, with research materials used to develop broader ideas. A grounded theory approach was taken to analyse data collected.
Greig et al. (2007) explain that grounded theory is based on the idea that theory emerges from, or is grounded in the data. This approach was appropriate in the context of this research because all data collected, no matter whether it was in written or visual form could be analysed consistently. In practical terms, focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts uploaded, along with photos of the visual data to NVivo. This software provides a way to organise the different data sets and carry out the coding process. Confidentiality was maintained through the transcription, analysis, and dissemination of the research, with pseudonyms used for the names of participants and schools. Articles were read and also thematically coded to identify key themes which revealed characteristics of media representations of elite private schools. Data analysis occurred through coding all data up until the point of saturation where no new ideas or themes were emerging. The codes developed helped to identify broad conceptual themes that form the basis of the following chapters. Institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions of privilege, while not explicitly labelled as such by participants, can be unpacked and examined through young people’s narratives, the visual and written products of focus group activities, and the analysis of a collection of public material about elite private schools in New Zealand.

The focus groups and diaries allowed insight to be gained into the performance and embodiment of privilege at an individual level and in a group setting. The combination of methods was important as both verbal and non-verbal cues as well as written text were generated to be analysed. One of the key rationales for implementing focus groups is the opportunity for interaction between individuals and the potential for dynamic discussions to materialise. However, the presentation of data from focus groups is often focused on the spoken word and quotes which are transcribed. In this sense, the outcomes of research methodology are prioritised in analysis over the process and interactions which help generate the outcome. Denham and Onwuegbuzie (2013) contend that researchers have tended to pay limited attention to nonverbal communication data and the role this data plays in the meaning-making process. While words are privileged, they fit within a wider pattern of communication which incorporates non-verbal cues (Manusov & Patterson, 2006). Effective analysis of focus group data therefore goes beyond words, to consider actions, behaviour and interactions (Krueger, 1998). This includes gestures, facial expressions, attitudes (enthusiasm, withdrawn, engaged, distracted), voice inflection, and tone. These factors contribute to participants ‘performances’ in focus group dialogue and thus influence the data collected and should be considered in interpretation. Attention must also be paid
to the dynamic aspects of interaction within the group (Liamputtong, 2016). This means that what is not said, and the non-verbal cues participants embodied during discussions, can tell us as much as what is verbalised. Overall, neither verbal or nonverbal communication can be considered in isolation, but a complete analysis of focus group data will consider both forms and the way in which they fit together.

5.5 Summary

Research undertaken with young people, and to explore privilege, employs a range of methodologies which are appropriate in different contexts. Treating participants as experts in their own lives is critical to developing deeper understandings of the geographies of young people’s lives and the multiple geographies of privilege. This chapter has outlined the methodology used to understand the everyday experiences and encounters of young people who attend elite private schools in Auckland. This approach takes into account principles of the ‘new social studies of childhood’ approach. The approach may not be explicitly and specifically related to privilege, but it provides a tool to shape approaches used to speak with young people about privilege. Key social science methods of focus groups and diaries were adapted to align with the age group and topic being specified. Incorporating interactive activities into focus groups for this current research proved a useful way to allow young people opportunities to display their identity and explore their everyday experiences through different mediums and approaches. The methodological approach was discussed in conceptual and practical terms, highlighting opportunities, challenges, and limitations. Opportunities for innovation in research design offer exciting possibilities, but as evidenced by the data leakage, the risks and possibilities for disruption to the research process need to be acknowledged and dealt with accordingly should they materialise.

A mixed methods approach was developed to capture data on a wide array of everyday scenarios and experiences occurring in local, regional, national, and international contexts. Young people's mobilities, attitudes, behaviours, interests, consumption patterns, friendships, and political awareness, all came to be discussed in the focus groups and diary entries. The key voice in this research is intended to be that of the young people and the information gathered from publicly available sources is used to provide further context and craft an image of private school geographies in New Zealand. By developing this
imaginary, young people’s narratives and experiences can be spatially and temporally situated. The following chapters unpack the structural system of privilege enacted in place as it was discussed through young people’s narratives.
Institutional dimensions of privilege

Institutions are a critical dimension of systems of privilege which contribute to the reproduction of advantage and unearned entitlements. Within the context of understanding race, class, and gender oppression, Collins (1993) explains how the institutional dimension of oppression is represented by systematic relationships of domination and subordination structured through social institutions such as schools. Therefore, all forms of oppression such as racism and elitism are regarded as having concrete institutional locations (Collins, 1993). This understanding can be translated to institutional dimensions of privilege. A complex network of institutions, including the economy, media, education (particularly, elite private schools), and the state structure everyday experiences and are thus important channels for the reproduction of privilege. This chapter takes the perspective that an institution can be conceptualised as both organisations and patterns of behaviour regulated by social norms (Turner, 2006). Turner (2006) suggests that institutions should be “treated as maps by which to read social processes”. Referencing the spatiality of social difference highlights the importance of considering the dialectic relationship between society and space when examining the institutional dimensions of privilege. Unpacking systems of privilege which operate through and within social institutions is one way to make privilege visible and enhance understandings of how systems of privilege operate. In this way, elite private schools contribute to the multivalent institutional reproduction of privilege.
Elite private schools are situated within a complex network of institutions which contribute to the reproduction of privilege. While not every individual who attends a private school experiences all aspects of privilege, elite private schools tend to constitute “privileged developmental contexts” (Ballard et al., 2014, p. 5). As Koh and Kenway (2016) contend, it is difficult to disassociate privilege from elite schools. Privilege is expressed in elite schools in many ways, including the grand and expansive buildings, modern learning facilities, sporting prowess, legacy of notable alumni, extensive curricula, connections with elite universities and other institutions, and the high fees charged. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) identifies markers of elite boarding schools, including independence, a sophisticated curriculum, long institutional histories, geographical elitism, and lineages of famous alumni which can be applied to distinguish elite private schools. Elite schools can therefore be studied to explore how privilege is material and materialised, produced through an intricate array of practices (Koh & Kenway, 2016). The importance of elite private schools to the perpetuation of privilege highlights how space and place are central to its articulation. Drawing on geographical understandings of place, elite private schools can be described as “locations imbued with meaning that are sites of everyday practice” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 176). Therefore, working from the premise that institutions are key sites for the reproduction and performance of privilege, this chapter explores what these sites are like as places, and the meanings and practices embedded within them.

One way to explore the institutional dimensions of privilege is to explore online public representations of elite private schools. Analysing documents and websites provides insight into the institutional identity the schools are seeking to portray. In a ground-breaking study of school promotional material, Symes (1998) suggests that these materials are one way that schools engage in ‘image management’. As Wardman et al. (2010) suggest, school advertising and prospectuses are critical aspects of the symbolic architecture of educational institutions. Further, Kenway et al. (2017) explain that school promotional material and media representations are part of the choreographed practices of class-making produced and reproduced by elite schools. The visibility of these schools means the websites and promotional material are also tools that the public use to construct ideas of what elite private schools are like as places. Therefore, these promotional materials are significant in the era of neoliberal marketisation and privatisation in which parental choice shapes the educational landscape (Carlson & Wilson, 2016; Hooper, 2011; Lewis, 2003; McDonald et al., 2012). Material produced by the schools reinscribes the status and
prestige of the school, and contributes to the discursive constitution of childhood wellbeing (Drew et al., 2016). As Meadmore and Meadmore (2004, pg. 381) explain, “promotional materials in the public domain should not be dismissed or under-estimated. These texts make truth claims that are important in understanding the cultural politics of education”. These practices contribute to visual representations and narratives of the symbolic architecture and elite status of these schools. However, a distinction must be made between elite and elitist. Kenway and Langmead (2017) suggest that the schools need to be recognised as elite by current and potential families, but do not want to be recognised as such by those who do not benefit from them. In this way, a narrative of elite, but not elitist is reproduced and circulated to maintain a sense of superiority, but also imply a commonality of interest across social divides. Many tactics and factors are used to mark this distinction which is particularly significant in a New Zealand context where notions of egalitarianism are a popular ethic (Kenway & Langmead, 2017). Examining the ways in which this distinction is reproduced and cultivated through school websites and social media representations is central to this chapter on the institutional dimensions of privilege.

The first section of this chapter locates elite private schools in the educational landscape of New Zealand, highlighting key characteristics of the social, economic, and built elements of the schools which make them spaces of elite education. Secondly, the meanings, practices, and values ascribed to the schools are discussed. Key motifs, including preparing for the future, a well-balanced education, maximising potential, and community service are discussed. Spatial metaphors act as a thread between the different sections of the chapter, emphasising the importance of understanding elite private schools not just as physical spaces in the landscape, but also as places imbued with practices and meanings. This chapter argues that the institutional reproduction of privilege is multivalent, working through discursive practices that distinguish private schools as elite. There are general trends in the practices and initiatives which are prioritised to construct images of exclusivity, but these trends can be nuanced to highlight diversity within the category of elite private schools. The reproduction of privilege involves substantial institutional work which takes place in a complicated landscape where both disruptions and duplications of privilege and elite status are constructed. The schools portray an elite status, through discourses of exclusivity which pervade promotional and other materials. However, there also appears to be a conscious effort to actively seek to resist being perceived as elitist through the promotion of scholarships, diversity, and social justice ethics.
Alongside some of the responses from participants, the data presented in this chapter was collected through a thematic analysis of school websites, social media and newspaper articles. The websites of 24 schools (see Appendix C) were searched and relevant documents collected in November 2016 - January 2017. This sample includes, but does not identify the two schools whose students participated in the study as such. In particular, the school prospectuses, mission statements, values, fees and admission procedures, open day advertisements, and school magazines were analysed. News text searches, focusing on print media published in New Zealand in 2014-2016 also provided an array of articles and advertisements which reinforce key aspects of the institutional dimensions of privilege. Finally, the official Facebook pages of some schools were examined, including posts from 2016. The social media presence of the schools varied considerably, thus not all schools listed in Appendix C had Facebook pages. This collection of data provides different lenses and approaches to the institutional reproduction of privilege, from the perspective of both schools’ self-constructed representations as well as media representations. The focus here is on elite private schools across New Zealand, not just the schools’ which participants attended. The data collected signals an institutional intent to emphasise the quality of education provided, and the independence and exclusivity of the schools. These mediated expressions generate understandings of elite private schools which contribute to conceptualising how privilege is institutionally reproduced through markers of distinction. Media representations present events which disrupt or reinforce the symbolic architecture choreographed by schools. Thus, exploring the situated geographies of elite private schools in New Zealand highlights the spatiality of privilege and the ways in which young people learn a privileged way of knowing and being through education at elite private schools.

6.1 Locating elite private schools in New Zealand’s educational landscape

Elite private schools are unique educational institutions which contribute to the reproduction of privilege at an institutional, symbolic, and individual scale. The classification of private schools in New Zealand covers a wide variety of educational organisations. To briefly recap, schools are characterised as private in New Zealand when they: are owned by private proprietors, governed by an independent board, meet New Zealand curriculum standards, and charge tuition fees to supplement receipt of state funding (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Along the spectrum of private education, the focus of this
discussion is on the most elite schools - those that carry symbols of exclusivity and privilege which portray discourses of educational excellence. Building on Gatzambide-Fernandez's (2009) typology of markers of elite private boarding schools, I discuss independent status, histories, geographical locations, and alumni to locate elite private schools within the educational landscape of New Zealand. Additionally, I consider the religious affiliations of these schools alongside the schools’ histories. These aspects characterise elite private schools in New Zealand and reinforce the exclusive and independent status of these schools which contribute to the institutional reproduction of privilege.

6.1.1 Independence and exclusivity

The relative independence of private schools, compared to state and state-integrated schools, is a key factor which contributes to their exclusive character. As private schools receive very little government funding per student, they ordinarily charge significant tuition fees. The fees paid range from $12,000 to $18,000 per annum for primary and intermediate education (children aged 5-12 years). At the secondary school level (students aged 13-18 years), fees can range from $16,000 to $26,000 per year. These figures do not include costs incurred for stationary and consumables, sports fees, purchasing laptops/tablets, building funding, or administration fees. Additionally, when parents enquire about enrolling their children, they are charged non-refundable application and acceptance fees regardless of whether their child is enrolled. Many elite private schools also have boarding facilities, which are utilised by international students and those attending from out of town. Further, in Auckland in recent years, there has been a trend whereby students whose families live in outlying suburbs also board at these schools (Bilby, 2014). Boarding fees vary, but can add $12,000-$15,000 per year to the fees already outlined. Emphasising the elite nature of these private schools, it is reported that it costs parents approximately $38,000 for 13 years of state education for a child born in 2017, while 13 years of private education will cost approximately $345,000 (Dougan, 2017). These fees are outside of the affordable range for most New Zealand families and these private schools are consequently only accessible by the wealthy and elite, unless a child is supported by a scholarship. The elite and exclusive nature of these schools, in part facilitated and reinforced by these tuition fee structures, is reflected in enrolment statistics. In 2016, only 3.64% of students in New Zealand attended private schools (Ministry of Education, 2017d). The percentage of students attending elite private schools is only a fraction of the already small proportion of students attending schools classified by the Ministry of Education as private. This situation reinforces the elite
and exclusive character of these institutions as they establish the boundaries of inclusion within elite private schools as spaces for the reproduction of privilege.

Elite private schools do offer scholarships to students who would otherwise not be able to attend these schools. Kenway and Langmead (2017) suggest that claims about access and social mobility are discursive practices used to distinguish these schools as elite, but not elitist. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, sports, music, and arts talents and the number of scholarships awarded varies between schools. However, these students only constitute a minority of each school’s enrolment. For example, Christ’s College in Christchurch advertise that approximately 25% of their students receive some form of scholarship. It is advertised that the scholarship programme “helps to ensure we have an increasingly diverse school community that reflects life beyond the school gates”. Therefore, not all students attending elite private schools come from a privileged background, but, by virtue of the schools they attend, they are afforded a higher degree of social and cultural advantage. Arguably, these scholarships provide an opportunity for social mobility, but there are also likely to be difficulties faced by these students who are not necessarily able to ‘keep up’ with their peers. As Zoe, a student on scholarship explained in one of her diary entries,

I was sponsored to go to School B and I genuinely promised my parents that I would never turn into an obnoxious snob though of course they worded it nicer. I most likely will never properly fit in with anyone here because I can’t keep up with the latest, most expensive designer things or I don’t listen to the latest music…’

Zoe’s concerns about keeping up with the latest trends while also remaining true to herself and her family is a conflict experienced by students attending elite private schools on scholarship who do not necessarily have the tastes and capital to engage as their peers do. Students learn a privileged way of knowing and being, which they may not necessarily perform, but can access through being educated in elite private schools. However, students like Zoe will have a distinct experience of private education, trying to learn the ‘rituals’ and ‘dance’ of privilege that other students have already acquired throughout childhood.

While there is an aura of eliteness associated with private schools, diversity is also promoted, particularly in terms of ethnicity. In 2017, the dominant reported ethnicity of students attending private schools was European/Pakeha (66.72%). The next highest ethnic
group was Asian\textsuperscript{6}, with 16.24%. There are only very small percentages of students who identified as Maori (6.05%), Pasifika (3.04%), MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African) (1.08%) and Other (0.88%). Another 6.05% of students are classified as international students (Ministry of Education, 2017d). There have been substantial changes in ethnic makeup when comparing statistics from the year 2000 where 81.49% of students identified as European/Pakeha (Ministry of Education, 2017d). Further, the proportion of Asian students has more than doubled in the 16 years from 2000-2016 (from 7.8% to 16.24%). Compared to 2016, there have been slight increases in Maori (+0.61%) and Pasifika (+1.44%) students attending private schools. This changing composition, while small, is indicative of changing demographics in New Zealand, but may also be a result of schools’ strategies to diversify and increases in scholarships being given to students who would otherwise not be able to attend these schools. The ethnic diversity evident in private schools is relatively similar to national ethnic diversity for European and Asian populations (European, 70.4%; Asian, 11.8%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a). Although, there is an underrepresentation of Maori (14.9%) and Pasifika (7.4%) students at private schools in comparison to census ethnicity statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a). The small percentage of young people in New Zealand who attend private schools reflects the independent nature of the schools and draws attention to privilege and the elite status the schools hold. However, the ethnic diversity of the schools also seeks to ‘reflect[s] life beyond the school gates’ as Christ’s College and many other schools try to replicate. For example, King’s College notes that “in considering admissions, King’s College seeks to have a roll that reflects the broader population of New Zealand”. St Andrew’s College also emphasises the benefits of co-education:

\begin{quote}
We live in a co-ed world - let's learn in one too! Co-educational schools more accurately reflect the diversity of our society. They help students gain confidence communicating and interacting with a broader range of people, and provide them with the social skills they need to succeed in the real world.
\end{quote}

Striving for diversity also contributes to the construction of images which imply inclusivity across social divides. Visual representations, usually associated with school open days seek to illustrate ethnic diversity. For example, the advertisement for St Kentigern School’s

\textsuperscript{6} The Asian category used in the New Zealand Census, derived by Statistics New Zealand in 1996, classifies people originating from the Asian continent, in an area bounded by Afghanistan, Japan, China and Indonesia.
Open Days in 2016 (Figure 6.1) picks up on ideas of diversity through the range of ethnicities (European, Asian, and Pasifika) the children in the billboard represent. However, representations of diversity along with other markers of difference such as disability are absent. The focus on being aligned with the reality of life outside the schools and enabling encounters with diverse bodies reinforces the importance of balancing distinction and commonality through the institutional reproduction of privilege. Established elite schools need to negotiate a complicated landscape of symbolic expressions of privilege and maintain a sense of outward inclusivity. This adds a further layer to the institutional reproduction of privilege as a sense of difference, and in turn similarities with wider society are implied through a range of initiatives.

Figure 6.1: St Kentigern Campuses Open Day Advertisement 2016

6.1.2 Geographical locations and campuses

In terms of the geographical locations of private schools in New Zealand, there is a definite urban bias. For example, 49% of the 90 private schools in New Zealand are located in Auckland, 14% are located in the Canterbury region; 9% in Wellington; 7% in the Waikato; and 21% in other regions of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017) (see Figure 6.2). The urban trend is even more distinct when considering the locations of elite private schools, with 15 of the 24 schools in my sample located in Auckland. In part this reflects the population distribution in New Zealand and demand for such educational institutions, but the overshare of private schools in Auckland is significant (Auckland is home to 33.4% of New Zealand’s total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). Some elite private schools are in regional centres (for example, ACG (Academic Colleges Group) Tauranga) and in smaller urban centres (for example, St Peter’s School is in Cambridge, near Hamilton). Within urban areas, elite private schools are often located in suburbs with
Figure 6.2: Distribution of Private Schools in New Zealand

Source: Data from Ministry of Education (2017b)
the highest socio-economic ratings, reinforcing the elite status of schools and the presence of affluent enclaves. In this way, elite private schools reflect and help constitute spatial manifestations of class relations. For example, King’s School as well as St Kentigern Girls and Boys Schools are located in the affluent suburb of Remuera in Auckland; and St Margaret’s College is located in the equally prestigious suburb of Merivale in Christchurch. The Central Business Districts (CBD) of cities are also the locations of elite private schools (for example, ACG Senior College in the Auckland CBD, and Christ’s College in the Christchurch CBD). Not all elite private schools, however, are in affluent suburbs. Some are situated in relatively deprived social landscapes and the schools can be described as islands of privilege. For example, King’s College is now located in the low socio-economic suburb of Otahuhu (the school was first established in 1896 in Remuera, before moving to its current site in 1922). While not originally regarded as a deprived area, suburban developments surrounding King’s College now comprise some of the most deprived areas of Auckland, with the school’s distinctive entrances, sculpted and manicured grounds, and historical architecture hidden behind gates and fences. In this way, deprivation has enveloped the school which thus symbolically, as well as practically, represents an elite space which people residing nearby are unable to access. Therefore, while the geographical location of some schools may not be in elite urban spaces, other elements of the school’s physical infrastructure signal the elite status of the school, which contributes to the institutional reproduction of privilege through the stark contrast to surrounding spaces.

At the level of school campuses, a palpable sense of privilege is felt when in these school grounds, it just feels different; grand, exclusive, modern, and professional. As with elite universities discussed by Sidhu et al. (2016, p. 1501), the “architectural aesthetics and spacious grounds” distinguish elite private school spaces from surrounding areas. This sense of differences and superiority was particularly apparent to me as a visitor, given I am someone who has not attended an elite private school, or been associated with these schools. Most elite private schools have spacious, world class facilities incorporating modern architecture as well as historic buildings on large campuses. Media articles which focus on the schools' facilities, or the development of new facilities reinforce the elite status of private schools. For example, the construction of a new $36 million arts facility at Diocesan School for Girls in Auckland captured attention (Gibson, 2015). It is reported that “there is no other centre comparable to this in Australasia, let alone in a New Zealand secondary school” (Gibson, 2015). Descriptions of facilities also highlight the prestige and
elite status of the schools, aligning with Gaztambide-Fernandez’s (2009) marker of geographical eliteness. McDonald et al. (2012) suggest that schools can bolster their self-promotion through visual and textual descriptions of the school’s infrastructure and facilities. These descriptions were dominant elements of all school websites and prospectuses analysed. For example, St Cuthbert’s College highlights the key cornerstones of their campus as, “spacious green areas, deciduous trees and lovingly cared for gardens provide a peaceful backdrop to superbly appointed buildings and excellent sports facilities”. This description includes tropes which evoke feelings of privilege and superiority, drawn from the inclusion of discourses related to pastoral idylls and Anglo-centricity. The campus is described as a nurturing environment, where both the infrastructure and students are cared for to retain the sense of quality and superiority symbolised by the school. Schools recognise, as Diocesan School for Girls posits, “how we learn can often be a reflection of where we learn. So our purpose-built campus includes state-of-the-art, sustainable buildings and exceptional sports facilities set in landscaped grounds”. In this way, tropes of elite status are not explicit in the descriptions, but language which invokes imaginaries of superiority is used to reinforce the reproduction of privilege through elite educational institutions.

Campuses incorporate fixtures and infrastructure which symbolise status and convey suggestions of exclusivity, from both a contemporary and historical perspective. Patterns of meaning are therefore embedded in elite school spaces which can be read to gauge the state of the school (Kenway & Prosser, 2015). Therefore, privilege is reproduced through materiality and meaning embedded in institutional places where symbols (such as landscaped, manicured grounds, modern architecture, and world class sports facilities) distinguish the schools as elite. As a marker of distinction, the materiality of the spatial form is complemented and reinforced by the language used to promote elite private schools as a key component of the institutional reproduction of privilege.

The place of technology and sporting facilities in schools is also emphasised. The language used to describe the facilities is particularly revealing, with phrases such as ‘world-class’, ‘state-of-the-art’, ‘purpose built’, and ‘first class’ commonly utilised. This language of superiority and excellence reinforces the elite status of these schools and contributes to the ability to distinguish themselves from other schools. For examples, Scots College’s (Wellington) prospectus describes the school campus
As a place in which you can learn, explore and realise your creative potential, the new Creative and Performing Arts Centre is second to none. This three-storey, purpose-built centre offers the latest interactive and sound technology, computer pods for graphics and robotics, facilities for film and animation production and for 3D printing. There's a fully-rigged stage and drama theatre, seven acoustically designed and soundproof practice rooms, and a state-of-the-art recording studio and designated rehearsal studio.

Diocesan School for Girls also has an “Imagination Station with high-tech editing suites, laser cutters and 3D printers for use by all students”. Emphasising the quality of sports facilities reinforces the broad range of amenities students have access to at these schools. As King’s College explains, ‘Our College facilities include a world-class athletics track, a water-based hockey turf, two gymnasia, two squash courts, tennis courts, a swimming pool and numerous sports fields.’ These descriptions, while marketing devices, do reflect the self-belief of the schools which signify their elite status grounded in the materialities of privilege. In this way, drawing on Kearns et al.’s (2003) conceptualisation of private health care providers, elite private schools are texts in and of themselves, as well as producers of texts. These texts can be read to interpret the elite status promoted by schools as part of the multivalent institutional reproduction of privilege. It is evident that elite schools promote themselves as places, more than simply a collection of facilities and classrooms students enter to learn (Koh & Kenway, 2016). The generation of a sense of place is not restricted to elite private schools (see, for example, Witten et al., 2001), but the distinction of private schools as elite places of privilege is significant. The infrastructure and facilities present on campuses of elite private schools can be regarded as symbolic of the elite and exclusive status of these schools, which in turn provides students with opportunities to extend their talents and gain the necessary skills to engage in a privileged world.

The development of new facilities at elite private schools highlights the intersection of independence and privilege. Due to the limited amount of government funding received by private schools, they must fundraise through other means, which often means involving local communities and alumni networks. Diocesan School for Girls' fund-raising initiatives were reported on by Wynn (2014) who described several items being auctioned at “an extravagant school fundraiser”. The 'Fizz and Quiz' night was raising money for arts scholarships, mentoring and “new acquisitions for our contemporary art collection”. Some of the items for auction include: two weeks accommodation in the south of France, an
internship with a top Sydney ad agency, a bronze sculpture, and “a ‘very convenient’ and envied private undercover carpark at the school — understood to be one of the most coveted items listed” (Wynn, 2014). Two philanthropic campaigns currently underway at Christ’s College and St Kentigern Boys School also provide further useful examples. Christ’s College’s campaign “For the Boys. For Our Future” is attempting to raise $35 million for educational initiatives ($10 million) and building new facilities ($25 million). These facilities include a “Sporting Excellence, Health and Wellbeing Centre, a Science Centre, and Music Learning and Performance Centre”. At a smaller scale, St Kentigern Boys Schools are seeking to raise $2.5 million to equip the new ‘Learning Commons and Science Centre’ (which is being funded by the Saint Kentigern Trust Board) through the “Building Minds, Building Futures” campaign. The call for donations emphasises how the school “must equip our students with the core essentials of education and provide them with the tools to think creatively, explore possibilities and take risks with their learning”. The manipulation and development of space is described by Kenway and Prosser (2015) as a practice undertaken to ensure conformity to expectations of how the schools should look, the expectations of being an elite institution. Having world-class facilities is critical to not only the image elite private schools portray and the reputations they seek to uphold, but also to the implementation of educational philosophies and practices promoted in the schools. In practical teaching terms, these facilities provide opportunities to engage students and provide them with experiences that other schools cannot, which is also generative of distinction and privilege through elite education. Putting out calls for donations highlights the importance of these schools being embedded in privileged networks, and how the reproduction of privilege is enabled by these schools.

6.1.3 History and religious affiliations

Some elite private schools are amongst the oldest educational institutions in New Zealand, having been founded by English missionaries and modelled on the public schools of England. Christ’s College is the oldest private school in New Zealand, founded in 1851 and based on schools such as Eton College in England. King’s College also has a very long history, founded in 1896 in the central Auckland suburb of Remuera. The College is now located south of the central city in Otahuhu, but King’s School (a ‘feeder’ primary school) is located on the original site. Both schools have strong links to the Anglican Church and this tradition is clear in the school’s values and practices. For example, the boys regularly attend chapel at both schools and are encouraged to explore their spiritual beliefs.
Prominent girls’ schools were founded in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, with Auckland’s Diocesan School for Girls opening in 1903, St Cuthbert’s in 1915, and Queen Margaret College in Wellington in 1919. An extension of the private education landscape, primarily in Auckland occurred in the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. For example, St Kentigern College was established in 1953. While only relatively recently established in comparison to schools such as King’s and Christ’s Colleges, this school clearly embraces Scottish heritage and tradition. For example, the school boasts the top pipers in New Zealand who have participated in the Edinburgh Tattoo Festival. As Symes (1998) suggests, schools seek to emphasise the importance of tradition alongside innovation and modernisation in order to portray an holistic approach to education. The rise of the influence of private corporations in education is also evident with the opening of ACG schools (i.e. Parnell, Senior College, Strathallan, Sunderland, and Tauranga) between 1998 and 2015. These schools are representative of the globalisation and marketisation of education linked to neoliberal reforms in New Zealand (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). Despite the diverse histories and character of elite private schools, an underlying character of exclusivity and privilege is consistent. Thus, privilege can be reproduced through seemingly distinct but remarkably similar institutions.

Linked to the schools’ histories are the religious affiliations which constitute a significant factor shaping the operation of each institution and hence how privilege is reproduced. The religious affiliations of elite private schools are varied, with the most dominant affiliation being Anglican (34%), followed by Presbyterian (22%). Most other schools are classified as non-denominational or as having no affiliation. These affiliations are strongly embraced by most schools, but many also emphasise that religion does not inhibit attendance. For example, St Kentigern emphasises that

*Today our school communities reflect a variety of cultural and family backgrounds and we respect the fact that our families represent many denominations and faiths. We continue to encourage the ideal of a Christian community where our students learn and grow in an environment of inclusiveness, mutual respect and care for one another.*

While St Kentigern Schools identify as Presbyterian, they welcome students from all denominations and seek to instil values which generally assist in students’ personal development. Religion can be considered a critical component of establishing heritage and
indexing the ways that schools are embedded in educational philosophies of colonial centres. Publicity for St Andrew’s College in Christchurch explains how “proud Scottish Presbyterian traditions and values, academic rigour, and exceptional sporting, cultural and leadership opportunities combine for an education that is truly world class and a life experience that is unforgettable”. Diocesan School for Girls also emphasises the centrality of their Anglican identity and service in who they are and what they do. The school’s motto is “Ut Serviamus That we may serve” and key values in the school’s strategic direction include fostering empathy, inspiring confidence, demonstrating integrity, encouraging curiosity, and striving for excellence feed into the school’s identity. An effect of embracing religious diversity in these schools was highlighted by one participant, who insightfully articulated her observations of starting at School B. Lara explained that one reason her parents decided to send her to School B was because of the school’s religious affiliation. However, she was surprised to discover that many students do not identify as religious:

very few people were actually Christian and although they attended Christian Ed. classes and chapel most did not believe what was being taught to them. It made me realise that the majority of parents send them here because of the opportunities and facilities offered, not because of the religious aspect of the college. Additionally, while we do recite the prayer of [School B] at every assembly and whatnot I find that most stress is placed upon academics, sport and the arts as opposed to developing a good spiritual relationship with God. I found this very interesting.

Lara’s observation reflects the school’s openness to diversity in terms of religion as well as other markers of social difference. It is not about current practices as Lara suggests, but religious diversity is actively qualified to create spaces for students whose childhoods reflect new dimensions of privilege today. In this context, newly developed elite private schools, for example ACG schools are never religiously based, and elite schools which do operate from a particular religious perspective such as Ficino School in Auckland are very niche. These affiliations emphasise the differences in approaches of elite private schools and the evolution of elite education beyond colonial influences. The older, more established elite private schools use their religious basis to reinforce heritage and status which are core components of privilege, both implicitly and explicitly communicated through educational philosophies tied to the institutional reproduction of privilege.
6.1.4 Alumni

The final characteristic which helps to locate elite private schools within the educational landscape of New Zealand is the importance of alumni, not only to the institution, but also the students. The alumni of elite private schools in New Zealand play a critical role in the schools’ operations, promotions, and practices. For example, The Christ’s College Old Boys’ Association provides “scholarships and prizes for the boys, and over the years it has raised funds that resulted in the building of the Memorial Dining Hall (1925), the enlargement and reconstruction of the Chapel (1957), and the Old Boys’ Theatre (2000)”. Alumni organisations often provide significant financial support to schools and organise a range of events. For example, a golf tournament is organised through Christ’s College Alumni; there is a King’s College Cookbook; and art sales at a number of schools. Additionally, students currently enrolled at some of the elite schools included in the sample pay subscription fees to the alumni organisations (for example, St Cuthbert’s College; St Margaret’s College; St Kentigern College). These fees provide students access to social networks and contacts which may offer further opportunities. The Old Collegians Association of St Kentigern explains that it “provides an avenue to foster friendships and strengthen ties; the extent to which you embrace the events is up to you, but as former students, you know there will always be a place for you, you know you will always be welcome”. Alumni networks claim to provide students with a long-term sense of belonging that many students experience from attendance at elite private schools. Much research on elite alumni networks, particularly at a university level highlights the effects of connections, particularly for entrance into the labour market (Tholen et al., 2013). This potential effect of engagement in alumni networks promoted through elite schools contributes to particular privileged notions of community. Purchasing privilege through education at elite schools is not enough, but rather engendering the results from alumni networks is dependent on being an active constituent. In this way, the institutional dimensions and reproduction of privilege extends beyond the period of enrolment at the school. Through attendance at the elite schools, current students become embedded in established lineages that they can model themselves on, thus emphasising the interaction between institutional and individual dimensions reproducing systems of privilege.

Long rolls of notable and famous alumni are also mobilised to promote the schools and mentor current students. For example, Lydia Ko (former World No 1. Women’s Golfer) attended Kristin School; and Stephen Adams (Basketball player at Oklahoma City Thunder
in the United States) attended Scot’s College. St Kentigern College, King’s College, and Christ’s College are renowned for producing All Blacks (New Zealand’s national rugby team) and Black Caps players (New Zealand’s national cricket team). Similarly, girls’ schools such as St Cuthbert’s and Diocesan School for Girls have nurtured many Black Sticks players (New Zealand women’s hockey team). Media mentions of elite private schools are also often associated with alumni, with schools acknowledged when successes are celebrated. Kenway and Fahey (2014b) suggest that elite schools are expected to produce alumni who go on to be successful and influential. The mobilisation of alumni is an implicit reference to this expectation, giving a high profile to their most successful professional, business, government, arts, and sports alumni (Kenway and Fahey, 2014b). Schools can mobilise discourses of success associated with alumni to try and attract new students, which in turn plays into the reproduction of privilege.

6.2 Placing elite private schools

Examining how elite private schools represent themselves as educational institutions, trying to attract students in a market in which students and parents have a wide range of choices, can assist in understanding these schools as critical components of systems of privilege. The websites of elite private schools generally portray a very professional, corporate image, suggesting that it is not only about what messages the schools are trying to represent, but also how the messages are represented. The overarching theme embedded in these websites and other promotional materials is of preparing students for the future, for young people to be engaged in elite social networks and spaces where being able to interpret and perform a privileged identity is essential. There is a pervading sense of looking over the horizon to a particular type of future in which students have developed the skills and knowledge to compete in a globalising world. For example, information about Queen Margaret College explains that “through a globally relevant curriculum, technically advanced teaching tools and co-curricular activities [that] ensure girls leave ready to take on the future world”. Similarly, at Diocesan School for Girls, they “believe that excellence is about so much more than just academic success. It is about enabling your daughter to think independently, make strong decisions and walk confidently towards the successes of her future”. These two quotes are representative of views expressed in publicity for all the schools whose websites I examined, with the link between the way students are educated and how prepared they are for the future explicitly
acknowledged. Kristin School’s slogan ‘Future Ready’ also highlights the centrality of preparedness to school’s practices. The role of schools in preparing students for the future is also visually highlighted, as depicted on the prospectus cover of King’s School (see Figure 6.3). Acknowledging the unknown nature of the future is also critical, as explained by St Cuthbert’s College: “The truth is, St Cuthbert’s is working today, to prepare our girls for a future that doesn’t yet exist. Our job, during these years of great personal change, is to see her potential and to shine the light on the greatest version of herself she can be”. To unpack the practices and processes undertaken at elite private schools to prepare students for the future, key motifs of a well-rounded education, maximising potential, and community service are explored in the remainder of this chapter. School’s independence, diversity, locations, facilities, history, religious affiliations, and alumni discussed above contributing to the social, material, and affective resources which young people access through elite private schools to prepare for their future.

**Figure 6.3:** Cover of King’s School Prospectus 2016-2017

6.2.1 Delivering a well-rounded education to prepare for the future

A key motif which emerged through analysis of school websites was the promotion of elite private schools delivering an education which was to produce ‘all-round’ students. A balanced education is visually depicted in school prospectuses and on websites, with
numerous images of students playing sports, using technology, playing musical instruments, participating in art and drama productions, laughing and engaging with other students, as well as images of students in classrooms, and studying in libraries (Gottschall et al. 2010; Wardman et al. 2010). As ACG Strathallan’s prospectus explains: “Participation by students in all areas of the extra-curricular programme not only provides them with a more rounded education but also strengthens school spirit, develops personal and social skills and widens their interests”. This sentiment is echoed by Diocesan School for Girls: “By the time students finish Year 13, they will have had every opportunity to achieve academic excellence. But that’s just the start. At Dio, they will also explore ethics, discover new talents, experience leadership and cement life-long friendships to take with them into higher education and beyond”. These sentiments are emblematic of McDonald et al.’s (2012) finding that academic success is linked to a blend of physical, emotional, and cultural development. Schools emphasise that success is a key component of privilege and reinforcing the importance of success in all aspects of life is central to the reproduction of privilege. The desire to deliver a well-rounded education can also be linked to education institutions mandate as part of the neoliberal project in New Zealand. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of governmentality (Faubion, 2010), the implementation of a well-rounded curriculum can be interpreted as directing the conduct of individuals and groups. Schools seek to produce highly individualised, responsibilised subjects who become “entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives” (Brown, 2003). As the schools indicate, students should be independent, balanced, leaders, ethical, and successful. Schools provide the opportunities for young people to cultivate a unique sense of self within socially, politically, and economically mediated boundaries (Davies & Bansel, 2007). In this way, elite institutions influence the construction of individual identity, moulding students who internalise privileged ways of knowing and being.

The promotion of a well-rounded education is not a new approach being taken by elite private schools. Rather, it was the vision of the founding headmaster of King’s College who, in 1896, articulated that “The vision of King’s College is to provide the best all-round education it is possible to obtain (Graham Bruce, Headmaster, 1896)”. Current King’s College prospectuses reinforce this vision by suggesting that they “aim to provide excellence in teaching and learning within a well-balanced educational context involving the academic, cultural, social, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of life”. Similarly, St Peters College in Cambridge was founded in 1936 with the aim of “educating
the whole person. Today St Peter’s still strives to develop well-rounded people with strength of character, a positive mind-set, and eagerness to serve their communities”. A well-balanced education within the context of classroom based learning is represented as encompassing not just traditional subjects, but also subjects which are perceived to be beneficial to students in the future. For example, keeping up with changing pedagogical and curriculum trends is regarded as being critical and evidenced by the significant visual representations of students engaged with technology and robotic equipment (see Figure 6.4). Christ’s College also has a Rocket Club where students design, build, and test rockets. Being engaged in a well-rounded education programme is also inferred as providing students with many opportunities. This sentiment is exemplified in St Kentigern Schools 2017 Open Day advertisements (see Figure 6.5) which depict students ‘Leap[ing] into a World of Opportunity’ and the Christ’s College’s Open Day advertisement (see Figure 6.6) which suggests that the foundations provided at the school will result in success and greatness. Parallels can be drawn here to linguistic devices used to market private hospitals which are constructed as being replete with expertise and technologies, looking to the future to ensure health care services remain effective (see for example, Kearns et al., 2003). Drew et al. (2016) explain that when smiling, happy children are prominently displayed on
websites, happiness functions as a central ingredient in the production of the school as a worthy and desirable place to be. The representation of enthusiastic, energetic students ‘leap[ing] into a world of opportunity’ is an attempt to reinforce the opportunities available to students and emphasise the ways in which schools can prepare students for the future.

**Figure 6.5:** St Kentigern Open Day advertisement 2017

![St Kentigern Open Day advertisement 2017](image)

**Figure 6.6:** Christ’s College information evening advertisement 2017

![Christ’s College information evening advertisement 2017](image)

A critical component of providing a well-rounded education involves activities outside the classroom, with extra-curricular activities promoted as providing opportunities for students to further extend themselves. In many cases, participation in extra-curricular activities is expected at elite private schools. For example, at King’s College, students in Years 9 to 11 are expected to take part in at least two activities; Year 12 students must be involved in one activity; and at Year 13, activities are optional, but most students continue to actively participate in extra-curricular activities. Activities to choose from include sports (for example, archery, badminton, rugby, football, hockey, orienteering, sailing, swimming, water polo); and cultural activities (such as, chess, craft, debating, drama, kapa
haka, speech club, orchestras, choirs, rock bands). Many successes from students’ involvement in extra-curricular activities are posted on social media. For example, young entrepreneurs from ACG Parnell won 2016 company of the year; and a film made by students from Christ’s College and St Margaret’s College won Best New Zealand Secondary Schools Film award at the 2016 Uni Shorts International Student Film Festival. The opportunities and resources available to students contribute to the successes they achieve, reinforcing how discourses of success are tied to privilege. The promotion of these notions is tied to efforts to encourage their internalisation as key characteristics for students, who are driven to succeed further, and privilege becomes reproduced.

At many elite private schools, sports are a major part of students’ schedules and are promoted as contributing to a balanced education. Sporting opportunities are many and varied, encompassing traditional games such as rugby, football, hockey, and netball, but also more specialised sports. For example, students at Christ’s College participate in an inter-house clay shooting competition; and students can be involved in fencing at Diocesan School for Girls (where the school team holds the national title). Elite private schools experience considerable sporting success which is also constantly reported through school’s social media outlets. For example, Christ’s College teams hold national titles in rugby, hockey, and rowing. Diocesan School for Girls is also the top girls’ school in the country at swimming; holds the national underwater hockey title; as well as being the 1st girls’ school and 2nd overall at the 2016 North Island Primary and Intermediate School Ski Championships. These sporting achievements often come at a significant cost, with the relatively exclusive nature of some of these sports prompting parents to have to financially support their children’s pursuits. Accumulating skills and capital through participation in an array of activities provided at elite private schools, coupled with the strong resource base to strive for success provides opportunities for the achievement of a well-balanced education involving academic, cultural, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of everyday life. A well-rounded student from an elite private school is constructed as being not only prepared for the future in terms of learning associated with academic subjects, but also having participated in a range of extra-curricular activities which are seen to broaden their horizons. Through multiple initiatives, elite private schools circulate ideas that well-rounded identities are critical to reproducing discourses of privilege within and outside the school gates.
6.2.2 Maximising potential

To prepare students for the future by allowing them the opportunity to receive a well-rounded education, elite private schools seek to maximise the potential of all enrolled students. Maximising potential as well as building resilience and character was another key motif represented in school material. Building resilience is understood in this context as providing students with the knowledge and experiences which will help them to overcome future challenges and enable their participation in a changing world. Encouraging students to maximise their potential is another element of the production of individualised and responsibilised neoliberal subjects through education (Davies & Bansal, 2007). At ACG Strathallan, the Principal notes in the prospectus that “we offer a supportive academic environment where each child is encouraged and challenged to reach their full academic and personal potential”. What is significant is that the school not only seeks to help students reach their potential, but also to maximise their potential.

This approach is also exemplified by a long-running advertising campaign from Diocesan School for Girls. The tag line of the advertisements (see Figure 6.7), which appear in magazines, newspapers, social media, billboards, and the school website, is “Be more than you ever imagined”. Sitting alongside the Diocesan School for Girls advertisements in Figure 6.7, the school promotes that “we walk alongside your daughter as we help her learn, discover and grow to be more than she ever imagined”. Students are encouraged to ‘think big’ and strive to achieve their goals, with the school’s approach to learning being about “making sure your daughter has everything she needs to not only reach but exceed her potential”. The campaign was also designed to reflect the range of opportunities available to Diocesan students by highlighting student involvement in sport, art, photography, and dance, showcasing diversity, opportunity, and possibility. St Paul’s Collegiate also encourages students to “give more than they believe they are capable of giving and to do more than they believe they are capable of doing. We are committed to a culture that encourages and expects each pupil to achieve the very best they can”. The sentiment is echoed in advertisements for King’s College (see Figure 6.8), which have the slogan “Find yourself at King’s”. This imperative suggests that by attending the schools, students can ‘find their place in the world’. Through the many opportunities students are provided, they can find what they are good at and strive to achieve at high levels. This prospect is further reinforced through supplementary advertisements released by King’s College (see Figure 6.9) in which past students have shared stories of the experiences at
school which have allowed them to go on to similar experiences at an international level. The images represented in Figures 6.7-6.9 can be interpreted as representing students acquiring an elite habitus through the availability of cultural capital associated with arts, music, and competitive sport (McCandless, 2015). McCandless (2015) suggests that there is an absence of images of students engaged in academic school work as academic success is a baseline expectation for those contemplating sending their children to these elite institutions. Elite private schools can therefore be described as sites where young people learn to navigate elite and privileged worlds, maximising their potential in more than academic endeavours.

**Figure 6.7: Diocesan School for Girls advertisements**
As part of maximising students’ potential, schools seek to build character and resilience. There are many references to both nurturing and challenging students through a child’s educational journey at elite private schools. For example, ACG Strathallan’s avowed purpose is to “inspire students to be creative problem solvers who are also willing to take considered risks; independent yet interdependent young people and life-long learners who
will be useful contributors and strong leaders in the global community of the 21st century”.

Nurturing a well-rounded individual is important. As Meadmore and Meadmore (2004, p. 383) explain, in schools where high fees are paid by parents, there is a heightened impetus to produce the “emotionally well-rounded young person who exhibits confidence, poise, and a general degree of happiness as well as academic success”. One of the strategic goals of Scots College is the ‘development of the all-round man (Virtute, Paret Doctrina)’. The school seeks to “provide a safe and nurturing environment based on Presbyterian values that will encourage leadership and citizenship as well as developing social competencies which will allow each young man to develop his full all round potential”. The importance of this goal for schools is also emphasised by Gottschall et al. (2010) who suggest that schools are depicted as providing the training ground for boys making the transition from boyhood to manhood. There is a commitment from these schools to assist students to develop as individuals, but also gain the necessary skills to be successful in life outside of school, now and in the future. The importance of delivering a well-rounded education discussed earlier is critical to this commitment. Discourses of balance, maximisation, and success feed into the practices and initiatives schools engage with, to shape students’ cultivation of their identity. Privilege, which is reproduced through these practices, therefore becomes part of individual biographies and shapes their conduct inside and outside elite institutions.

6.2.3 The importance of community service

The final critical element of the practices and values represented by elite private schools is community outreach undertaken by students. As has become evident, providing students with a well-rounded education is a key philosophy shaping schools’ strategies. Community service is identified as a key component of this educational philosophy. This community outreach is an example of what Kenway and Fahey (2014a) describe as gifting practices which elite private schools promote. These gifting practices are initiated by the schools and involve students as either the recipients or givers of gifts. In other words, gifting practices can include scholarships which students receive to attend these schools, but students are also encouraged and expected to be involved with gifting practices through initiatives implemented in local and global communities (Kenway & Fahey, 2014a). Perhaps, in an attempt to balance out dominant reports of success and the elite nature of these schools, there is an emphasis in the media on highlighting instances where students...
are involved in community outreach. For example, a group of Christ's College students travelled to Samoa to help refurbish and renovate primary school classrooms (The Press, 2014). As St Margaret’s College recognises, “Learning is not confined to the classroom and a wide variety of learning experiences take place in the community beyond the school and in the outdoors”. Providing students with opportunities to engage with individuals and groups outside of their core social networks can help with establishing an awareness of social difference and the hardships being faced by some sectors of the community that they might not otherwise have contact with.

Community outreach is one way that schools such as Diocesan School for Girls seeks to ensure that “our girls leave school as global citizens with a deep understanding of other cultures and people”. This links to the school’s motto Ut Serviamus (That we may serve), which is lived out through the establishment of a “Giving Programme that encourages our girls to share their time and talents to support the work of community aid organisations…. Each year, we get involved with local, national and international charities”. Christ’s College also publicly advertises their aim to develop boys’ understanding of social differences through outreach initiatives as illustrated in Figure 6.10. Similarities are evident between the approaches taken at Christ’s College and Diocesan School for Girls. Links between community services and good, global citizens are evident, as explained on the Christ’s College advertisement: “By helping them meet the challenges of good citizenship, we encourage participation in a range of activities that give back to the community around us”. King’s College also has a similar approach, whereby

Each week students volunteer their own time to help those in our community who really need it. Since the establishment of this service scheme, King’s College has developed relationships with a number of community agencies that we now work alongside. At present this includes the Refugee Centre, Reading in Schools, IHC, Retirement Homes, Kidz First Children's Hospital, Cats in Need Trust, Woman's Refuge Centre, Mangere East Primary Lunchtime Programme and Middlemore Hospital Reception.

This wide range of examples of community service could be argued to represent instances of what McDonald et al. (2012) suggest is a reframing of elitism through promotion of attempts for social justice and espousing egalitarianism in public discourse. In the New Zealand context, eliteness diverges from popular understandings of society being a level
playing field. The gifting practices elite schools engage with could be interpreted as attempts which seek to ease the effects of inequalities shaping everyday life. Diversity is also reinforced through these practices, promoting diversity within the schools, as well as interactions between diverse groups who would otherwise not interact. Being seen to be involved in the community and helping students to recognise the prevalence of significant social issues such as child poverty through gifting practices is another initiative which contributes to the multivalent institutional reproduction of privilege.

Figure 6.10: Christ’s College advertisement
School Facebook pages present examples of students’ involvement in outreach and service, as schools seek to portray a positive image to the community. On a local scale, there are numerous examples of schools working with local community groups, representing children and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. For example, Christ’s College students collected canned goods and donated them to the City Mission; Diocesan Joy Warriors arranged gift baskets and distributed them to families associated with the Anglican Trust for Women and Children; Diocesan and King’s students cooked dinner for families staying at Ronald McDonald House; and St Kentigern Boys’ School students painted a mural for Middlemore Hospital and put together Christmas hampers for families from a local school in a low socio-economic area. These initiatives all provide students with an opportunity to give back to their local communities, be exposed to the diverse realities of everyday life, and meet people they may otherwise never interact with.

The ‘globalisation of gifting practices’ (Kenway & Fahey, 2014a) is illustrated through initiatives students in elite private schools in New Zealand are involved in. The importance of international mobility and connections stressed by elite private schools (Kenway & Fahey, 2014a) can also be argued to be reinforced through schools providing opportunities for international travel. For example, students at King’s College travelled to a school in Tonga, helping to tutor students and deliver school supplies. Primary school students from Diocesan School for Girls also travelled to Fiji to engage in a similar service programme. Additionally, St Kentigern College students participated in the World Vision 40-hour Famine, developing advertising campaigns (see Figure 6.11) to support their drive to raise money for hungry children living in third world countries. The development of positive civic attitudes was evident in the responses of several participants in the research who discovered their desire to help others. For example, within the context of discussing moving to her new school (School B), Lily described how

> it was a big change... more homework, fancy uniforms and classrooms, weird rules only girls in my classes, massive school and most of all more people. But for me, the most important thing I found out about that year (year 7) was my love for helping others more in need than myself. (Diary (D))

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7 Ronald McDonald House is a facility where families whose children are enduring long stays in hospital can live.
From these examples, it is clear that practices of giving through community service are integral to elite schools, and students’ fostering a desire to help others. Privilege and the operation of systems of privilege, can contribute to a culture of privilege developed in private schools which in turn promotes community orientation and positive civic attitudes (Ballard et al., 2014). However, as Kenway and Fahey (2014a) suggest, privilege is not necessarily challenged. Indeed, the demarcations of other groups in need of assistance, the provision of that assistance by the elite, and receipt by the disadvantaged, is a fundamental component of social stratification. In this way, privilege can be further reproduced through gifting practices, as they seek to instill values of compassion and the importance of giving back to the community. Therefore, gifting practices and community service are part of the institutional dimensions of privilege reproduced as elite schools attempt to portray a commonality and engagement with wider society, while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from other schools through other initiatives.

**Figure 6.11: St Kentigern College 40-hour Famine advertising campaign**

![Image of St Kentigern College 40-hour Famine advertising campaign](image)

In contrast to the success and community service reported, media representations also highlight controversial events students from elite private schools have been associated with. The reputations of the schools which are so carefully cultivated through websites and social media are fragile and in need of continued institutional and personal maintenance to retain their elite status representations. Several examples of the reporting of controversial events can be found, including, the distribution of a bottle opener keyring to boys attending the Christ's College Ball which was perceived by some to encourage drink-driving (Law, 2014); debates around student car parking provisions at Christ's College (Stewart & Mann, 2015); a public indecency incident involving St Cuthbert’s College students on a sports trip.
(Arthur-Worsop, 2014); hazing controversies and racial slurs being used at King’s College (Fuatai & Glucina, 2014; Blackstock, 2014); and a serious incident involving a prop and injuries to students at the St Kentigern College theatre production of Sweeny Todd (Nichol, 2016). The seriousness of these events varies, however, the fact that students from well-known, elite private schools were involved, seems to make them newsworthy. This fact was not lost on the students participating in this research, as articulated by Holly: “we get a lot more media attention than other schools, so say if public schools do stuff, but our school did something that wasn't as bad, it is published in the New Zealand Herald, and then everyone knows about it just because we are a private school” (Focus Group (FG)).

The reports of controversial, negative events linked to elite private schools highlight a side of the institutions which are understandably not promoted by the schools themselves. Emphasising symbols of success as well as trouble can amplify and diminish dominant representations for different people at different times. In this way, these events highlight the multiple representations of elite private schools which can be disrupted as the reproduction of privilege takes place against a complex backdrop of institutional norms.

6.3 Summary

Education is a key context in which privilege is learnt and reproduced in children’s lives, and differences in resourcing, culture, and orientation of schools influence how the learning of privilege might occur. As Koh and Kenway (2016, p. 7) suggest, elite schools “represent themselves to the world as places of distinction wherein affluence and influence are normalised”. Fitting with McDonald et al.’s (2012) conclusions, the material analysed in this chapter shows how elite private schools are balancing messages of elitism and exclusivity with commitments to diversity, inclusion, and community outreach. Schools are using rhetoric to enhance their reputation and leverage advantage in the competitive school market. Distinguishing themselves as elite institutions, but not elitist, is critical to the messages being portrayed by the schools. Further, it is evident that elite schools operate within local, national, and regional contexts, and are also caught up in wider global forces (Koh & Kenway, 2016). This results in differences in institutions which engage in initiatives that contribute to the institutional reproduction of privilege in different ways. Institutions as organisations and patterns of behaviour and social norms reveal how systems of privilege contribute to the perpetuation of unearned advantages.
Analysing the institutional dimensions of privilege through the lens of elite private schools shows how privilege lies within discursive structures which shape social relations. Additionally, the ways in which elite private schools as institutions can both enable and restrict the experiences of young people in regard to privilege has become apparent. Educational institutions provide the transmission and cultivation of knowledge, abilities, and skills and are therefore critical components in systems of privilege which are implicated in the process of socialisation. This observation helps to extend the argument that privilege is not existential, but rather is acquired, embodied and enacted through education at an elite private school. Drawing the two sections of this chapter together, I have developed a picture of what elite private schools in New Zealand are like as places in order to characterise the institutional dimensions of privilege as multivalent, symbolic, and discursive. The independent status of elite private schools contributes to the sense of eliteness and exclusivity which is reinforced by history and religious affiliations, geographical locations, campus infrastructure, and alumni networks. Further, the practices and educational philosophies of schools highlight key motifs (a well-rounded education, maximising potential, and community service) which are all framed as preparing students for their futures. The schools’ ’symbolic architecture’ (Wardman et al., 2010) is constructed through discourses of exclusivity and quality, thus reproducing privilege. However, the notions of privilege and elitism are not explicitly promoted by the schools, reflecting the pervasiveness of discourses of egalitarianism in New Zealand. Representations of elite private schools in the news media also seek to reinforce ideas of exclusivity, by both highlighting successes, but also controversial events which are deemed to be in opposition to expectations of elite private schools. Overall, I contend that examining the institutional dimensions of privilege is critical to understanding how systems of privilege operate and are perpetuated.
Symbolic dimensions of privilege

Alongside institutional dimensions of systems of privilege sit symbolic dimensions. Examining the symbolic dimensions of privilege reveals how discourses of privilege embedded in institutions are signified through explicit and implicit codes embedded in material and metaphorical signs. Collins (1993) explains the symbolic dimension of oppression as being comprised of widespread ideologies which are used to justify social relations of domination and marginalisation. Stereotypes are key to this dimension, as symbolic images become associated with different race, class, and gender groups (Collins, 1993). Taking the symbolic dimensions beyond the categorisation of subjects, this chapter explores how stereotypes and codes associated with practices of movement and consumption have a similar effect of perpetuating a culture of privilege. I contend that signifiers of privilege are encoded and decoded through discourses and practices of consumption and mobility. Critically, young people learn codes through processes of socialisation and enculturation which shape everyday practices. Metaphors of tunnelling, spacing, and timing highlight key themes associated with practices of mobility and consumption as manifestations of the symbolic dimensions of privilege. Movement in this context is understood through a mobilities lens, whereby the practice of movement is considered as important as the spaces of movement (Cresswell & Merriman, 2010). Consumption is also conceptualised in a broad sense as more than the purchasing and use
of goods and services, but rather including the acquisition of knowledge and ideas (Mansvelt, 2005) which contribute to young people’s understanding of the world around them and their futures. Making visible the unmarked discourses of privilege emphasises how symbolic dimensions of privilege are critical cogs in systems of privilege which operate through socialised education to have material effects on young peoples’ lived realities.

Before examining practices of movement and consumption, it is important to outline a framework for understanding the symbolic dimensions of privilege. I employ a discursive, semiotic approach to interpret stereotypes and discourses which feed into the construction of coded signifiers and systems of privilege. Objects, people, and practices can become coded symbols, given meaning through the application of shared frameworks of intelligibility, or discourses, which individuals and groups bring to them (Hall, 1997). A Foucauldian understanding of discourse, as a system of representation, and as being about the production of knowledge through language and practice is critical to understanding the symbolic dimensions of privilege. As Gregory (1994, p. 11) explains, the notion of discourse encapsulates the “network of signs, symbols and practices through which we make our world(s) meaningful to ourselves and others”. Echoing this idea, Howard et al. (2014) suggest that privilege works through memberships, actions, and languages. Young people attending elite private schools are therefore argued to be able to learn and perform a privileged way of knowing and being through the interpretation of signs and symbols imbued with shared cultural codes.

Fundamentally, meaning is produced and constructed rather than simply found, as groups and individuals read signs and in turn reinforce or resist stereotypes through languages and actions. Cultural, social, and economic capital is critical to the interpretation of signs and symbols. As Bourdieu (1977) sought to show, individuals embody social positions, enacting this embodiment through movement and social practices which in turn reproduce social differences. Thus, the accumulation and transformation of capital through education at elite private schools structures how young people engage with and interpret everyday signs and codes associated with practices of movement and consumption. The unearned advantages and entitlements associated with privilege (Mcintosh, 1988) materialise through the interpretation of cultural codes and discourses attached to signs (languages and practices). Examining these practices helps to mark out privilege, which is difficult to access and see because it has become a normalised, ingrained component of the
fabric of everyday life (Twine and Gardener, 2013). Through the representation of discourses and languages which act as symbols, cultural stereotypes are reinforced and resisted as part of the symbolic dimensions of privilege.

7.1 Privileged mobilities: Tunnelling and spacing

Through a mobilities lens, movement at the level of the mundane through to more spectacular international travel provides insights into how coded discourses of privilege are identified and reproduced. As Hopkins (2010) observes, there are divisions in young people’s use of spaces and places based on their social position in relation to categories of class, race, gender, and sexuality. This section begins by discussing modes of mobility, including young people’s descriptions of the realities of their everyday mobility, as well as their imaginings of a world without motorised transport. Secondly, a representative selection of mental maps are examined to provide insights into how discourses of privilege shape mobility patterns and attitudes toward places. The metaphor of tunnelling is explored to suggest that systems of privilege contribute to a channelling effect shaping knowledge and use of space. This idea draws on Graham and Marvin’s (2001) notion of tunnel effects, which can be applied to interpret how systems of privilege contribute to mediated mobilities experienced by young people. Moving beyond the local context, international travel movements are then discussed. International travel is a significant part of participants’ lives, with a range of benefits such as a heightened awareness of social issues emerging through encounters. The notion of spacing (Crouch, 2003) is used to explain how young people seek to distance themselves from the privilege they are afforded in a local context, but feel more comfortable discussing encounters with inequality overseas. Young people decode signs of privilege and poverty through practices of mobility in local and global contexts, with a range of material and immaterial effects. These effects highlight the significance of symbolic dimensions of privilege being understood discursively to reveal how systems of privilege operate.

7.1.1 Everyday mobility: Mediated movements

Privilege manifests through young people’s mobility patterns and use of space. Everyday mobility for young people participating in this research occurred through a range of modes. Travel to school by bus and train was common, a trend which is likely an outcome of the fact that many students attending elite private schools live a significant
distance away. Based on home suburbs indicated by participants, cohorts of students attracted to the elite private schools are from suburbs with high socio-economic status. As such, contrary to common perceptions of young people being driven everywhere by their parents, there is evidence that public transport was commonly utilised, not just to get to school, but also to allow them to meet up with friends outside of school. As Nathan explains, "I’ve got a hop card so just load that up at home and it’s all good. I also use Uber quite a lot. It’s really good and cheap. Public transport is convenient, not getting in your parents way. You just say you are going out, and you are good to go" (FG). While Auckland’s public transport system is renowned for its flaws and inconveniences, Nathan and others suggested that the independence afforded them by being able to access and use trains and buses is significant. Interestingly, common public stereotypes of public transport and walking (Kearns et al., 2012) being regarded as less elite than movement in automobiles (for example, buses being known as ‘loser cruisers’), do not appear to influence young people’s attitudes and behaviours in this research. However, this may be a function of their age, rather than socio-economic status. Travelling to school by bus and train contributes to the normalisation of public transport and their enthusiasm for utilising these modes for other journeys.

Simultaneously, all participants recognised that cars were key to their mobility patterns, as summarised by Abi’s response to a question about how places are accessed: “Car, it is just easier” (FG). When public transport was not accessible or convenient, the car and chauffeuring by parents was important. These young people were not able to get a New Zealand driver’s licence (for which the minimum age is 16 years) so their movements were sometimes reliant on parents and other family members being available to drive them. Car transport also enabled access to more exclusive sports clubs for some. For example, Hannah, a keen and successful swimmer explained how she “decided that my swimming club was not taking me where I wanted to go. I quickly moved to the best club in NZ (United)... my parents now spend their days picking me up and dropping me off to different locations from the city to Manukau” (D). Hannah is very grateful to her parents and acknowledges that without their help, access to this highly regarded swimming club would be difficult, and thus the benefits afforded by belonging to this club would not be experienced. Theses anecdotes highlight the range of mobilities young people utilise as well as how increased mobility and subsequent access to other places is possible because of the resources available and family support.
It is widely known that there is a reliance on motorised forms of transport in many Western cities. Seeking to challenge young people’s perceptions and get them to think about alternative transport options provided interesting insights into attitudes toward mobility and everyday experiences. The following are representative of responses to the focus group prompt ‘Imagine there are no cars, buses, boats, planes, or trains? How would this change your life?’

William: “Even if we had a lot of stuff, it would be a prehistoric mindset, where you can’t really grow knowledge, you would be stuck in the way the village you grew up in functioned.”

Andrew: “Isolated. The world would be much smaller, less outside influence. The variety of food you can eat would be tiny comparatively. Only what you could grow or access from the local area.”

Mia: “If we don’t have any trucks or cars or anything, how do we make buildings?”

Drawing on Cresswell’s (2010) notion of constellations of mobility, the participants can imagine very different experiences and practices of mobility. William’s reference to a ‘prehistoric mindset’ and associating mobility with knowledge emphasises a recognition that learning and extending oneself in contemporary times is significantly enhanced by mobility. The discussion also highlighted an imagined future where the potentiality for growth, both at an individual and societal scale, is restricted due to limited mobility. William and Andrew both acknowledge that movement is key to being exposed to new things which can aid in personal growth. Everyday practices which are intertwined with local and global processes are expected to be constrained if motorised transport was no longer available. For example, the ways in which everyday life is all about mobility were acknowledged by participants, including how mobility enhances access to food and education, as well as contributes to the development of infrastructure as Mia highlighted. Notions of time and space, which are argued to have been compressed through technology and mobility (Graham & Marvin, 2001) are symbolised in these responses. For example, Andrew imagines a future where the world is much “smaller, less outside influence” (FG) which highlights an awareness of the interconnected world he lives in, as well as the ways in which his world is made bigger through practices of mobility. The importance of mobility for participants’ current experience is revealed through their discussions of the effects of a future without such freedom to move. However, William also commented that
some people do not have access to such a diverse range of transport options: “in a way, some people are already living like that. Like, seeing other places is great to grow your knowledge and see new things, but not everybody can do that” (FG). This awareness, as will be discussed later in this chapter, is heightened by international encounters with others who are not as privileged. The thought of motorised transport no longer being available as concerns around peak oil being reached in the future also prompted participants to acknowledge that they would not be attending the school they do due to the large distances between home and school which cannot practically be traversed daily: “it would make it seriously hard to get to school. No way would I go to School A, it would just be impossible” (FG). Given that it is established that elite private schools are key to the reproduction of privilege, the realities of travelling long distances to schools outside of local neighbourhoods emphasises the importance of mobility to the reproduction of privilege.

Modes of mobility are critical to movement, but equally important are the patterns of mobility, and the use of space which occurs through mobility. To explore young people’s spatial awareness and use of space, participants were asked to draw a mental map to represent ‘My Auckland’. A mental or cognitive map “reflects the worlds as some person believes it to be…” (Downs & Stea, 1977). Analysis of such maps therefore provides insights into how spaces are coded, and in turn how direct and indirect experiences contribute to decoding messages embedded in spaces (see, for example, Collins, 2012; Halseth & Doddridge, 2000). Specifically, the mental maps drawn by participants provide insight into how coded signifiers of privilege manifest in terms of young people’s interpretation and utilisation of space. As Reay and Lucey (2000) show, social categories of difference such as class structure experiences of places. Drawing on a representative selection of mental maps produced by participants (Figures 7.1-7.8), it is clear how direct and indirect experiences influence young people’s use of space. This data provides insights into how places are coded with discourses and symbols of privilege and therefore how symbolic dimensions of privilege operate as part of systems of privilege.
Figure 7.1: ‘My Auckland’ Amelia’s mental map

Figure 7.2: ‘My Auckland’ Logan’s mental map
Figure 7.3: ‘My Auckland’ Lily’s mental map

Figure 7.4: ‘My Auckland’ Alex’s mental map
**Figure 7.5:** ‘My Auckland’ William’s mental map

**Figure 7.6:** ‘My Auckland’ Nicholas’ mental map
**Figure 7.7:** ‘My Auckland’ Ella’s mental map

**Figure 7.8:** ‘My Auckland’ Abi’s mental map
Figures 7.1-7.8 include a range of places which are meaningful to the participants such as home, friend’s and family’s houses, malls, schools, the inner city, the airport, other consumption spaces such as restaurants, cafes, movies, supermarkets, and libraries, sports facilities, churches, iconic Auckland landmarks, open green spaces, and beaches. While not drawn to scale or directionally accurate, there was a spatial clustering of places participants drew with many locations being in Central and Eastern parts of Auckland. This pattern reflects the home suburbs of participants and not necessarily the locations of the schools. All participants explained that the places they included in their mental maps were places they visited often or were important to them, as encapsulated in Abi’s comment: “they [places] are all personal. Everyone will have something the same, like school and home, but your hobbies influence other places. I put my dance studio, singing room. Things that matter to me and that I go to often” (FG). The inclusion of sports grounds, for example in Figures 7.3 and 7.6 is illustrative of the fact that Lily and Nicholas spend a lot of time training and competing on these grounds. Other extracurricular activities such as tutoring, drama, dance, and singing were also important factors influencing the inclusion of spaces. For example, Alex was the only participant to include the Town Hall on his mental map (Figure 7.4) as this is where he goes a lot to sing with the various choirs he is a part of. Additionally, William (Figure 7.5) included the places where he receives extra tutoring and drama lessons. Abi’s map, while sparse in terms of the number of locations included compared with others’ maps, highlights the importance of singing and dancing to her everyday life by including studios for these activities. These inclusions were reinforced by her commentary in which she explained

_I enjoy dance because you dance to music and nobody really cares what you look like when you dance, and you don’t have to worry about anything. And I like acting because you don’t have to be yourself, you can be somebody else which is kinda nice. I like singing just because you can belt it really, it is all you want to do, play the music up loud and sing. (FG)_

The inclusion of the airport on many mental maps (see, for example, Figures 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7) is also revealing, and correlates with the range of international travel experiences discussed by participants. The places young people included are symbolic in that the location of these spaces within the urban landscape are coded with privilege, whereby one’s ability to access these places, as well as participation in activities in these places is influenced by levels of social, economic, and cultural capital.
Friendships and family ties were also identified as being critical to the inclusion of particular spaces on the mental maps. For example, Ella explained that she included the inner city on her map as this was somewhere that she likes to go to spend time with friends. This inclusion reveals how enhanced mobility and freedom is a result of friendships and relationship with others in similar social positions, as well as greater access to resources (Hopkins, 2010). Consumption spaces, for example, malls, restaurants, cinemas, and supermarkets also featured prominently in the mental maps (see, for example, Figures 7.1-7.4, 7.6-7.8) as places where young people like to socialise with friends, and also where they are able to access the goods and services which have come to symbolise privilege. Friends and family members’ homes were also prominent features on the maps, demonstrating the importance young people place on the social networks they are a part of. Being able to maintain social relationships is critical to the maintenance and operation of systems of privilege, reinforcing Holland et al.’s (2007, p. 98) suggestion that social capital is a result of “collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships”. Belonging and engaging in privileged networks is maintained by engagement in socially coded spaces and negotiated patterns of movement. Building on the importance of connections, Logan and William’s mental maps (Figures 7.2 and 7.5) also incorporate more hidden urban infrastructure with internet links radiating out from their homes. These features suggest the centrality of connectivity and technology. Logan also labelled a computer and the digital platform YouTube as being inside his home and hence important to his everyday life (the role of technology in the operation of symbolic dimensions of privilege is discussed in more depth later in this chapter). Symbolic images and perceptions of privilege, often related to socio-economic status are encoded in places which, in turn, influences young people’s mobilities. Subsequently, it can be argued that mobilities enable the reproduction of privilege, as discourses of privilege become further engrained through movement and use of space.

The areas not included on mental maps are just as important to consider as the places young people do visit. When discussing the mental maps, participants were prompted to consider what they had not included, and why this was so. In a broad sense, areas to the West, North, and South of the Central City were not included on the maps. There are of course exceptions, with some participants drawing the airport, which is located south of the central city, and others (for example, Figure 7.3) who have family ties to areas in Western suburbs. Many reasons, linked to both direct and indirect experiences, were provided to
explain the clustering of spaces represented on the maps. Firstly, codes attached to some spaces imply messages of danger and fear which are verbalised by students: “You be careful which train station you get off at”. This street sense has developed through the socially constructed reputations of areas being unsafe, as well as indirect experiences of being told stories from other students who have heard negative accounts of areas. For example, William explained in the focus group how he had heard stories of “the occasional mugging of a School A student at the train station and you just hope it is not you. You don’t want to hang around there for too long. There are just some areas, especially South Auckland, Glen Innes and West Tamaki that you don’t want to go to” (FG). This expression of fear has material implications on where young people go and how they use space, and is a reflection of the way in which particular areas of Auckland are coded based on the positionality of people living there. Therefore, it is evident that the disadvantaged status of some areas is also perpetuated through the operation of symbolic dimensions of privilege. Not having family or friendship ties to the areas was another explanation put forward to explain the compositions of the mental maps. Therefore, social networks, social and cultural capital, and attachment to place inform young people’s spatial awareness. The maps reveal the subjective relationships (perceptions, attitudes, and experiences) individuals have toward the objective world they live in (White & Green, 2012). However, as with the participants in Howard’s (2008) study, the participants refrained from making comments about specific areas, potentially to avoid being labelled as prejudiced and to display the politically correct image they have been taught. Encounters with places therefore signify an understanding of the cultural and social codes, included in space, but also highlight feelings of exclusion from other spaces. Learning privilege and learning where to be seen and where not to go, reflects a translation of symbolic codes attached to space into practices. Practices of movement show how the culture of privilege regulates social practices, influences conduct, and consequently has practical effects on everyday life.

Thinking through the ways in which participants’ representations and use of space reflects the operation of systems of privilege, the metaphor of tunnelling is useful. Graham and Marvin (2001) discuss the notion of tunnel effects in terms of splintered infrastructure networks in cities and the ways in which tunnelling effects mediate and construct diverse experiences of time and space. However, this notion is also useful for interpreting the ways in which the mediated movements of young people can isolate them from reality. Systems of privilege generate tunnelling effects, whereby the movement of young people reflects
and reinforces local topographies of privilege. Firstly, the distance many students have to travel to elite private schools means that a corridor of sorts is created in young people’s mental maps. This tunnelling effect means that other areas of the city are bypassed and young people do not associate themselves with these areas. This disassociation from specific places creates a spatiality which also reflects the socioeconomic gradients of suburbs in Auckland. Young people’s exposure to different parts of the city is therefore mediated by the routes they take to school, reinforcing the lived effects of systems of privilege. Building on this metaphor, the discussion now turns to exploring privilege as a generator and outcome of socio-spatial practices and encounters on a global scale.

7.1.2 International travel as a symbolic manifestation of privilege

The spatiality of privileged young people’s lives may be constrained in a local context, but it is simultaneously extended on a global scale. Overseas travel was a common topic of discussion in all focus groups, with young people able to express a myriad of experiences they have had travelling internationally with their families. Participants all loved travelling because “you get to see new places and experience things that you wouldn’t be able to if you stayed home all the time”. Throughout their childhoods, participants had travelled to a diverse range of countries, including Belgium, Japan, the Maldives, Europe, Fiji, England, Taiwan, India, USA, France, Italy, Egypt, Jordan, New Caledonia, Switzerland, Scotland, Greece, and Tahiti (FG and D). Domestic travel around New Zealand was not prominently discussed, but it was evident that participants had indeed travelled to many different locations around New Zealand including Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown, and Wanaka. Strong family ties were often reasons for travelling to these places as well as opportunities for outdoor activities such as skiing and tramping. Despite this significant travel experience, young people still had clear intentions to travel further and could name places they wanted to visit without hesitation, including: Thailand, Tahiti, Bali, Hawaii, Morocco, Croatia, Antarctica, New York, Bora Bora, Europe, Singapore, and Samoa. Interestingly, many participants noted that they wanted to go beyond traditional tourist destinations, at both the scale of a country and within cities. For example, Lily noted that she would love to visit “Malaysia, and travel not just to the pretty parts, but the other parts and see what it is really like there” (FG). When discussing travel, young people were enthusiastic, and their attitudes signal how international travel
was an ordinary part of their lives. For many it was taken for granted that they would continue to travel extensively, both independently and with family.

Participants identified a range of benefits afforded through their various travel experiences. Firstly, travelling has taught young people lessons and widened their knowledge about how the world works and the everyday realities of life for different social groups. There was often reference to sites of disadvantage and impoverishment that young people noticed while travelling, as Lara explained in her diary entry:

*Paris was one of my favourite cities that I visited because it was so incredibly interesting to see how different their way of life was compared to mine back in New Zealand. It felt as if the citizens of Paris were very fancy and rich and there was an air of superiority to them that the simple, country people back home could not fake if they tried. However, this is only how I felt before I saw the real Paris… I say this because in reality, the streets of Paris are littered with beggars and thieves, some faking fatal [sic] injuries, some disguised as businessmen and some that looked like they were simply out of a movie, with matted hair, a dark cloak and concealed faces streaked with dirt. It was extraordinary to think that the rich, posh Parisians lived amongst these poorer, less fortunate souls. It was fascinating to see such a stark contrast, I had never seen humans so poor yet never seen humans so rich.*

With numerous stories like this being told by participants, it became evident that travelling exposed them to the stark visibility of inequalities. Symbols and stereotypes of oppression associated with homelessness were, in this case, marking discourses of poverty. Imagining a more egalitarian society was common, as encapsulated by Abi’s comment: “I wish everybody would come home, have a nice meal, a nice bed to sleep, but they don’t. They just have to resort to the street and eat what they find out of the rubbish bins, which is sad, but the reality for some…” (FG). However, through the discussions a sense was garnered which implied that what was being seen by young people was only the poverty being experienced by others, and the connection back to the privilege they experience was not made. This reinforces the unmarked, invisible nature of privilege discussed by Twine and Gardener (2013), which restricts an individual’s ability to see their role in the perpetuation of inequalities. The realisation of imaginative futures such as Abi’s, where people can access the necessities of everyday life is linked to making systems of privilege visible,
moving beyond the individual. Some participants did note that they thought that more young people like themselves should be exposed to the realities of inequality as explained by Charlie who had travelled to India:

*One time I went to India. It is definitely something for our generation that you have to see. Because it definitely shows you what we have, all the privileges we have, that everyone over there has to work for. They would have to work all the time just to make a living, not to have tonnes and tonnes of stuff.* (FG)

This reflection demonstrates the exposure to inequality and difficulties of everyday life for some which are so different to the worlds’ participant’s experience. Recognising their own privilege, by being exposed to those less fortunate, is one of the ways in which privilege is made visible. In other words, systems of privilege embedded in the fabric of everyday life can be made visible and a language to discuss privilege found by looking to the other (Wildman & Davis, 1995). Seeing what other people did not have allowed Charlie to see the privileges he experienced. Charlie’s call for all young people to see inequalities to understand their own privileges is not an attempt to romanticise inequality and poverty, but is a way for young people like him to appreciate everything they have which others simply cannot access. Therefore, developing an awareness of stark inequalities, as these young people have through international travel, is critical to marking the privilege that they experience and revealing how systems of privilege function in society.

The retelling of these scenes of inequality in an international context also often referred to inequalities in New Zealand. Two key perspectives are identified. Firstly, comparisons were made to suggest that New Zealand does not have inequality as they have seen in other places. As Lara explains finishing off her story of the trip to Paris: *“It was really different and made me realise, in France there are a lot of really rich people and a lot of really poor people which you don’t see in New Zealand”*. The tunnelling effect of young peoples’ mobility, which means that they are not as exposed to the realities of everyday life outside their ‘privileged bubbles’ (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2009), may be one explanation for the lack of knowledge some have about inequalities in New Zealand. Interestingly, prominent places in New Zealand which participants have visited, such as Wanaka and Queenstown, are also sites of privilege. Further, the mobilisation of notions of egalitarianism and a belief in the presence of a classless society in New Zealand is arguably revealed through young peoples’ attitudes and practices. The attitudes and
comments about inequality could also be regarded as an attempt by young people to distance themselves from the privilege they are afforded in a local context. Crouch’s (2003, p. 1945) conceptualisation of the term ‘spacing’ is useful to explore the “subjective and practical ways in which the individual handles his or her material surroundings”. Interpreting the notion of space in a metaphorical and practical way, a range of strategies are implemented by young people to put space between themselves and the privilege they are afforded. These strategies include discussing poverty and disadvantage, and seeking to position themselves as being just like any other teenager. The tunnelling effect of young peoples’ mobilities also contributes to the practice of spacing. Discourses of privilege embedded in place, therefore shape young people’s performance of privilege, as they seek to distance themselves from broader social realities.

Secondly, and in comparison, there were some participants who recognised that inequalities visible overseas are also apparent in New Zealand. William’s awareness of inequalities in New Zealand is emphasised when he stated “you don’t see many Maori or Pacifica people in affluent areas, living in affluent areas. It is a whole lot of wasted potential and we could do better…” (FG). As William continues, “In America, there is a whole lot of homeless people. Like, how can you be a proper community and society, and think you are a great country when you have so many homeless people. New Zealand is the same. The lack of respect for human life” (FG). This is one of the few examples where the presence of inequalities in New Zealand was highlighted and compared to the visibility of inequalities in overseas countries. William continues, stating

\textit{New Zealand is such a small, insignificant place. You go to Europe, America and it’s different. Some people haven’t been out of New Zealand, not just some people, but so many people, but we never really see that side (very poor) because we are so insulated. Even friends that you might think are poor, aren’t actually that bad off…} (FG)

Young people’s fleeting encounters with the ‘other’ are significant and reactions are shaped by perceptions and imaginaries which are in turn influenced by their privileged position. However, the encounters are memorable and affecting for young people, whose international travel experiences can in some instances provide the context for evidence of how the use of capital can influence the interpretation of cultural codes, reinforcing the operation of systems of privilege. While travel experiences were generally seen in a very
positive light, there was also an awareness from some young people that the travel experiences they have had while young do not leave opportunity for many new travel experiences. As Mia explained:

_In Year 7 we rented a boat and sailed around Tahiti. It is one of the once in a lifetime chances, but it ends, and it is like, it was good, but I feel like I did it at such a young age, that you don’t really have anything to look forward to. Like there is always places to go, but I feel like it changed my perspective. Being young and my Dad working for airlines, we always went everywhere. So I have been around Europe and America and all that, and it is kind of like, there is not that many places left. I feel like I need to travel more wisely, I will go to places that I have already been, but I don’t want to go anywhere new right now... (FG)_

While not a common attitude, Mia’s thoughts reveal insights into the unexpected consequences of extensive travel during childhood, as she perceives this restricts her ability to be able to discover and travel to new places in the future. Learning more about themselves as individuals as well as the realities of everyday life for those less fortunate in other countries are seen as positive outcomes of the vast travel experiences the young people have been able to enjoy. The operation of systems of privilege which contributes to the ability for young people attending elite private schools to travel is thus further reinforced through new experiences and encounters with the ‘other’.

There is a contradiction between perceptions and realities of privileged young people’s mobilities in local and global context. There are definite advantages and extended mobilities afforded in an international context, as evidenced by the vast distance participants have travelled on a global scale. However, at a local, city scale, their freedom and independence is mediated by class boundaries. The tunnelled, confined experiences of urban space at a local scale restricts young people’s exposure to the realities of everyday life. In comparison, these realities were starkly visible to the young people when they have travelled internationally. Discourses of privilege which become embedded in practices and places shape how young people move, where they go, and therefore how they come to understand the world and their privileged position. It remains evident that privilege is often invisible to those who experience it, particularly in local contexts, while young people find it much easier to discuss instances of poverty and disadvantage visible in international settings. Overall, the practices of mobility described by young people who attend elite
private schools provide insight into how symbolic dimensions are critical to the continued operation and maintenance of systems of privilege.

7.2 Consuming knowledge

The act of consumption in terms of purchasing and valuing goods which symbolise or resist privilege contributes to the construction, performance, and negotiation of identity. However, as Mansvelt (2005) argues, consumption can be understood as more than the act of purchasing goods. Instead, a wide range of objects and services can be consumed through a variety of mediums. In this way, the following discussion turns to a reflection on the role of technology as enabling and disabling symbols and signs of privilege. Firstly, the ways in which notions of social and cultural capital, as symbols of privilege, are critically maintained and decoded using technology is examined. A focus on young people’s consumption of coded knowledge which comes to affect their aspirations is then discussed. The tunnelled ways in which young people attending elite private schools are exposed to options for their futures provides the foundation for the development of very specific aspirations in relation to education, employment, home ownership, and personal relationships. Knowledge as a form of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is accumulated and coded with discourses of privilege related to expectation and entitlement, to the extent that a belief in a right to aspire to achieve is evident. A belief in the right to a successful future can become an implicit code of privilege, an unearned entitlement which allows for conferred dominance (after McIntosh 1989), performed through young peoples’ narratives of their future aspirations. The development of this belief and a global outlook are outcomes of classed, privileged enculturation and the accumulation of vast bodies of knowledge through everyday practices, including local and international movements. This reflects Bourdieu’s (1984) suggestion that one’s social location in society can result in particular consumption practices, as individuals and groups seek to perform privilege. Performances and practices of consumption therefore contribute to the symbolic dimensions of privilege.

7.2.1 Technology

Technology, referring to electronic devices in this context, is central to the lives of most young people, and is a key medium through which symbolic dimensions of privilege operate. Values and meanings attached to technology can be interpreted as enabling
symbols and signs of privilege, such as social and cultural capital. Simultaneously, technology can also be identified as a symbol of privilege. Just as everyday life is all about mobility, it is also apparent that young people’s everyday life is also all about technology. The roles of technology in affording young people greater independence, in providing opportunities to learn about new things, to meet new people, and maintain social relationships were all important. These practices are also reflected in the role of technology in the lives of different groups of young people (see, for example, Marlowe et al. (2017) in the context of ethnic minority tertiary students). As Liam explained, “we have literally been born into technology” (FG). Building on this comment, William notes how “yea, we couldn’t live without it now. Of course they did 20 years ago fine, but we now would find it hard to live without it, it is just a great tool. But in a way it is also, it is really good, but it is also really bad, kinda 50/50” (FG). The contradictory nature of technology was a common theme which was enthusiastically discussed by the participants, highlighting how it is critical to their everyday lives, but they also recognise issues it can cause.

Technology has contributed considerably to young people’s development of a broader knowledge base as a form of embodied cultural capital. Discussing local issues they would confront if they were the Prime Minister of New Zealand, young people discussed homelessness, housing affordability, social welfare, child poverty, the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA)\(^8\), and minimum wages as critical issues to be addressed. Participants also had knowledge of local political issues, such as the New Zealand flag debate\(^9\) which was prominent in the media at the time of the focus groups. Some insightful comments, reflecting wider debates about the flag were made as represented by Abi’s reflection: “Do not change the flag! It is 26 million dollars, such as waste of money. There is so much history behind the flag and they want to go and bin it…” (FG). Despite having passionate opinions on the flag debate and other social issues, young people’s ability to identify and discuss global issues was much more comprehensive.

An increased awareness of what happens in the world, as well as what could happen in the future, outside of national boundaries was evident in participants’ discussions and

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\(^8\) The TPPA is an international trade agreement that would liberalise trade and investments between 12 countries. There has been significant public debate about the perceived risks and benefits of the agreement for New Zealand.

\(^9\) In 2015-2016, the New Zealand Government held two referendums to determine whether the New Zealand Flag would be changed. There was considerable public debate at the time this research was being undertaken. Debate centred on the amount of money ($26 million) being spent on the referendum, but also the flag designs. In the end, the result of the referendum was that the flag would not be changed.
reflections on the role of technology in everyday life. Accessing the media via technology is a critical way young people were educated about important global issues. For example, Chloe very passionately described her perspective:

_Global problems I feel strongly about are the gender gaps between men and women, and also the strong economic gaps in some countries. There are many living in poverty, and while people are starving in Africa, large food-chain restaurants such as McDonald’s exist in the ‘richer’ countries which lead to obesity in places where food is plentiful._ (D)

Global tensions related to religion and culture were also identified by participants as issues they feel strongly about. For example, Anthony comments on “how religion can affect society, such as ISIS, they are quite extreme, but Islamic racial segregations were concerning” (FG). The continued implementation of Sharia Law in Saudi Arabia, racially motivated shootings in America, the American Presidential Election and potential success of Donald Trump, child labour, capital punishment, climate change, criminal execution, minimum wages, and the war on terror were all identified as concerning issues. At the time of the focus groups, the terrorist attacks on the Bataclan Theatre in Paris had just occurred. Reflecting on the event, Lily captivated the group with her insightful comment:

_Yes, 129 people died in Paris, but more people die from poverty than terrorism. Then they went and dropped bomb on ISIS places and thousands died. They are still people. Paris, is everyone’s perfect place, but the other events don’t get publicised. It’s a big deal, but hundreds of thousands of people die each day from other things and nobody cares too much about that. If we can care so much about Paris, why can’t we care so much about other things. We do, but we just don’t know about it, they don’t report it. War doesn’t solve everything._ (FG)

Others in the group Lily participated in also went on to explain similar attitudes, highlighting an awareness of politics associated with media representations and the reality of what is going on in the world. The gap between rhetoric and action in politics was also discussed, as William explains “the way we are looking at global warming right now. Because people are like, we should do something about it, but it is kind of like, it is like saying you are going to do some exercise. You talk about it, but never end up doing it” (FG). Participants’ awareness of global issues is arguably enabled and developed through their engagement with technology and consumption of knowledge through different forms
of media. Parents’ embodied capital and interest in political issues is also likely to have influenced young people’s curiosity in keeping up to date with important issues, that may not affect them directly, but are nonetheless concerning. The accumulation of this knowledge as embodied cultural capital, as part of the symbolic dimensions of privilege, contributes to representations of privilege. While participants were aware of these issues, there was a sense that most felt somewhat powerless to influence these events. However, some ambition and confidence was displayed, shaping their aspirations for a world free from the effects of processes such as climate change and poverty. Being involved in events such as the 40-hour famine, raising money for those less fortunate, and preparing to study degrees which are perceived to be associated with these issues are some of the practical steps the participants were taking to enhance their sense of agency to influence these events.

While technology contributes to a broadening of knowledge, technology can have positive and negative effects on young people’s experiences, wellbeing, and identities. When discussing what participants would like to do that they have never done before, Abi provided an interesting response: “you know what it would be, and I know how silly this sounds, but it is to do stuff without a laptop. Because we do everything on a laptop, do it on Google. If I don’t know what I am doing, put it into Google and the answer is just there” (FG). Mia followed up this comment, highlighting the novelty of using a dictionary: “Yea, like actually pulling out a book, a dictionary and having to look up a word” (FG). Technology is described by participants as “running our lives” and the negative side of social media was a prominent topic of conversation. For example, Mia highlighted a conflict between real and virtual friendships:

I feel like I would change the fact that when you get social media, like Instagram or Facebook, people expect you to have all these followers and friends and stuff like that. But just because you are not friends with everyone doesn’t mean that you are not a good person. People assume that if you get Facebook, if you don’t have like a thousand friends, they just kind of assume that nobody really knows who you are. (FG)

This sentiment also highlights a recognition of the importance of social capital, or in this case being seen to be involved in important social networks which are perceived to have benefits. This perspective is also evident in the opinions of ethnic minority young people whose presentation of self on social media was carefully cultivated as they feel a sense of
judgement from others online (Marlowe et al., 2017). Being able to retain strong social networks, particularly with family, through technology is widely regarded as a positive use of technology (Ergler et al., 2016; Longhurst, 2013). For many participants, large numbers of immediate and extended family live overseas, so applications such as Skype were the portal through which communication could be maintained. Communication with family and friends was critical to the maintenance of social networks which are seen to be beneficial to everyday life. This belief was strongly articulated by Anthony, who explained how attending elite schools taught him “how to connect with people, the more you connect with your friends, the more you connect with other people and you can develop those networks, public and social skills” (FG). Technology is therefore understood as a medium through which symbolic dimensions of privilege in terms of social capital are maintained and developed.

Despite highlighting the benefits of enhanced communication through technology, participants also countered this narrative by considering the perceived anti-social nature of social media platforms. Picking up on the idea of technology as a symbol of privilege, Chloe also explains how the use of technology can hinder social interactions:

> There are trends that people follow, and everyone wants to have the latest iPhone or iPad or Samsung phone. Especially at School B, you see everyone on their iPhone 6s, earphones plugged in, socially isolated and not having conversations. I feel like technology has made us interact less. They call it social media, but I think it is more anti-social. (FG)

The anti-social nature of social media was a common remark made by participants who saw the benefits of enhanced communication, but also acknowledged the negative effects in terms of online bullying and mental health issues:

> Some people’s lives are changed forever. What is on the internet, you can’t get it down.... Bullying online has made people take their lives, I mean, arguably, social media at least has done more bad than good in terms of people taking their lives, and that really isn’t acceptable. But without technology, many people would also struggle to live... (Lucas, FG).

Weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of technology, participants agreed that “in a way it is good, but in a smaller way that it is bad” (FG). The centrality of technology to
young people’s everyday lives has made them aware of the positive and negative effects and uses of technology which are implicated in the reproduction of privilege.

As well as being an enabler of signs of privilege, and having negative consequences for some young people, technology can also be a symbol of privilege in and of itself. In a privileged context, such as an elite private school, the act of consuming technology is not symbolic, but having the ‘right brand’ is critical. This became evident on many occasions during focus group discussions, where participants engaged in debates about the use of Apple versus Samsung devices. This tension is represented in the following conversation which began with a question about pressures to conform to particular trends:

Andrew: At School A, it not so much about what you wear, because with a uniform you rarely see people out of uniform. But have, Apple.

William: Yea, Apple. Apart from the few guys who have Samsung, like the other 50% of the population in the world! But heaps of people have Apple. Even if someone has an Apple 3GS, they still think they are better than you if you have a non apple phone. And it is kind of like, bro, it is 6 years old, get over it.

Andrew: It’s just a phone.

Liam: Always trying to have the best things in the world that are possible.

Being seen to have the ‘right’ brands comes from the codes that are attached to those brands and what the products signify to others. The dominance of Apple products was evident when, during a break in one focus group, the boys got out their iPads. As a performance of privilege, the act of being seen to have access to and utilise technology from the right brands is another component of symbolic dimensions of privilege.

7.2.2 Aspirations: Tunnelling and timing

The consumption of knowledge through technology is critical to the symbolic dimensions of privilege, specifically, the consumption and representation of knowledge associated with aspirations. Unprompted in the initial focus groups, participants began discussing their future aspirations, which reveal a sense of expectation as well as a right to aspire to achieve a successful future. There were two key dimensions to the aspirations put forward: one linked to education and employment, and the other associated with more personal endeavours and familial circumstances.
Aspirations associated with time after finishing high school fell predominately within the dichotomy of learning or earning. Almost all participants aspired to engage in further education at a tertiary level. Moving on to tertiary education was regarded as a normative occurrence immediately after school, and their educational journeys were precisely timed to ensure they could imagine a successful future. To give this result perspective, of the 60,000 students who left school in New Zealand in 2016, only 33.3% were enrolled in a degree level programme by the end of 2016 (Education Counts, 2017). However, there are significant differences in school leaver rates of enrolment in tertiary education when comparing between deciles. For example, 55% of school leavers from decile 9 and 10 schools were enrolled in a degree level programme the year after finishing school, while only 14.4% from decile 1 and 2 schools progressed directly to a degree programme (Education Counts, 2017). When discussing aspirations, the body language and expression of the participants suggested that attending University was perhaps expected by their parents and other options were not considered or promoted. Their immediate, non-hesitant response to discussions of their future aspirations can be read as displaying a socially constructed sense of expectation and entitlement, an unquestioned assumption that they will attend university. This is another example of the effect that tunnelling can have on young people’s lived realities, as options outside of tertiary education were not considered desirable. Many participants had very clear plans for their future in tertiary education, with these plans clearly oriented to the next goal of successful employment. Imagining futures where the timing of transitions to education and employment varied did not come across as a possibility for many participants, whose minds were clearly set on following in the footsteps of others they knew. These participants’ aspirations demonstrate the sense of entitlement associated with privilege (Pease, 2010) which can be reproduced as young people’s beliefs and aspirations are structured by systems of privilege. Therefore, the effects of systems of privilege on young people’s aspirations results in the funnelling of immediate futures through investment in tertiary education, revealing the symbolic dimensions of privilege.

When faced with the prompt, ‘In 10 years from now…’, participants identified a range of occupations. These included a musician, lawyer (more specifically a criminal lawyer), professional football or rugby player, pilot, graphic designer, actor, architect, 10 Aggregate data for enrolment in degree level programmes (Level 7 or above) specifically for students who attended private schools in New Zealand could not be found. However, the elite private schools focused on in this research all have a decile rating of 9 or 10.
psychologist, ecologist, animator, and a doctor owning “a successful medical practice”. For example, William explained in his diary entry about aspirations how he “would like to be a doctor or an engineer, however, my dream job would be a fighter pilot on an aircraft carrier. I am interested in other fields such as business, law, media or being a priest, however, I do not have an ongoing passion for them like I do with other jobs”. Having a passion for their future careers was important. Chloe’s ambition and determination to achieving her imagined future of attending Berkeley and getting a PhD was clear:

After school I want to obtain a scholarship to Berkeley University in California – I know this is a big stretch as I don’t obtain perfect grades, but I really want to go there. The reason I want to go to Berkeley specifically is because they are the No. 1 School in the world for ecology, and I plan to get a PhD in Ecology/Environmental Studies. After that I want to help reduce climate change, and maybe even discover more that could help us with our Earths’ crisis’ – rising sea levels, starvation, extinction. I am aware that maybe this is a risky career choice, but in all honesty, even though many people (my parents included) are trying to steer me away from this, and even though they say that I, a singular female, cannot do such a thing, if I don’t then who will? (D)

Chloe’s certainty around the subject she wanted to study was mirrored by other participants, and there was an emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) occupations, with boys especially recognising the potential opportunities available within the realms of engineering and science. Business and medicine were also popular. This reflects how “aspirations occur within strong, locally embedded, class-cultural frames of reference that continue to structure young people’s expectations” (Stahl, 2015, p. 322). While STEM subjects are being widely promoted as critical to future progress, the extent to which these dominated the participants’ aspirations is revealing. The disposition of elite and middle-class students means that science based subjects are perceived to be a realistic pathway for future study (Archer et al., 2014). Extending the role of capital and habitus for the construction of aspirations, it emerged through conversation that their parents were doctors, lawyers, and pilots. Following in their parents’ footsteps was common, as Lily explained:

My aspirations after I leave high school are to go to university, possibly in Dunedin or Melbourne and study medicine. I’ve always found medicine
interesting and I guess that I found out from a young age; I always loved going on ward rounds with my Dad (who is a Doctor). My dream is to become an anaesthetist eventually... (D)

This reveals the influence of parental modelling on young people’s understandings of themselves and their values, and links to McDonald et al.’s (2011) contentions that there is a need to consider the social, economic, and cultural context of childhood as this influences the choices available to young people and the decisions they make. In this way, systems of privilege operate as a tunnelling mechanism shaping young people’s imagined futures. The accumulation of knowledge about potential futures through the symbolic dimensions of privilege, therefore contributes to the operation of systems of privilege as young people’s endeavours to reproduce the privilege afforded to them occurs through aspirational participation in higher education.

Studying abroad, while not the only avenue to pursue for any participant, was an option many were considering. Outward student international mobility from New Zealand is relatively low, with only 2.4% of national tertiary students in 2015 enrolled abroad (OECD, 2017). There has been growth in students studying aboard, however, and an emerging pattern is also evident through the appearance of American, Australian and Singaporean Universities in newspaper advertisements and education fairs. Exposure to the potential to be able to study abroad, an understanding of the resources required, and a belief that they could gather these resources and head to world class universities in Australia, the USA, and the UK, come with growing up in environments where studying abroad is common (Findlay et al., 2012). Universities identified as potential destinations for participants include many Ivy League institutions such as Harvard, Berkeley, Princeton, UCLA, and Stanford, as well as prestigious institutions in Australia and the UK. As Ella explained, “I want to go to Melbourne University because I feel the industry is better there and there is more opportunity to get a job. Also there is a bigger chance of travelling further into the world like America or something” (D). This fits with Ball et al.’s (2002) findings that family and institutional habitus have a significant influence on aspirations for higher education. The perceived benefits of studying abroad were highlighted in the following conversation:

Emma: I feel like if you go to university in NZ, it is cool, but if you have been to university at Harvard or Oxford, somewhere cool like that, it is better.
Abi: I also think if you travel abroad while you are younger you get more of an idea of how to look after yourself.

Emma: Yea, and there is more opportunity.

Abi: More independence and even though it is scary moving away from home straight after school after living with your parents for 18 years, it is exciting, you get to meet new people, do exciting things.

Holly: It is part of growing up.

Abi: It is what it is.

This exchange reveals several insights, beyond the fact that there was a real sense of studying abroad becoming a reality for these girls. Abi’s comments highlight a recognition of educational experiences being more than what happens in the classroom or lecture theatre (Waters & Leung, 2013). Becoming more independent, widening social networks, and enjoying new experiences are seen as part of the experience of studying abroad and the process of growing up. These perceived outcomes are present in the work of Collins et al. (2017), however, they also suggest that these outcomes and after-study mobility are not automatic. Again, there are hints of the unquestioned nature of studying at university, and of moving abroad through Holly’s comment “It is part of growing up”. When asked why they want to study overseas, many agreed with Emma’s statement: “I feel like they are better”. Having family living abroad, as Emily does, was also an imperative to study overseas: “I want to leave because my family is there. That and the fact that I want to leave NZ. I love it here, but there is not enough here for me to do” (FG). Emma also hints to perceptions of staying in New Zealand restricting future opportunities and experiences. Siblings’ experiences of studying abroad also influenced desires to leave New Zealand for tertiary study, reinforcing the importance of cultural and social capital on young people’s practices and aspirations. Knowledge of transnational mobilities in the case of privileged young people, thus emerges from lived and engaged movement, and contributes to imaginings of potential and aspirational movement.

Alternative paths to tertiary education were outlined in some diary entries. Of particular interest are the aspirations of two boys who identified themselves as not being as academically proficient as they feel is necessary to pursue university. The timings of potential events in their imagined futures differ from the predominant understanding of
what constitutes a successful future within the group. For example, Liam explained that “after school I would like to become a pro rugby player. Otherwise me and my friends were looking at possibly doing a gap year” (D). This aspiration fits with quintessential endeavours of young people growing up in New Zealand, particularly boys, many of whom dream to be an All Black. This trope can be contested, and may also be a reflection of what young boys playing rugby are expected to want. Having a gap year and travelling overseas before attending University is common in Britain and America (Heath, 2007), while an OE (Overseas Experience) is more a more common element of life after tertiary study in New Zealand. These alternative transitions after education are somewhat reserved for the most privileged young people though, and are not a universal option. The fact that some participants identified a gap year as a possibility demonstrates the narrative of future possibilities they are exposed to, with the transference of an overseas practice beginning to permeate the imaginaries of young people in New Zealand. This information may permeate through social networks as well as international mobilities. Liam, like most of the other participants, has enjoyed a childhood travelling the world, which has sparked his interest in travelling independently and with friends. Liam did follow on from his comment with a suggestion that after travelling, or if he was not successful in becoming a professional rugby player, he would like to go to university and study something to do with sport. The boys’ aspirations thus reflect their interests and hobbies, with suggestions that extra-curricular activities are important to their futures. For example, a link between interests, hobbies, and future careers was also evident in Logan’s aspirations: “Once I finish school I really want to try and get into Weta Workshop (a prominent digital design company) in Wellington. If this does not work out or I don’t get accepted I will do farming on the farms that I have been born and raised on” (D). Logan was very interested in computer animation and technology, incorporating his interests into pursuing a career in the film industry. Continuing work on the family farm was also important to Logan, arguably conforming to hegemonic masculine ideals in New Zealand (Law et al., 1998), where farming and working outdoors is characteristic. As with the girls in Maxwell and Aggleton’s (2013a) study, Liam and Logan’s narratives emphasise the plurality of experiences and aspirations emerging from a group perceived to be relatively homogenous, whereby a particular type of sociality and distinction is important to the reproduction of discourses of privilege.

While many displayed a sense of assurance about their futures, the aspirations of others were also more tentative, with participants recognising that they need to pay some
attention to thinking about what they want their future to be like: “I still haven’t planned if I will go to a Uni, study in another country or stay in Auckland. But I know I have to think about this soon because I know the clock for me is already ticking” (Matthew, D). The anxiety associated with preparing for a future beyond the school gates was evident, but did not seem overwhelming. There was a sense of confidence displayed by participants which contrasts with expressions of anxiety defining contemporary youth experiences (Pimlott-Wilson, 2017). For example, Michael also initially started off by saying that “After high school I honestly have very little idea about what I want to do” (D). However, he followed up that comment by suggesting that he might go to university to “get a Commerce degree of some sort so have signed up for accounting and economics next year” (D). The idea that University acts as a fall-back mechanism or an option when there are uncertainties and hesitations about the future is arguably not only the case for privileged young people. However, the likelihood of being able to go to university is restricted to only some groups, whereby those from less socio-economically and culturally privileged backgrounds are less likely to be able to pursue further education, thus contributing to the perpetuation of privilege. Keeping in mind that the participants still had 3-4 years of school remaining, the importance they place on determining what their future will hold is arguably influenced by encouragement from schools and families. Future plans were at the forefront of many of the participants’ minds at the time of the research as they were all in the process of choosing the subjects they wanted to take the next year at school, which for these participants, was the first year of NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) and Cambridge International Examinations. As Sarah explained, “I have actually been seriously thinking about my future recently because of school options and just generally thinking. What I have so far is that I won’t have a gap year and just go to university. I want to study for a teaching degree, architect or a lawyer” (D). They recognise, and it was reinforced by the schools, that the decisions they make now, will affect what subjects they can take in the final two years of school, and ultimately what programmes they may be able to pursue at University level. This forward thinking arguably contributes to the reproduction of privilege, as knowledge acquired from school, family, and wider social networks shape the decisions young people make. Therefore, embodied and objectified cultural capital and social capital are key to the symbolic dimensions of privilege.

Taking the next step, participants also often referred to getting jobs, after university, which would enable them to live comfortably. Having a “stable bank account” and “a
"decent job" was important, as was not getting into debt while attending university. The fact that participants recognise the link between further education and debt, but imagine a future where they can get a degree, but not be in debt, highlights the capital and resources their family may provide to make this aspiration a reality. White and Wyn (2013) note that the link between education and employment is complex and precarious. However, the precarity associated with employment markets was not explicitly acknowledged, despite young people showing a strong, engaged awareness of local and global, political, economic, and social issues. Employment was unquestionably seen as the next step after education, with alternative possibilities not articulated in narratives, constructing a future which is consistent with parents’ and other family members’ career trajectories.

Many imagine a traditional trajectory for their future, whereby leaving school signals the beginning of further education in university environments, getting a job, being in a relationship, and owning their own home. These aspirations were implicitly linked, with education and employment seen to provide the economic, social, and cultural capital required to pursue aspirations for home ownership and strong relationships. While discussing lessons learnt from friends, teachers, and parents, William explained how you learn “how to connect with people, the more you connect with your friends, the more you connect with other people and you gain those networks, public and social skills” (FG). The school has a significant part to play in reinforcing the importance of social networks. This is part of what Giroux and Penna (1972, p. 22) term the ‘hidden curriculum’ which captures the “unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life”. Education is an agent and medium of the process of socialisation which contributes to the perpetuation of privilege, shaping young people’s awareness of the importance of belonging to elite social networks, which are created through connections made at elite private schools.

Drawing on their childhood experiences growing up in houses owned by their parents, home ownership is considered a desirable and achievable goal for many. Brainstorming in groups around the prompt ‘In 10 years from now we want to…’, there was an emphasis on having a secure home with many groups’ responses echoing the sentiment “I want to own my own home”. More specific detail was provided by some, who aspired to own an apartment, while others imagined a more traditional standalone suburban home. As Rowlands and Gurney (2001) explain, young peoples’ preferences and
aspirations of home are often socially mediated and therefore shaped by young people’s upbringing, expectations, and cultural backgrounds. A dominant imaginary of the ‘quarter acre dream’, owning your own slice of New Zealand pervades discussions of home ownership in New Zealand, although this dream is now often out of the reach for many. Participants were realistic when discussing the idea of home ownership, showing a detailed awareness of the housing affordability and urban development issues facing Auckland. The following quote summarises participants’ attitudes “I may live overseas, if I don’t see housing prices dropping from an average of $800,000, I don’t want to be paying off debt for year and years” (FG). Several participants revealed that they may potentially move overseas, with their widespread travel experiences providing them with knowledge about the opportunities available outside of New Zealand.

An important consideration is young people’s negotiation of the complexity and expectations associated with privilege. The educational and employment aspirations articulated by participants portray a sense that they do not feel restricted, but instead envision a range of future opportunities. This evident lack of boundaries, however, must be situated within the context of the privileged, class boundaries these young people’s lives play out within. A possible contradiction emerges with a lack of boundaries paralleled with the pressure of expectation associated with having attended an elite private school, following in siblings’ and parents’ footsteps. Thus, while the young people seemed to display a sense of assuredness about their aspirations, the pressure of expectation was also evident in their narratives. Expectations are linked to class, but also intersect with gender, culture, and age. Alex explains that “there are always people who pressure you to like conform, to be what they want you to be. But it is like, personally, I don’t want to do that, I have other things. But still, there is always that pressure” (FG). Freedom and the ability to make decisions for themselves is important to participants. Linked to this attitude are notions of autonomy and agency, whereby the attitudes young people have toward everyday life, in the present and future, are bounded by class expectations to succeed and pursue ambitious goals which will ultimately be beneficial in the future. This is illustrative of the concept of bounded agency (Evans, 2007) whereby agency can be constrained by privileged social positions, afforded by the education they are receiving, which contributes to the reproduction of privilege.

Not being able to reach expectations was problematic as the young people felt pressure to be studying hard and participating in many extracurricular activities which were
positively contributing to their futures. This feeling is captured in William’s comment in response to talking about what makes him happy: “having nothing to worry about, academically. Being able to do nothing, without feeling guilty and having to think about what you should be doing” (FG). This raises questions about the acceptability of failure for a cohort of students like this. Having to worry about the future and failing in different arenas of everyday life, including school and sports was not expressed as an option for these young people, who emphasised throughout the focus groups the importance of getting good grades and training hard for sports to ensure success. The pressure to achieve and thinking about their future is the other side of the aspirational capacity which is shaped by privilege. Achieving top grades in their classes and being awarded academic and sporting awards at school were significant events for participants, allowing them to take pride in their achievements amongst peers. Sentiments such as “Keep on time, never give up even if it gets hard”, “study for tests and exams, you don’t want to get to university and not know how to study” (FG) represent the attitudes the participants have toward achieving their goals. Lily’s analogy to explain lessons learnt from her parents summarises the attitudes participant have toward their future: “Like there is a heavy box, and a less heavy box, and they say always take the heavy box, because ultimately, at the time, you might temporarily struggle, but it is ultimately for the best” (FG). From their experiences within and beyond the school gates, young people in this study attending elite private schools have a strong awareness of their potential for a achieving successful futures. This awareness comes across in their aspirations, whereby it can be argued that a belief in a right to aspire to achieve is perpetuated through symbolic dimensions of privilege. However, upholding these aspirations demands continued investment and attendant anxiety related to the risk of failure as young people attempt to reach expectations and strive for excellence.

7.3 Summary

Reflecting on the mobility and consumption practices of young people provides insights into the translation of symbolic notions of privilege (understood using a discursive framework whereby practices and languages shape the representation, interpretation, and enactment of symbols and cultural codes) into knowledges and actions. Decoding these signs reveals a language of privilege associated with expectation, entitlement, denial, and guilt, and adds another dimension to help examine how systems of privilege operate to structure the everyday lived realities of young people attending elite private schools. Exploring young people’s mobilities demonstrates how discourses of privilege pervade
taken for granted everyday practices of movement. Metaphors of tunnelling, spacing, and timing are used to interpret the effects of privilege, which become coded in spaces through young peoples’ actions and attitudes. Mediated movements in a local context, whereby participants bypass areas of Auckland which are not considered socio-economically elite, contribute to a specific, privileged understanding of the socio-cultural environment as represented in mental maps. In comparison, extensive international travel has made visible inequalities which were somewhat hidden from young people in a local context. The act of spacing and therefore distancing themselves from local inequalities shows how the advantages and unearned entitlements of privilege come to shape attitudes and behaviours. Overall, examining the practice and spaces of movement at different scales reveals how deconstructing and unpacking the taken for granted aspects of everyday life helps to decode the ingrained culture of privilege which forms a critical component of systems of privilege.

A dialectic relationship between young peoples’ actions and knowledge and the symbolic dimensions of privilege has also been identified. The existing symbols of privilege are interpreted by young people, however, this practice of representation in turn further reinforces the symbolic dimensions of privilege. There is therefore a link between language, discourse, and symbolism. Examining the consumption of knowledge about the world around them, as well as potential futures, has provided insights into the critical nature of social and cultural capital as symbols of privilege. I argue that capital contributes to the encoding and decoding of signs with discourses which are critical to the operation of systems of privilege. The aspirations articulated are tinged with expectations placed on them from their school and family, both in terms of the options chosen and the timing of transitions. These pressures contributed to feelings of familiarity and assuredness for some, while others were wary about what the future may hold. Importantly, these effects are situated within the boundaries of class expectations, which provides another layer to understanding privileged aspirations. In this sense, while young people have agency to determine their future, their aspirations are shaped by the tunnelling of their behaviours and thoughts. Young people’s imagined pathways can be described as simultaneously fluid and structured, realistic and hopeful, and reflective of home circumstances and educational experiences. These pathways are part of the performance of privilege and the way in which it is embedded within specific socio-cultural settings through education at elite private schools. This reveals the kinds of bounded agency that emerges in this context and the key role that young people play in the reproduction and operation of privilege.
Individual dimensions of privilege

At an individual level, identity is one way that the enactment of systems of privilege can be examined. Identities, as a form of self-understanding are moulded by personal agency and structural factors, relationally constituted, and always performed (Howard, 2008). Privilege relates to both individual and group identity, and the varied biographies of young people reflect the relative status of privilege. Collins’ (1993) conceptualisation of the individual dimension of oppression refers to the ways in which social categories such as race, class, and gender, which are associated with institutional and symbolic statues, frame individual biographies. As Howard (2008) suggests, identities reproduce social ideologies and discourses which are constructed in wider societal contexts and embedded in schools. Therefore, central to individual dimensions of privilege is the intersectional nature of identities. An intersectional approach emphasises the importance of considering interconnections between different social categories that contribute to an individual’s sense of self (Ferber et al., 2009). The complex nature of identity means that it is problematic to structure an analysis of young peoples’ identity by extricating data related to lived experiences associated with each category. As Valentine (2007) notes, while social categories may be thought of as separate social structures, the effects are experienced simultaneously by individuals. Thus, the influence of age, gender, class, and culture, on the identities of young people attending elite private schools is significant.
Discourses of privilege feed into the construction and performance of individual identity. Being successful, ambitious, confident, and independent, but also humble, respectful, and thoughtful acts as a model for young people to strive towards. These discourses of privilege act as tools, or guiding principles which influence the construction of identity, in turn reproducing privilege through performance. The meanings and discourses associated with intersecting social categories are transformed and reproduced as individuals mediate and construct identities. This process fits within Howard’s (2008) framework of ideologically mediated identities. Drawing on the work of Erikson (1968), Howard (2008) explains that ideology gives young people’s lives meaning and purpose. Ideology also has a role in maintaining and reproducing the dynamics of privilege (Apple, 1995). Considering the role of ideology in identity construction therefore helps to reveal how privilege is actively produced and reproduced. A culmination of institutional and symbolic dimensions, as well as individual agency constantly reshape identity through the complex interactions embedded in individuals’ lived realities.

To examine the individual dimensions of privilege, this chapter narrates the process of identification through young peoples’ experiences. In particular, the chapter focuses on how identity is constructed, negotiated, and performed in privileged spaces. The privileged environments young people grow up in, and the places they encounter and negotiate have implications for who they are (Hopkins, 2010). Thus, examining the factors that influence young people’s construction of their identity, how they negotiate wider social discourses in the process of identification, and how they perform their identity provide insight into the ways in which social structures and collective identities intersect. Notions of structure and agency are the implicit foundations of the discussion. Additionally, discussing the tensions and contradictions of privilege allows for nuanced understandings of privilege and emphasises how experiences of privilege and oppression shape everyday encounters. The intersectional nature of identity is emphasised here, as young people can be precariously part of the social elite by virtue of the schools that they attend, and also simultaneously disadvantaged in some contexts because of their age. Therefore, exploring the individual dimensions of privilege reveals nuanced understandings of how systems of privilege shape young people’s identity.
8.1 Constructing identities

Identities are not innate facts, but rather socially constructed entities which are simultaneously unique to individuals and shaped by wider collective discourses. Parallel with the conceptualisation of identity as narrative (Yuval-Davis, 2006), the participants told stories, which craft an image of themselves, who they are, what is important to them, and how they come to know this. These narratives encapsulate both individual, internal factors as well as external factors shaped by, and situated in, the society young people find themselves a part of. Places imbued with personal, social, and cultural meaning thus provide a framework within which personal identity is constructed. There is evidence that young people in this study construct ideologically mediated identities, embodying aspects of privilege. This observation aligns with the work of Howard (2008) who noted how attendance at elite private schools affords young people privilege. Key themes in narratives which help to explore the construction of identity relate to culture and hobbies/interests. These factors play significant roles in the construction of identity and are simultaneously themselves structured by the wider social context.

To get young people to think about their identity, they were asked the question ‘Who am I?’ Reflecting on their self-identity by confronting this question was difficult for participants, but interesting insights emerged in the adjectives they used to describe themselves. The ten most common adjectives were: respectful, competitive, friendly, creative, ambitious, active, easy-going, caring, funny, and organised. Other prominent descriptors included: artistic, energetic, enthusiastic, imaginative, independent, intelligent, polite, thoughtful, risk-taker, good listener, confident, and fun-loving. These descriptors highlight a positive rendering of the self which was almost universal amongst the participants. The sense of assurity associated with these descriptions demonstrates a confidence in their self-understanding. In comparison, stepping beyond their personal identities to discuss the collective identity of typical New Zealand teenagers, participants brainstormed a wider range of adjectives and characteristics. Participants suggested teenagers in New Zealand are typically ‘chilled’ (laid-back), passionate, friendly, happy, funny, unique, a little bit rebellious, overly politically correct, good with technology, self-conscious, out-going, educated, moody, and sporty. In contrast to the list of positive adjectives used to describe their identities, there is much more ambivalence in these descriptions, highlighting how identity is about establishing a sense of difference. Activities that a New Zealand teenager is likely to participate in were also included in the
brainstorm, including: going to parties, watches a lot of YouTube, listens to a lot of music, picture taking, trying to find the right clothes, and goes to the beach a lot. More serious suggestions were also tabled, including that teenagers often succumb to peer pressure related to eating habits (not eating enough, eating too much), hair styles, social media, and clothing (particularly branded clothing). Using terms such as rebellious and moody to describe teenagers picks up on common representations of teenagers and youth (Buckingham & Kehily, 2014). While working on the brainstorm, Lucas commented: “describing yourself, that is a pretty hard topic” suggesting that despite the relative privilege afforded by his education, he considered himself to be a typical New Zealand teenager. Nathan responded to Lucas’ comment, pointing out that “Yea, but everybody is different. Unique”. This comment was more representative of most participants’ approaches to the brainstorm as they tended to speak in the third person, suggesting that that thinking about their own identity was not relevant to describing a typical New Zealand teenager. Socialisation, and the perpetuation of dominant ideologies feed into self-understandings which were distinguishable from descriptions of others.

8.1.1 The role of culture: Nation and privilege

Culture is an important part of identity. Interestingly, when asked to note down their culture, the participants were very unsure what to say: “I don’t have a culture” was stated by several participants. Culture was often equated with ethnicity, with many students eventually deciding their culture was ‘New Zealand European’ or ‘Kiwi’. One participant identified as Maoi, one as Scottish, and one as Austrian. Describing Kiwi culture was another stumbling block in the conversation, with participants struggling to explain what it means to say that you are a Kiwi or a New Zealander. In this way, simultaneous feelings of exclusivity and uncertainty around Pakeha and ‘Kiwi’ identity described by Bell (2009) were also apparent for these young people. To explain, participants emphasised how socio-cultural norms influenced the construction of their identity. Drawing on a common cultural trope in circulation, New Zealanders were described as “really laid back, really chilled”. Another brief conversation between Lucas and Alex speaks to the notion of ‘tall poppy syndrome’ which pervades New Zealand culture:

Lucas: People are proud of things they achieve but don’t like to show...

Alex: Yea, you’ve got to stay humble!
Lucas: Yea nobody likes people who come out and say how great they are

This conversation shows how discourses of New Zealand national identity feed into individual identity. The assertions link to a sense of homogenous identity amongst participants that resonates with tropes that are widely circulated about life in New Zealand. Being humble and laid back are key elements of New Zealand national identities, ideologies which have become internalised by young people trying to navigate the contours of society they are growing up in. Linking school culture and nationality, the act of attending an elite private school was an important part of William’s culture: “Being Kiwi, at a private school, but it is still very kiwi. It is not all posh and pompous” (FG). Andrew followed on from this comment, noting that “It is different to something say in Britain”. Acknowledging differences in elite private education and noting that these schools in New Zealand are different is significant, suggesting that the lived realities of privilege are contextually specific. The prevalence of a reluctance to be perceived as ‘posh’ and ‘pompous’, and the importance of staying humble as highlighted in the conversation between Lucas and Alex also fits with this characterisation of elite private education in New Zealand. In comparison to the British social system where class is a prominent descriptor of social relations, class in the New Zealand context can be described as an absent presence in identity construction (McAlloon, 2004). Using Zandy’s (1995, p. 10) words, class is “like a ghost, it is there but not there, mentioned but not really welcomed into the multicultural conversation”. This attitude fits with the prevalence of the myth that New Zealand is a classless society (Crothers, 2013), as contextual realities effect the identities of young people in this research. This emphasises the role of structure and agency in identity formation, as participants’ agency to construct their identity is mediated by dominant ideologies. Young people in New Zealand do not identify with the language of class, instead learning dominant tropes of New Zealand national identity which become part of their own self-understanding.

Alongside these articulations of identity in terms of nationality, a ‘culture of privilege’ (Kimmel, 2003) also implicitly contributed to the construction of identity. Ballard et al. (2014) suggest that privilege constitutes an aspect of identity that shapes how people see each other in relation to the world. Thus, values, perceptions, and actions are shaped, recreated, and maintained through a lens of privilege. However, acknowledging the ways in which privilege shapes identity is a difficult proposition for many. This was evident in the ways in which participants narrated their identity without explicitly referring to how privilege, and growing up in privileged environments affected their everyday lives. Instead,
articulations of luck were more widespread. They understood themselves predominately to be ‘lucky’, appreciating how fortunate they are to go to the schools they do, to have had the experiences they have, to be able to live where they live, and to be able to participate in society in the way they do. For example, Abi explains that:

*If I was going to be telling someone from another country about my life I would start my saying how lucky I am to be living where I do…and to have what I’ve been given. I have two very hard-working parents whose effort they put into their everyday lives provides me with many opportunities that I have everyday. Without them [parents] I would not have the privilege of going to the school I do, having the luxuries of dancing and doing outside school activities and going on trips around the world with them. (D)*

Lucas also speaks of how lucky he feels:

*...it would probably go something along the lines of how lucky I am. I go to a good school, in a good country, surrounded by loving family and caring friends. I would tell my experiences, which trust me, I have many. I would start with how fortunate I am to have visited so many unique cultures and nations throughout this huge world. I have visited the northern part of the Americas, a lot of Europe, China, Singapore, Australia, and most of the touristy Pacific Islands. If that doesn’t scream lucky, then I don’t know what does. (D)*

Charlie also noted “One way I would describe my childhood/upbringing is ‘free flowing.’ What I mean by this is that I have always been given the best possible opportunities in my life so far, and I’m very grateful for that, and I will forever be” (D). In these excerpts, the young people recognise the advantages they have and how that shapes their identity, but do not explicitly associate this with privilege. This distancing fits with the ways in which privilege is unmarked. There appears to be a conflation of fortune, luck, and privilege, as the participants do not associate their position with personal achievement, but being given opportunities by their families. Abi did acknowledge the privilege associated with going to an elite private school, but associated this privilege with her parents’ hard work, rather than the result of wider social structures. This response demonstrates a common confusion between achievement and privilege (Borell et al., 2009), as well as the influence of dominant notions of New Zealand as an egalitarian society. The broader social structures
which shape the reproduction of privilege are not acknowledged, reinforcing the normalisation of these experiences for participants.

Acknowledging but hiding their privilege was also evident in narratives. For example, while outlining his autobiography, Noah suggested that “if I was talking to someone who was living in a third world country I would definitely soften the autobiography so I didn’t sound ‘up-myself’ but would still talk about things like holidays and how much easier it is, generally living” (D). This suggests that young people have an awareness of how their lifestyle and childhood are perceived by others, and by “softening” their narrative they are seeking to avoid judgement but at the same time still acknowledge the advantages they have experienced. Defending their privilege by also identifying the privilege afforded to others was also apparent. As Andrew astutely explained,

_We have some neighbours, they are nice people, but they seem to have massive stereotypes about every [School A] student being incredibly rich. And the thing is, they seem to ignore that they have houses in [exclusive suburb], which are massive, they have computers, and iPhones, the latest things. They seem to ignore that they have any privilege and seem to think that we are uber privileged. But it is like, open your eyes, yes we are privileged, but so are you. (FG)_

This awareness signals an acknowledgement of privilege in how Andrew identifies himself based on the school he attends and the neighbourhood he lives in. However, it also highlights an awareness of the invisibility of privilege (McIntosh, 1989) which is commonly suggested to be prevalent for those who experience privilege the most. This invisibility is also captured in Alex’s diary entry where he explains how

_My life has been normal (no different from any other person in a 1st world country). I have been educated very highly (well educated), I have been fed to the point where I need no more and I have shelter and protection over natural aspects like storms and droughts, also protection from my family over other people who may cause harm. To me my life seems no different from others in a first world country! (D)_

Alex does not see his life as being any different to those in other parts of the developed world. The limited awareness of inequalities within developed nations emphasises how Alex has grown up within a ‘bubble of privilege’, insulated from the realities of everyday life faced by many different groups. Alex’s comment also highlights the paradoxical
experience of being privileged without feeling privileged (Johnson, 2006). Alex identifies a range of what should be unearned entitlements (McIntosh, 1989), but does not recognise how these entitlements become unearned advantages as outcomes of practices of privilege. The needs identified are common facets of everyday life, but the sense of entitlement and the expectation of universal experiences emphasises the reproduction of privilege. The distinct differences between Andrew’s acknowledgement of being privileged against Alex’s denial of privilege highlights the complexity and invisibility of privilege, which feeds into young people’s self-understandings and attitudes toward their everyday lives.

Highlighting the taken for granted nature of mundane everyday activities, Lucas insightfully distinguishes between needs and wants:

*If I were to walk over to a tap, and twist it on, I could guarantee all year round that safe, clean drinking water would come out. I could guarantee that when I walk over to a cupboard and be guaranteed food, edible food that is. I can also guarantee having a shelter, clothes and every other basic necessity that I could possibly ever need. So I am not going to lie, my needs are given to me, to the point where they aren’t really my needs at all...instead my desires and wants become my needs. And my needs become an iPhone or a Playstation or whatever I think I need.* (D)

This window into the mindset of young people growing up in privileged environments demonstrates a reinterpretation of the notion of needs, where everyday necessities such as food, water, and shelter become treated as ‘givens’ and not needs. Young people’s ability to reinterpret what constitutes a need is reflective of the social, cultural, and economic capital they and their family have accumulated. Fitting this scenario into Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, Lucas perceives his physiological, safety, and belonging needs to be met, and has identified material objects which contribute to his esteem and self-actualisation needs. This is possible because the lower order needs are met, highlighting the influence of privilege on everyday experiences and the construction of identity.

8.1.2 The role of hobbies and interests

As well as narrating the role of culture, the importance of hobbies and interests to the construction of young people’s identities was also highlighted. While it was noted by many participants that spare time to do things that they enjoyed was limited, for many, their
hobbies and interests are encompassed in the wide range of extra-curricular activities they engage in. Writing, travel, sports (hockey, aerobics, cycling, running, swimming, netball, rowing, and motocross), model making, gaming, hunting, music, martial arts, performing arts, dancing, art, singing, and engaging with social media were all important. While technology plays a significant role in everyday experiences and is central to many of the activities identified above, as Weber and Mitchell (2008) note, sport, art, books, and ‘hanging out with friends’ offline all remain part of many childhoods. This was clear as participants explained their hobbies, interests, and participation in extra-curricular activities. Sport and outdoor activities were particularly prominent in discussions of hobbies and interests. However, apart from the physiological benefits of sport, the participants recognised a wider range of benefits as Scott explained:

I have found sport to be extremely beneficial to my personality and other qualities… ranging from teamwork and being able to cope/work in a group environment while also having the ability to work independently and be self-reliant. Sport has given me a drive that has helped me persevere and allowed me to appreciate the importance of giving your best effort. (D)

Sport is therefore seen as a tool to drive personal development and has a number of positive benefits. In particular, a number of discourses of privilege which feed into individual identities such as confidence, independence, respect, and success are reinforced through engagement in sport.

Aside from sport, a range of other interests were described by the boys. Firstly, gaming was a common interest shared by many, as Nicholas explained:

Gaming is quite nerdy but I don’t care because I think it is fun. I don’t think I would be as close to my friends without it because when something funny happens or something like that it makes it more fun and you want to do it again. So it’s not just gaming, it’s also talking to friends. (D)

For Nicholas and many of the other boys, gaming is not just a hobby, but also a way of meeting new people and interacting with friends, a way to develop online, virtual friendships with those who share common interests. Music was also important – both playing music as well as listening to music. As Alex explained, “music is important to me, something to do. I’m not very sporty, so music is my thing” (D). Alex’s comment also provides evidence of a divergence to the perceived expectation that boys will participate in
sport. Interpreting the questions about hobbies and interests more broadly than other participants, William explained that “anything that grows your knowledge in any way” (FG) interested him. Science, technology, and history interested William, whose hobbies had a more academic focus. Conforming to stereotypes of what teenage girls like to do in their spare time, shopping and socialising with friends, was discussed in both girls’ focus groups. Additionally, more academic interests such as reading and writing were popular amongst the girls. Lara passionately explains her love for reading: “Once I completely immerse myself into those pages I am no longer Lara, I live and breathe that character, I see the world through their perspective, I am that character” (D). The range of different hobbies and interests described by the participants reinforces the diversity of privileged childhoods, reflected in the ways hobbies and interests contribute to the construction of identity. Demarcations of privilege are articulated through a wide variety of pursuits which are enabled by foundational privilege provided by family connections, as well as the opportunities afforded through attendance at elite private schools. Lessons associated with discourses of privilege such as being successful, ambitious, independent, and confident can be learnt through participation in extra-curricular activities, which in turn contributes to the construction of identity and subsequent reproduction of privilege.

When asked why these hobbies and interests are important, participants often noted that they enjoyed doing these things because “it makes me happy”, “to achieve something, a goal”, “it gives your life meaning” (FG). Links between hobbies and interests and being happy were prominent. When asked ‘what makes you happy’ the following quote captures the essence of participants’ comments: “Relaxing. Family. Eat, sleep, drink, repeat” (FG). Being able to relax and have few worries was important to participants, as this time was very rare. William explained how “being able to do nothing, without feeling guilty and having to think about what you should be doing” (FG) would be refreshing. These quotes highlight the significance of wider social structures on individuals’ self-understandings. A heightened sense of expectation is often associated with privileged childhoods (Luthar and Becker, 2002), but wider than this, a broader politics of aspiration and future making can be interpreted. Davidson (2008) explains that young people’s identities and attitudes reflect a ‘neoliberal politics of subjectivity’, where there is a pressure to showcase success, a key discourse of privilege. A ‘politics of hyper-vigilance’ is argued to have both positive and negative consequences for young people (Davidson, 2008). These consequences can include increased opportunities and successes, but also pressure, expectation, and
exhaustion. Therefore, there are tensions and contradictions associated with the operation of systems of privilege that can have significant effects on young people.

Interests and hobbies were viewed by some participants as critical to them getting through some of the tough times associated with this hyper-vigilance, as Lily describes:

_I like to keep busy because it keeps my mind off not so happy things in my past like being bullied and depression because of that. Also, my parents work hard and are very determined and committed to things so I have followed in their footsteps. Their being busy and stressed all the time meant they didn’t really have too much time for me so I keep myself busy to stop being lonely._ (D)

Lara also explained how “co-curricular activities really give me a sense of purpose and belonging, especially within the [school] family” (FG). Music, dance, and acting played an important role in negotiating pressures and expectations in the participants’ lives, as Abi captured

_I enjoy dance because nobody really cares what you look like when you dance, and you don’t have to worry about anything. That’s only for about half an hour a day, but that is kinda good. And I like acting because you don’t have to be yourself, you can be somebody else which is kinda nice._ (FG)

Extra-curricular activities, and the creative arts in particular, are therefore considered an outlet for participants to be able to ‘step out of their shoes’ and relieve some of the pressures and expectations they feel. For many participants, pursuing their interests outside of school was an escape from family and school pressures, reinforcing the importance of considering how hobbies contribute to the construction of identity. However, interests and hobbies have multiple functions in young people’s lives. They are seen simultaneously as both a means to ‘get ahead’ and expand knowledge and capabilities, to relieve stress and expectation, but also a source of that pressure in some cases. This highlights the complexity of systems of privilege, as trying to perform an expected, privileged subjectivity can contribute to, but also relieves pressures associated with privilege. Young people have to negotiate these contradictions as part of the construction of their identity by negotiating and enacting discourses of privilege.

When presented with a collage of images depicting stereotypical leisure activities and asked if they represent the types of things that young people do today, the responses
were mixed. Commenting on an image of a group of teenagers socialising at Starbucks, William noted that “Not going to get coffee, apart from the girls, they do that, get what are they called? The shakes and stuff, Frappuccinos” (FG). However, like most teenagers, many participants, both male and female suggested that socialising with friends was something they enjoyed doing in their spare time. As Hopkins (2010) notes, hanging out with friends in different street spaces is a crucial part of young people’s free time, with friends providing emotional and social support as well as sources of knowledge. The way meetings occur, and the activities done together was gendered, as highlighted in the following conversation:

William: I think girls, like you see the pictures on Facebook and Instagram, having a great time at Starbucks or Hoyts, or in the city, and it seems like they are trying to be 5 years older than they are. And then guys are still going around to each other’s houses to play Call of Duty, guys seem 5 years younger than they actually are and still like to do that kind of stuff, and girls 5 years older, well trying to be.

Charlie: Boys act younger, like gaming and girls are trying to go out.

William: Yea, and it’s not for the fun, for the impression.

Ben: They go out to look good, but overall, nobody is really bothered.

This conversation also draws attention to further issues associated with the image young people are trying to portray to their peers through social media. Marlowe et al. (2017) note that the presentation of self in online spaces reflects what individuals thought would make themselves meet expectations amongst peers, rather than their actual lives. This brings into question differences between public and private construction and performances of identity and processes of belonging as young people seek to fit into social networks. In this sense, socialising with friends could be differently interpreted by onlookers and resulting comments affect young people’s understandings of themselves.

The construction of identity, encapsulating a range of factors such as privilege, culture, hobbies and interests, and values does not follow a linear trajectory. Culture can be interpreted in terms of ethnicity, as well as a culture of privilege which shapes the construction of identity. Hobbies and interests contribute to the process of becoming. These factors are inextricably linked, with individuals aligning their narratives, values, and
interests with expected tropes of nationality and privilege. Technology is also important for the construction of identity, as a source of information, a window into the world, and importantly, other worlds beyond the ‘privileged bubble’ of elite private schools. Rather, a host of mediating factors such as age, institutional structures, and stereotypes complicate narratives of identity. Others’ attitudes toward ‘private school kids’ and ‘teenagers’, which the participants self-identify with, are key factors in the negotiation of identity.

8.2 Performing and negotiating identities

Identities are fluid and open to negotiation, a process rather than a fixed label. Linked to the process of constructing identity are the negotiated events which can reshape identities. It is important to explore the negotiation of identity for young people whose lives play out within relatively privileged places – where there are perceived widespread advantages but also diverse realities that influence their identity. Identities are negotiated through practices, as the body and associated identities are performed through ways of behaving, talking, gesturing, dressing, and interacting (Butler, 1990). It is important to note that it is not the individual who is performative, but the discursive practices and representation through which the individual finds their identity articulated which is performed (Butler, 1988). Within the context of this research, these discursive practices are related to consumption and style. How young people negotiate who they are in relation to others who are the same, but also different, is part of the construction of identity and individual dimensions of privilege. Both age and class, and the intersections of these categories are significant factors to be considered in the following discussion, further reinforcing how identity, as representative of the individual dimensions of privilege, is important to the operation of systems of privilege.

8.2.1 Negotiation expectations: Being a teenager

All young people negotiate the construction of their identity, battling to overcome ingrained structures, perceptions, and discourses, while discovering who they are and what they want to be. Age is a significant social category through which people define themselves individually and collectively. Further, expectations are often tied to chronological age, and an understanding of essentialist characteristics tied to years of life. However, James and Prout (1997) suggest that notions of chronological age fix limits and boundaries to conceptions of childhood – a powerful and constraining force on the daily
activities of children. Young people’s reflections on their identity and place in the world illustrate tensions between being a child and wanting to be an independent adult, but simultaneously being constrained by rules, social structures, and perceptions. Throughout the focus group discussions, it became apparent that participants are not immune to the trials of growing up as a teenager in the 21st century. Describing the difficulties associated with being their age, the quotes presented below are representative of participants’ thoughts:

“Competition, standards, what you need to be accepted. Like if you are strong, have a nice hairstyle, all that stuff.”

“Peer pressure…everybody is like ‘you have to wear this to be cool.’”

“Our image, everybody thinks that we are rowdy annoying teenagers. Slackers.”

“Everybody is older than you, there is a sense of superiority.”

“People who are pre madonnas (sic), think they are older than they actually are.”

“We all think we are old enough to be independent and making decisions, but other people don’t. That is really annoying.”

Comments from the young people in this study signal how traversing the period of adolescence, within privileged contexts, is reflective of an ‘identity crisis’ (Weber & Mitchell, 2008), where they seek to resolve tensions and negotiate their place in the world.

A sense of liminality and feeling of being in between also emerged from young peoples’ discussions of the difficulties of being their age. Mia’s comment was widely agreed upon by the whole group as summing up an overarching issue which contributes to the pressures faced:

*I kind of feel like everyone our age, it is kind of like that awkward age in the middle where everyone is really judgemental of everyone. Like, you look at someone and immediately judgements pop into your mind. Like, it is an awkward stage where people don’t see you as a kid, but you are still just too young to be considered an adult. (FG)*

The following conversation also reinforces this sense of liminality:
Emma: Well it is, you are kind of at that age where you are still kind of a kid but everyone expects you to make decisions about your entire life. We have to choose what we are going to take next year, and what we choose next year depends on what we are going to take the year after, and that decides like our entire life.

Holly: Yea, but we still have to ask if we can go to the bathroom! Honestly, just let us leave!

Two key insights emerge from these comments which signal how the individual dimensions of systems of privilege shape young peoples’ understandings of themselves and importantly, their position in wider social structures. Firstly, the role of intersectionality in identity construction and related experiences is emphasised (Ferber et al., 2009). Young people from affluent socio-economic backgrounds, who attend elite private schools, may experience privilege based on this marker. However, their everyday experience is also guided by their association with other social categories they belong to. In particular, they experience restrictions, within and outside the school gates, due to their age and perceptions associated with being teenagers. The inherent contradiction between having to choose subjects which will influence their future choices and opportunities, while still having to ask permission to go to the bathroom was a source of entertainment for the participants, but also a situation that they could not fully comprehend. From this point, ideas of transitions and future temporality can also be explored. Transitioning through the life course is not a linear process, but rather is more relational and complex (Pain, 2001). Young people’s agency is shaped by the socially constructed norms around age, but also at the same time, the participants felt they were partially constructing their life course through the choices they were making. In this way, the linearity of understandings of time and the lifecourse has implications for young people’s experiences. In this scenario, discourses of privilege influence identity as young people strive to be independent and successful through their choices, but are also constrained by perceptions of their position in the life course. This also emphasises how privilege is relational, actively negotiated, and performed.

8.2.2 Negotiating expectations: Being ‘a private school kid’

As well as negotiating stereotypes associated with age, young people attending elite private schools also negotiate the stereotypes associated with being a ‘private school kid’. Discussion of participants’ personal experiences of being subject to a range of stereotypes prompted a passionate conversation:
Holly: They create stereotypes about you because you go to a private school. They think we are all rich and don’t have any problems because you are rich...

Mia: I feel like people think kids at private schools have all this money and can buy all the latest things, but it is like, we have to save.

Abi: Yea, like our parents give us a weekly allowance but I have to do things to get that money (Holly and Mia agree). I save it, I don’t spend any of it. Then when I do go shopping, it is because I have saved up money. I don’t just go, ‘hey mum, can I go shopping and she gives me $50.’ ‘She would go ‘Na a na!’

The construction of these stereotypes was acknowledged to be grounded in the realities of the lives of some private school kids, but these were not believed to be widespread. There was extensive agreement in all focus groups that stereotypes do not match the reality. For most people. There are some people at every single private school that have everything. There are always people that stereotypes are based on, but just because there are a couple of people amongst hundreds, doesn’t mean that it is fair to say that we are all the same. (FG)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Charlie who, recognising the relative opportunities provided by attending his school, highlighted the links between elite education and wealth. This prompted a discussion about ‘hard times’ and the perception that just because you attend an elite school means you have not suffered:

Charlie: Just because we go to a school, where in some terms we have a bit more opportunity, maybe from the perspective of different schools, just means that they think this is a rich school, and weak.

William: Because we haven’t been through their tough times.

Charlie: Yea.

William: Yea, some people seem to think that we don’t deserve this life, because we have never been through any hardships. But of course, some people live through really, really bad things. But for some reason people think that we don’t deserve it. However, if you were the same person and went to a different school, like you are just one of the bros.
These comments highlight how the generation of stereotypes can render particular bodies constrained to pre-determined identities. In particular, being associated with spaces such as elite private schools marks the participants as privileged. There was some anxiety evident in how others perceive them, and a strong need displayed by the participants to counter the stereotypes. They acknowledge the work that stereotypes do to shape understandings of others who are different to oneself, but seek to reveal through their identities how they do not conform to the images. The role of stereotypes in the reproduction of systems of privilege emphasises the link between symbolic, individual, and institutional dimensions of privilege. Collins (1993) explains how control of the institutional and symbolic apparatuses of oppression forms the structural backdrop against which individual lived experiences play out. The same can be seen in relation to privilege. Stereotypes of privilege, which are perpetuated and reinforced by both those in control, and others outside systems of privilege, shape individual realities and the construction of identity through negotiation and performance.

Bodies are encoded, read, interpreted, and responded to. Judgements are made about people based on images and perceptions which are entwined with everyday social and cultural relations. Any visible signs that participants attend an elite private school act as markers for others to begin to make assumptions based on pre-conceived ideas. For example, hanging out at the mall is a common activity enjoyed by young people, but is also a setting where the visibility of attending an elite school is heightened. As Abi enthusiastically exclaimed

*Like you go to the shops in your blazers after school on Friday and they just give you looks, like ‘ew, private school’. And it is like, come on, I am just like you. I go to the school up the road, but it doesn’t matter, we are all the same!* (FG)

In another context, others’ feelings toward private school kids were also noted while attending after school tutorials. For example, Lara retold a situation in her English class:

*I go to English class and it is full of Asians and they are all from [public schools] and if I say something they are always like ‘O you’re a rich kid, you go to [School B]. You must be really rich and you must have all this stuff, and you are really snobby and stuck up.’ Obviously they don’t say all of this to your face, but you can tell.* (FG)
While not always verbalised, Lara’s experience and sense of others’ opinions of her school highlights the ways in which stereotypes can be perpetuated through actions as well as speech. Walking home from school also provokes attention from the public for some students, as Nicholas explained “I’ll be walking home, and this swaggy kid in his tuned up car will pull the tallest finger on his hand” (FG). The symbolism attached to the status of attending an elite private school and the uniform makes visible the privileges afforded to young people. For some, school uniforms are a mark of honour, and indeed the participants were proud of the school they attended and wore their uniform with pride. However, others read the codes assembled on the uniform, or attitudes associated with knowing what school a student attends, and use these signs to inform their actions and interactions. The dual significance of the uniform and stereotyping of people wearing a particular uniform may be a manifestation of the supposed classless society that is said to exist in New Zealand. Uniforms of elite private schools could be regarded as an unacceptable display of privilege which goes against the common aspiration of equality. The visibility of privilege through uniforms has consequences for young people who are trying to negotiate the stereotypes and construct an individual identity, which can be tarnished by perceptions that may or may not be relevant. The pervasiveness of systems of privilege, and associated ideologies operating at a collective level therefore shape individual identities and lived experiences.

8.2.3 Pressures to succeed: Age and class

Linked to the reluctance to label themselves as privileged discussed earlier, the conversation often moved quickly to the strategies young people employ to negotiate the perceptions and attitudes of others. Disrupting these stereotypes and asserting themselves as being the same as other young people was important, as summarised by Ben: “Just because we go to a different school, doesn’t make us any different” (FG). More focus was on the negotiation of privilege which influenced the construction of their personal identities. For Hopkins (2010), identity is about establishing a sense of difference and similarity between individuals, across and within different social groups. Participant remarks reveal this, as they simultaneously try to identify as being the same as other young people, and differentiate themselves from others in their school and sporting environments who were seen to be ‘flashy’. As Luthar and Becker (2002) identified, pressures to succeed and isolation from parents contribute to distress experienced by children living in an affluent suburban community. Stereotypes related to age and class also have a particularly
significant effect on young people’s experiences and the negotiation of their identity. Abi explains how “there are so many stereotypes of 14 and 15 year olds, like you have to do this, you have to do that, and it is kind of like, you know…” (FG). Technology and social media is identified as a medium through which stereotypes are reinforced and expectations in terms of style and appearance conveyed. There were also signs that some young people sought to resist the stereotypes and pressures, as explained by Michael: “There are always people who pressure you to conform, to be what they want you to be. But it is like, personally, I don’t want to do that, I have other things. But still, there is always that pressure” (FG). Peer pressure was a particularly significant issue for the girls who participated: “Peer pressure...girls are not nice at this age. Pressure to be perfect and the stereotype of what girls should be. To be skinny, high ponytails, nice skin, short skirt, bikini body, smart...” (FG). The constant negotiation of trying to determine where they fit in has had serious consequences for some of the young people participating. Reflecting on feeling like she did not belong anywhere, Grace opened up, and explained “I was a victim of bullying...I had slight depression, suicidal and self-harm issues. And a bit of not quite serious anorexia when I was 13. I also have a rebellious streak. Quite dangerous I admit. I can fall into temptation to anything I am not allowed to have/do” (D). Grace is only one of several students who reported feelings of anxiety and depression resulting from bullying. Of course, these experiences are not confined to students attending elite private schools, but widespread amongst teenagers who are trying to navigate society and find their place in the world. Concern arises, however, because as Luthar and Lantendresse (2005) suggest, this group is often perceived to be low risk. Affluence is only one marker of privilege, but has been shown to be a critical factor shaping the pressures young people face in trying to live up to expectations (Luthar & Becker, 2002). In this way, the role of discourses of privilege in shaping individual and collective identities, as well as practices such as bullying and peer pressure which stem from a common understanding and perceptions of the need to fit in, can have negative impacts on young people’s self-understandings.

Pressures to succeed appear stronger for young people attending elite private schools, with parents, friends, teachers, and family setting high expectations. Getting high grades, living up to siblings’ previous experiences, and excelling in everything they do were identified as pressures felt by the participants, as the following conversation highlights:
William: Teachers, coaches and staff, they expect you to be better than you are. Even when you try, you don’t fail, but you don’t reach your goals, it seems like you are not good enough for anybody.

Ben: Yea, you can’t reach expectations.

William: Yea, which is stupid because your English teacher may never have been good at maths, but yea, it just depends.

William and Ben’s conversation highlights perceived pressure from teachers and coaches. With the best of intentions, teachers are seeking to get students to strive toward excellence, instilling key discourses of privilege. However, not being able to live up to these expectations meant participants felt that they were failing. The sense of always needing to be successful becomes ingrained in individual understandings of how they should be acting and achieving. It was not only the pressure of school staff which participants suggested was concerning, but they felt pressure to live up to the expectations of siblings who had also attended elite private schools as Mia and Emma explained:

Mia: When I got to private school, I felt like I was expected to be following in my brother’s footsteps, but I never thought that I was as smart as them… (D)

Emma: I grew up always trying to be better than my older brothers, who are extremely intelligent, so it was a struggle keeping up with them. Now that my brothers have left school, I realise how much pressure was put on them to succeed, all that pressure has been transferred to me as I am trying to live up to expectations. (D)

The transfer of pressure, coupled with feelings of self-doubt, was concerning. However, Mia and Emma revealed that while they were not able to ‘be’ their brothers, they were achieving highly and beyond their initial expectations. The opportunities provided at elite private schools, particularly in terms of extra-curricular activities as well as support within the classroom has allowed participants to succeed. This dualism between expectation and opportunity highlights the complexity of privilege in that striving to meet expectations associated with discourses of privilege, being successful, independent, and ambitious could prompt anxiety. However, at an institutional level, elite private schools provide resources and opportunities to allow students to try to meet these expectations, shaping young peoples’ understanding of who they are.
The experience of negotiating where they belong and aspirations of young people to ‘belong’ is significant because it demonstrates that young people are materially and subjectively connected to people, places, events, and institutions. Freeman and Tranter (2011) reveal a paradox that with privilege often comes a loss of freedom and independent mobility, as well as increased pressure to succeed. Thus, children’s lives are simultaneously richer and more deprived as they negotiate everyday experiences such as attending school. Zoe’s reflection emphasises this negotiation of identity, moving into a privileged environment where she does not feel like she fits in:

*I was the classic ditsy child who thought she was a mermaid her whole short life until the reality of boys, looks and cell phones came in touch. I have always stood out from the crowd, always never ‘clicked’ with a particular group. I’ve tried being popular, I found myself looking like a dork, I’ve tried the try-hards, their group had collapsed before I even got there, and most recently I have tried the know-it-all’s/obnoxious group, but they are just pure selfish and mean to their own group members; so quite often I ask myself, where do I belong? I most likely will never properly fit in with anyone here because I can’t keep up with the latest, most expensive designer things or I don’t listen to the latest music... (D)*

Outside of the school context, fitting into the family was also a concern for some participants whose individual agency had led them to question their identity. As Grace explains:

*I was brought up in a stereotypical Asian, well off, perfect Christian family. One sibling, a pet rabbit, normal house, normal school. I also learnt the piano at an early age, had math tutoring and Chinese lessons. Perfect stereotypical happy childhood... Then I learnt more of the world I lived in, not just my grades were important. I no longer really belonged to my ‘perfect’ stereotypical family... (D)*

The experiences of both Zoe and Grace, highlight how young people are both ‘beings and becomings’ (Uprichard, 2008). Accounting for the notion of agency, whereby young people have an ability to influence the construction of identity and their everyday experiences is important. However, equally important to think through is the privileged social structures which these young people’s lives play out in. Thus, the individual dimensions of privilege
shape, and are shaped by, the constant negotiation of systems of privilege, having material and immaterial effects on young peoples’ lives.

8.2.4 Performing alternative identities

Style was a significant factor which young people discussed to provide insights into how they perform and construct their identity, both in terms of conforming to perceptions of style expressed by peers and the media, but also in terms of resisting these perceptions. Many different descriptions of style were articulated, for example: creative, random, nothing flashy, sporty, fashionable, freestyle, and mainstream. Portraying a particular style through their body is important as bodies are sites for young people to express their identities, as locations where social identities are marked out and practiced (Butler, 1990). Further, consumption is identified as an activity through which identity is negotiated and performed (Mansvelt, 2005). Young people’s taste, style, values, interests and what is important to them are coded with discourses of class and privilege. Girls’ discussion of style was much more involved than the boys, and often focused on consumption in terms of branded clothing and the importance of shopping at particular stores. This reveals the acquisition of cultural capital, which becomes reflected in style and consumption habits. For example:

Holly: I was going to write clothes, like my favourite stores.

Emma: Like Marc Jacobs?

Holly: I was going to write that! And Country Road. {laugh}

Emma: They already know we are “private school kids”, it’s all right.

Holly: I wrote my favourite stores {laugh}. Shall I share? Yea! Ok, don’t judge, this is really private school! Country Road, Witchery, Kookai, Marc Jacobs, Nike and Victoria’s Secret.

Branded clothing purchased from high-end designer stores acts as a sign of exclusivity and wealth when worn. The association between particular branded stores and the notion of ‘private school kids’ highlights a connection between economic and cultural capital. As with the young people in Piacentini and Mailer’s (2004) study, the participants purchased branded clothing from high end stores to signal their identity and social position. Other young people would never dream of being able to consume and utilise these products.
However, for these young people, the opportunities to consume in this way are not questioned and are important to them, to the extent that they use brands to describe their style. Thus, identity does not just exist, but is given meaning through social processes and the way it is articulated by people in particular places. Knowing what these brands represent, but also having the economic capital to purchase products, and the confidence to enter these stores is symptomatic of the operation of systems of privilege.

Many participants agreed that there is strong pressure to conform to particular styles: “All these expensive clothes, people saying if you want to be this cool, you buy those, like this is where it is at…” (FG). Having the right brand, and most updated version of technologies was also discussed at length: “Everyone always wants to have the latest iPhone, or the newest update. Like yesterday, a boy was trying to find out how another boy has IOS 9 on his phone. It is always about having the latest, newest and best things” (FG). Given these trends, technology and fashion also provide contexts to examine how young people seek to challenge norms of having the latest, designer brands. The act of resisting norms by not participating in these trends is clearly captured in the following conversation:

_Mia_: It’s all about branding. Everyone has to have specific brands, like Nike.

_Abi_: A Nike hat, shoes, slides (sandals)... It's like, I can't afford all of this.

_Emily_: Yea, I go to training and everyone is dressed head to toe in Nike and I'm just there in... I don't care about branding, if it does what it is supposed to do and I can wear it, I don't care. I'm not going to spend $50 on a shirt that is going to get trashed after 4 days.

_Abi_: If you don't have anything sporty or Nike, people look at you like 'ew cheapskate'.

_Mia_: I feel like there are so many trends, like yoga pants all the time. I get they are comfortable, but you don't have to wear the really high quality ones, you can just wear a pair of normal ones.

_Abi_: Yea, I wear them all the time, like Kmart ones.

_Mia_: Exactly, if you can wear them and they fit, they don’t have to be Nike. I feel like everyone judges you if you don’t have high end brand things. They just expect you to have them.
By wearing clothing that conveys messages, individuals are contributing to the performance of their identity, which is read by others they interact with. As Shipman (2004) explains, individuals consume products and brands as much for their symbolic properties as for their functional benefit. Contained within the Nike products are messages that individuals want to transmit, although as evidenced by the above conversation, these messages can be questioned. Comprehending how individuals ‘space’ (Crouch, 2003) themselves in relation to others, in this case through resisting to conform to branded fashion trend, is critical to their performance of identity and the notion of performativity.

Through the process of negotiation, the performance of identity is revealed. The application of stereotypes associated with discourses of age and class are tied into encounters where young people negotiate the construction and reproduction of their identity. Adolescence is a time of significant development where young people navigate wider social dynamics and perceptions to discover where they belong. A distinct difference between the reality of everyday life and social perceptions was troubling for the young people, who sought to reinforce how their school “doesn’t make us any different”. Seeking to reinforce their social position, by downplaying the significance of their school is an important strategy employed by young people to try to fit in. There are obvious advantages and entitlements afforded to young people because of the school they attend, but disrupting negative stereotypes and seeking to emphasise the similarities in their experiences was an important part of the negotiation and construction of identity. In the context of young people educated at elite private schools, privileged ways of knowing and being are learnt and influence their individual identity.

8.3 Summary

This chapter has explored narratives of young people’s identities, examining how everyday practices and experiences influence the identity young people perform. The construction, performance, and negotiation of young people’s identities is inherently tied to individual dimensions of privilege. The performance of identity is a critical part of the process of identity formation, as it is through performance that identities are (re)constructed and (re)negotiated. Through the operation of systems of privilege, discourses are perpetuated and reproduced, emphasising what it means to be privileged. Participants’ narratives of their identities reveal the centrality of discourses of privilege, including success, ambition, independence, confidence, humility, respect, and thoughtfulness. By
unpacking young people’s identity, the contours of privilege have been exposed, reinforcing how social norms and power relations are tied to social categories of difference which influence the construction of identity (Howard, 2008). The intersectional nature of privilege was also apparent through the construction and performance of identity, as young people sought to navigate the complexities of being young and privileged. In many situations, it was not the status afforded to them by virtue of their attendance at an elite school which dominated, but their age and stereotypes tied to youth. This intersectionality shows how young people are “located in narratives of identity not of their own making” (Valentine, 2000, p. 257). In saying this, young people’s agency was also highlighted through their resistances to pressures associated with looking, being, consuming, and performing in a particularly privileged way. The negotiation of stereotypes is therefore argued to be central to the construction of privileged identities. The social values and norms tied to categories of difference such as class, gender, and age, shape young people’s everyday encounters. In this way, privilege is shown to be a critical part of the self-understanding that individuals inherit and recreate.

This chapter has primarily drawn on routine, familiar, and taken for granted scenarios of everyday life which provide insight into how young people understand themselves as their lives are played out in relatively privileged environments. The role of ethnicity was critical to the construction of young people’s identity, as they drew on dominant understandings of national cultures to inform their performance of identity. In a New Zealand context, this means that discourses of humility were identified as being significant to individual identity, a result of the dominance of egalitarianism and tall poppy syndrome. Participating in extra-curricular activities was also a source of identity, as well as a means to escape some of the pressures associated with growing up in privileged contexts. Therefore, the tensions and contradictions of privilege were highlighted through how young people negotiate the pressures, expectations, and perceptions of age, privilege, and elite education. While obviously critical to their identity, privilege was not explicitly discussed by most participants. Instead, privilege was conflated with notions of luck, emphasising the paradox of being privileged without feeling privileged (Johnson, 2006). Interactions between the symbolic, institutional, and individual dimensions of privilege are also revealed, highlighting the complexity of systems of privilege. As was shown in this chapter, the symbolic values and meanings associated with stereotypes of youth and privilege, can be reinforced or overcome through institutional structures. These stereotypes
and practices then shape individuals’ self-understanding and provide insights into how identity is a social and collective process rather than an individual possession. Each dimension of privilege cannot be siloed, but the intersections of identity need to be considered to understand how privilege is reproduced to shape everyday encounters.
Conclusion:
Embracing uncertainty to examine privilege

This thesis contends that the operation of systems of privilege in place can be examined through institutional, individual, and symbolic dimensions. Young people attending elite private schools are regularly framed only as ‘rich, snobby, white kids living a life of luxury’. Yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, diverse lived realities are experienced by young people. By giving young people a voice, the particularities of their everyday lives have been recounted to provide insight into the pluralities of privileged childhoods. Geographic literature exploring the intersection of education, privilege, and childhood is limited, while sociological and educational accounts are much more common. Building on this literature, this thesis has placed a geographic lens on issues of privilege by considering the way socio-cultural relations between people contribute to differentiated social positions in places. In particular, the focus has been on seeking to understand how systems of privilege operate through the encounters and practices performed by young people who attend elite private schools. Unpacking the taken for granted reveals how young people’s lives are shaped by wider social processes and collective identities such as privilege, as well as how young people negotiate these processes and identities in their everyday life. Specifically, the thesis has explored the following research questions:
1. How are the social discourses which structure society produced and reproduced in the lives and futures of young people?
2. What do the everyday experiences of young people reveal about discourses of privilege and childhood?
3. How do practices of privilege shape young people’s identities and everyday experiences?
4. In what ways does the embodied performance of social difference influence privately educated young people’s construction of their identities?

By responding to these questions, the practices of privilege have been named and marked in this research. Therefore, through exploring the encounters and experiences of young people, this research has contributed to developing a critical understanding of privilege as a social discourse which is simultaneously unmarked, while also visible through material manifestations in people and places. The unmarked nature of privilege strengthens the power relations it creates and maintains. Firstly, the ways in which young people negotiate the different institutional contexts of daily life exposes wider issues of place, power, and boundaries. This understanding has revealed how place is key to a geographical understanding of privilege. Secondly, and linked to the role of privilege in structuring social relations, insights have been gained into the plurality of childhoods and youth experiences. Overall, exploring how systems of privilege work to structure the lives of young people educated at elite private schools helps to develop critical understandings of children’s geographies, as well as the multiple geographies of privilege.

9.1 Summary of findings: Five key messages

This final chapter draws together key messages of the thesis linked by the overarching theme of embracing uncertainty. By embracing uncertainty, the research has been able to examine young people’s identities and experiences of place and privilege by marking and privileging privileged voices. Five key messages related to conceptualising privilege as a system; intersectionality; elite education and understanding the social fabric; the contextual specificities of privilege; and the risks and rewards of innovative methodology are discussed through this chapter. These messages emphasise the intersectional nature of privilege, place, and identity: how systems of privilege operate, but also how innovative methodologies (while risky) can generate valuable insights that may
otherwise not be drawn attention to. The chapter concludes by noting how future research endeavours could continue to explore privilege in different ways.

9.1.1 Conceptualising privilege as a system

This thesis provides insights into how privilege can be understood as a system made up of components and practices which have institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions. The metaphor of a system has not been used in this thesis to imply a fixed, perfect, and closed arrangement of practices and components. Rather, systems of privilege are fluid, complex, and negotiated organisations of practices and components which are affected by a range of factors. In this way, systems of privilege are dynamic and composed of interconnected components. Systems, including systems of privilege, have no fixed spatial or temporal boundaries. In this context, elite private schools are not completely bounded spaces, but the practices of privilege transcend porous boundaries to have significant influences on young people’s identities and experiences outside the school gates. Notwithstanding the often gated and walled nature of elite private school campuses, this claim highlights the dynamic and embedded nature of privilege in place. Practices such as consumption, mobility, education, and identity construction are entrenched in the system which enables the reproduction of privilege. The multiple dimensions and practices of privilege highlight how individual and cultural processes are involved in cultivating privilege (Howard et al., 2014). Therefore, I argue that privilege is not existential per se, but produced and reproduced by multiple active agents working through many media.

The socialisation and enculturation of privilege highlights how young peoples’ experiences are socially and culturally patterned. The institutional dimensions of privilege are relevant here as socialisation occurring within elite private schools reinforces Howard’s (2008) suggestion that through both parents’ actions as well as social processes embedded in institutions, children learn particular ways of knowing and doing that reflect their social positionality. In this way, being educated at an elite private school is a means to provide young people with the experiences and skills which reinforce their privileged position in the social hierarchy. Privilege is therefore argued to be acquired and enacted by doing and being. The act of enrolling children at an elite private school, as well as having them engage in certain institutional practices, is important. This is because social and cultural capital has been shown throughout this research to be accumulated through experiences in both formal education as well as the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Giroux & Penna, 1979) within the school
gates. Focusing on understandings of success, it is evident that friendships and social networks are particularly important in gaining the necessary experiences. The centrality of friendship for young people’s futures was reinforced by the passion with which participants discussed the importance of retaining existing networks, and creating new relationships in the future. Understanding what it means to be successful is also learnt as young people’s cache of cultural capital is built up through attendance at elite private schools. These understandings are especially reflected in young people’s aspirations to participate in international tertiary education networks. Aspiring to attend universities overseas reflects schools’ attempts to maximise young people’s potential. In this way, it is clear that, at home and at school children are taught important lessons about what it means to be successful and how they should go about gaining this success (Howard, 2008). This is where, in their futures, young people will have the power and opportunity to be more active agents in the processes of framing systems of privilege. This orientation towards self-improvement highlights the importance of the education they are receiving now, formally and informally, for the continued reproduction of privilege. By investing in young people’s education, parents and school staff are also reproducing economic and social relations which consequently shape lived experiences for all.

Linked to the institutional dimensions of privilege are the symbolic dimensions, highlighting the interconnected nature of distinct components of systems of privilege. Moreover, this thesis has shown how discursive and symbolic representations of privilege materialise in everyday experiences of young people who attend elite private schools. Practices of, and encounters with, mobility and consumption reveal how privilege is coded in material objects and practices. Enhanced mobility and freedom is not just the result of greater access to resources, but also the result of the friendships and relationships with others in comparable social positions who engage in similar activities. In the same way, consumption is a practice through which young people seek to perform their identity, reinforcing Bourdieu’s contention that one’s social and spatial locatedness manifests in specific consumption practices. Through consumption, young people both consciously and unconsciously embody privilege and as a result, have different experiences. Young people also seek to challenge dominant consumption trends, perhaps a genuine form of resistance to stereotypes, or a way to distance themselves from privilege. Deconstructing the taken for granted aspects of everyday life to uncover the culture of privilege as it is enacted and embedded through signs and symbols is a key contribution of this thesis. Signs and codes
of privilege are therefore both hidden and known, implicit and explicit, spoken and unspoken, but young people learn to decode them through engagement with different social institutions and by reflecting on their personal identities.

The experiences and identities of young people who attend elite private schools presented in this thesis provide insight into how privilege structures everyday encounters, through the performance and resistance of privileged ways of knowing, being, and doing. Privilege is therefore an active construction which is relative, experiential, situated in place, acquired, learnt, enacted, and shaped by everyday actions and practices. The embodiment of privileged practices by young people is reflected in their narratives of identity and everyday experience. The identities young people construct, perform, and negotiate highlight how privilege influences young people’s sense of self (Howard, 2008). This contention illustrates how identity is a product of discourses and sets of practices that are part of the fabric of everyday life, reinforcing Valentine’s (2000, p. 257) claim that children are “located in narratives of identity not of their own making”. The performance of identity is thus embedded in a complex web of social relations between bodies, texts, events, and technologies. A ‘culture of privilege’ (Kimmel, 2003) contributed to the construction of participants’ identities, but was interestingly not named as such, reflecting local socio-cultural norms and the reinforcement of discourses of egalitarianism in New Zealand through young people’s actions. Instead, notions of luck dominated descriptions of identity. These attitudes reflect how privilege in this case is linked to family position rather than individual membership to social categories such as class. The structural and agentic components of systems of privilege must therefore be acknowledged and examined to understand how privilege is produced and reproduced.

However, it must be recognised that privilege is relative, and therefore the operation of systems of privilege does not have the same outcome for all. The narratives reproduced by some participants in this research stress that not all students attending elite private schools experience the same degree of privileged affordances. While such young people are privileged in the sense of the education they are receiving, outside the school gates it became apparent that some participants found it difficult to ‘keep up’. Again, linked to the symbolic dimensions of privilege, objects, tastes, and styles are coded with discourses of privilege, which young people on scholarship or being sponsored to attend elite private schools can decode because they have learnt what it means to be privileged. However, at the same time, their relatively restricted access to resources means that being able to
embody and enact these codes through ownership of objects and behaviours is not always possible. Therefore, this research shows how both inherited and learnt privilege is needed to sustain systems of privilege. Together, the individual, symbolic, and institutional dimensions and practices constitute systems of privilege which operate as part of the broader social fabric.

Privilege is central to the reproduction of inequality, thus highlighting the need to understand how systems of privilege work to better understand how poverty and disadvantage is perpetuated. In New Zealand, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow despite political, social, and economic strategies to reduce inequalities. Reframing issues of inequality in order to consider the role of privilege is a critical task. Understanding privilege as a system, placed in a particular context with a variety of components which effect how the system works, fits with Pease’s (2010) call for a new vocabulary to understand how different dimensions of privilege are interconnected and reproduced. More nuanced accounts of privilege can help to better understand inequality and how the reproduction of privilege is implicitly tied to the continued poverty and disadvantage faced by others. It is important to render privilege visible. The reproduction of privilege is shaped by everyday actions and practices, constructed as a normalising discourse which shapes lived realities. By privileging the voices of the privileged in research, the more nuanced understandings of privilege which are required have been made visible.

9.1.2 Intersectionality: Age and privilege

Seeking to understand how privilege shapes the geographies of young peoples’ everyday lives is one means to make privilege visible and uncover the ways in which systems of privilege operate. The participants occupy an ambivalent position within the systems of privilege discussed here. They are active members of society and possess agency to reproduce dominant discourses and social norms. In this way, young people are actively engaged in the practices which contribute to the construction of systems of privilege, even if they are not always consciously aware of their contributions. However, at the same time, by virtue of their chronological age and associated social norms, young people do not ‘set the rules’ by which systems of privilege operate. Young people can, however, contribute to its reproduction by performing as social selves through the different dimensions. This reproduction was evident in many experiences and encounters young people narrated, including, for example, following technology and clothing trends, aspirations for tertiary
education, and extensive international travel experiences. Therefore, considering the intersectionality of age and privilege reveals how privilege is relative and actively constructed. This is because young people’s actions and attitudes are shaped by privileged understandings of the world which are developed through socialisation in elite private schools. Further, the influence of structural components of the systems of privilege on young people’s agency is also highlighted as young people’s attitudes and actions are mediated. In these ways, this thesis contributes to the theorising of the relationship between privilege and young people.

This thesis has privileged the voices of the privileged (based on class and education), challenging and disrupting dominant discourses and narratives. Privileging the voices of the privileged is a counter-cultural narrative to those that are usually produced in social and cultural geography where there is often a focus on ‘studying down’. However, the benefits and insights gathered by investigating the narratives of young peoples’ experiences, as well as focusing resolutely on privilege, are many and varied. By studying privilege, the nuances are investigated rather than simply reasserting its normative status. Privileging the voices of the privileged is not denying the importance of seeking to understand disadvantage and marginalisation, but rather acts as an alternative approach to further understanding how privilege actively contributes to the perpetuation of inequalities. This move fits with Wildman and Davis’ (1995) contention that dominant vocabulary allows us to talk about oppression and disadvantage, but hides the mechanisms that perpetuate it. In this way, the absences and silences surrounding privilege are just as important to consider as visible markers of privilege. Young people’s resistances to labelling themselves as privileged or acknowledging how their everyday experiences differ from other young people is telling. For example, the spectacular acts of transnational mobility in the form of international travel was accepted to be a privilege, but the attempts to suggest ‘that we are all the same’ reinforce how young people do not always see themselves as different. Therefore, it is necessary to find a vocabulary to discuss privilege. Focusing on the interconnected dimensions of systems of privilege is one way this conversations can be started, particularly in a context such as New Zealand, where dominant social norms present a discursive veneer of equal opportunity and discourage the naming of privilege.

Evaluating the intersectionality of age and privilege, it is important to reflect on how the account of privilege developed through this thesis enhances geographical
understandings of the plurality of childhood and youth. This is because the ways in which young people who attend elite private schools negotiate the world is disciplined by privilege. Young people attending elite private schools are not immune to the challenges of growing up as teenagers in the 21st century. Many participants evoked emotion through their diaries, discussing the troubles they have faced and will continue to face. Experiences of bullying, depression, and feelings of self-doubt were retold by the participants, who also explained that they felt pressure to live up to parents’ expectations and the successes of siblings. Additionally, focus group discussions quickly turned to the ways in which they, as ‘private school kids’, are perceived in society. School uniforms act as markers of privilege in these practices, resulting in different experiences of childhood. For those outside the elite schools, the uniforms serve as symbols of privilege and eliteness, but for those wearing the uniform, it has an ambivalent value. In this way, the uniform is a source of pride they have for the school they attend, but is also a visual marker which can lead to uncomfortable situations. Therefore, I contend that public assumptions of happiness and homogeneity within cohorts attending elite private schools can be contested. Privilege thus affords advantages, but also contributes to feelings of despondence and isolation associated with the pressure of expectation and success. The varied experiences narrated by the participants emphasises the plurality of privileged childhoods, which are popularly assumed to be relatively homogenous and stable.

9.1.3 Elite private education in the wider social fabric

This thesis has shown how elite private schools are one key setting where practices of privilege are enacted. Following Wildman and Davis’ (1995, p. 883) suggestion that “privilege appears as the fabric of life, as the way things are”, it is critical to unpack how systems of privilege operate to better understand the social fabric. Elite private schools are a fundamental component of the wider social fabric. However, the effect of these institutions on the perpetuation of privilege has only recently become a focus of research. The effects extend beyond the seemingly impermeable walls and gates of these schools, just as wider social discourses influence the state and practices of these institutions. For example, elite private schools’ marketing campaigns signify how schools present themselves as spaces of independence and exclusivity, in which the resources available and the delivery of a well-rounded education prepares students for the future. Each school’s representation picks up on similar tropes, but multiple representations of elite education are
evident which reflect the wider social context. The schools seek to portray an image of being elite, exclusive, and superior, but also that they share a commonality of interest across social divides. For example, public representations of elite private schools in social media often highlight the successes and community engagement of students attending the schools. More formal representations on school websites and prospectuses emphasise different elements of schools’ practices, including history, educational philosophies, and strategic directions to underline the independence and exclusivity of schools. This approach is implicated by New Zealand renderings of privilege and a reluctance to discuss class and associated notions of eliteness. Often the goal is to counter perceptions that elite private schools are only accessible to particular social groups and operating within a bubble of privilege. This approach also highlights how interactions between the different actors and dimensions of privilege are important and that the lived experiences of class leads to the inculcation of certain values, expectations, and hopes. The co-constitutive relationship between elite private schools, other social institutions, and individuals is critical to this contribution to identity-formation. This idea reinforces Collins and Coleman’s (2008) suggestion that schools are central to the social geographies of everyday life, playing a significant role in shaping children’s knowledge, behaviour, and social identities. In this way, elite private schools are embedded in the wider social fabric and provide a gateway to understanding wider social issues.

Elite private schools act as a portal to access groups who experience the effects of privilege by being educated in privileged spaces. However, examining the institutional dimensions of privilege, what happens inside the school gates, also needs to be supplemented with consideration of young people’s experiences and encounters outside the school gates. Therefore, while elite private schools provided the location for the focus groups and the means by which the young people were approached to participate in the research, the research did not quarantine education. Rather, I took the view that all spaces young people’s lives are lived in are entwined in systems of privilege. By exploring the everyday practices and encounters of young people who attend elite private schools, the thesis builds on literature which focuses on how privilege shapes young people’s experiences inside the school gates. Howard et al.’s (2014) collection of narratives also provides insights into young people’s privileged experiences outside the school gates. By engaging with young people at elite private schools, the embodied and material representations of privilege outside the school gates were revealed. For example, the fact
that travel was such a significant practice and experience for the participants is telling. International travel became a way for parents as well as schools to expose participants to the reality of the world. This observation illustrates that, while the participants commonly attempted to distance themselves from privilege through travel, they also recognised how lucky they were. Participants’ strong awareness of global political issues, yet relative naivety of understanding and reluctance to discuss local political and social issues, is significant and highlights the ways in which young people’s understandings of the world are constructed through their experiences. Further, the act of acknowledging and discussing inequality in New Zealand may have reinforced and emphasised their privilege. The vast amount of international travel undertaken by the participants ‘opened their eyes’ to social issues such as inequality, which were somewhat obscured and hidden by the privileged, tunnelled, everyday routines and rituals young people engaged with in New Zealand.

Accordingly, this thesis has shown how privilege is learnt, reproduced, and performed through education at elite private schools. Formative experiences occurring or initiated inside the school gates influence the construction of young people’s social selves. Through education (understood in broad terms as occurring formally in schools, but also informally), young people ‘learn’ a privileged way of being, but also resist this too. As discussed earlier, not all young people who attend elite private schools experience privilege outside of the school gates, but by virtue of their education they begin to learn and internalise privileged ways of knowing and being. This was illustrated by comments young people made about understanding trends of consuming the ‘right’ products, but also being unable to follow or actively trying to resist these trends. As such, I argue that the embodied performance and resistance of privilege strongly influence young people’s construction of their identity. The position of students who have not had the same privileged upbringing as most of their peers in elite private schools highlights the way in which systems of privilege operate to shape the experiences of all social groups, not just those who are privileged. Analysing institutional dimensions of privilege signifies how elite private schools can be thought of as places which afford an awareness of difference, both highlighting and downplaying the elite status of the schools. These discourses and narratives are then reflected in young people’s experiences and identities. This view was evident through the gifting and community service work young people attending elite private schools can be involved in. Community service programmes act as a space for practices of encounter which highlight social realities. These are fleeting, but affective experiences. In this way,
the boundaries of material space, inside and outside the school gates become blurred as experiences outside formal education are an extension of school encounters.

9.1.4 The significance of context

While broader conceptualisations of privilege, the relationship between privilege and young people’s experiences, as well as the role of elite schools in understanding the wider social fabric have significant value, the contextual specificities of the research are also meaningful. It has become evident through this thesis that privilege is lived in a particular way in New Zealand, influenced by culture, history, and geographic location. Therefore, following Borell et al. (2009), to highlight how the specificities of place influence the operation of systems of privilege, it is useful to think about whether the outcomes of this research would look different elsewhere. For example, British experiences of class are in stark contrast to New Zealand, and an American understanding of class differs again (in British and American societies there are much stronger demarcations of class, working class, middle class and elites, than in a New Zealand context). The effect of dominant understandings and approaches to discussing class in different contexts is critical to understanding the operation and effects of systems of privilege. Analysing young people’s narratives and institutional tropes in this research exposes two dominant social narratives which prevail in New Zealand and shape how systems of privilege operate.

Firstly, the myth of New Zealand as a classless society structures how New Zealanders describe social relations. It is widely believed, but undermined when unpacking the realities of inequality, that New Zealand is a classless society. As such, discussions of privilege and class are somewhat silenced. In this way, I argue that class-based languages are moulded by dominant discourses. Countering notions of a classless society, young people’s narratives expressed in this research reveal the ways in which privilege and class manifest in the form of education and wealth. Secondly, and connected to the myth, is the resistance to discuss individual success and advantage which are always framed as being a result of hard work, rather than unearned entitlements. These two ideas were clear in young people’s autobiographical narratives, where there was a reluctance to label their experiences and lifestyles as privileged. Instead, descriptions of being lucky and fortunate dominated. The connection between parents’ hard work and the young people being able to attend elite private schools is also illustrative of the tendency to attribute privilege to hard work rather than marking such experiences as an outcome of privilege. This thesis
therefore highlights the centrality of place in the operation of systems of privilege. Just as systems of privilege have varied effects on individuals and groups, the operation of systems of privilege reflects broader social systems embedded in place.

The empirical evidence suggests that when trying to examine systems of privilege in a context such as New Zealand, a nuanced approach is required. Privileged lifestyles occupy an ambivalent position in New Zealand, but this ambivalence needs to be acknowledged and examined in more detail. Examinations must incorporate analysis of wider social, cultural, and economic factors to understand the geographies of privilege, and do so by privileging the voices of the privileged. This poses difficulties and brings to the surface feelings of uncertainty for researchers. However, embracing the unknown, rather than focusing only on those who are disadvantaged and using their experiences as a proxy for inequality, is critical. The reproduction of inequality will continue to be only partially understood unless the mechanisms by which this occurs are examined in greater detail. Without overcoming common perceptions of New Zealand as a classless society, and dominant resistance to discussing individual success and advantage, privilege remains unnamed. This contention does not dismiss the argument that privilege is invisible to those who are privileged (Borell et al., 2009; Johnson, 2006; Pease, 2010), but nuances the claim. Symbols and signs of privilege are evident in both material and embodied ways, such as through housing, employment, mobility, and consumption. Most participants’ responses emphasise how privilege remains unmarked from the perspective of those who are privileged (Borell et al., 2009), but privilege was covertly marked through experiences, identities, and symbols. One participant explicitly noted that he was privileged given where he lived, the resources he had access to, and the school he attended, but other participants were not as forthright in their claims. Therefore, I conclude that privilege remains largely unnamed, but the unnamed nature of privilege reinforces its dominance. Acknowledging the luxury of obliviousness privileged people can claim (Johnson, 2006) is therefore important to understanding how systems of privilege work. By not naming oneself as privileged, privilege continues to remain unnamed in society. This reinforces how language can mask and mark systems of privilege (Wildman & Davis, 1995). Explicitly naming and marking the effect of privilege (systems and practices) on childhood is important. Although this thesis examined privilege within the context of New Zealand, focusing on young people’s experiences, the framework can be expanded and nuanced to further understand geographies of privilege in different contexts.
9.1.5 Innovation and methodology

This research demonstrates how innovative methodologies, especially those utilising digital platforms, can provide useful insights, but also pose significant challenges and risks. Innovation is valuable and can be a productive means to understand personal or provocative ideas. Participants in this research were not directly asked about particularly controversial issues or ideas, but this did not mean that personal issues were not presented by participants in their diaries. Through responding to prompts focused on banal aspects of everyday life, such as my requests that they recount their life story so far to a child in another country, their travel experiences, aspirations for the future, and hobbies and interests, participants chose to reveal very personal experiences. This result highlights one of the benefits of an online approach as the participants felt comfortable revealing personal issues such as the death of a parent, experiences of bullying and mental health issues, as well as relationship and friendship difficulties. These unexpected revelations were unlikely to be revealed in a group setting or even an interview. The distance between participants and researcher induced by the internet, as well as the normalisation of sharing things on the internet for young people today, provide opportunities to gain insights into issues which would otherwise be silenced.

However, with this opportunity comes risks which all geographers and social scientists need to be cognisant of when utilising online methods. The design and implementation of online dialogic diaries as part of this research was a productive but risky approach. Despite trying to control the unknowns associated with online research, the uncertainty that comes with utilising innovative methodologies was heightened when the leakage of data occurred (Sparks et al., 2016). Technological innovation therefore provides opportunities for research creativity, but this comes with the possibility of failure and leakage. Therefore, as reinforced by this research, extra attention is required when utilising unfamiliar online methods.

Reflecting on the incident, the key theme which emerged was the notion of an ethics of care, which extends beyond the process of gaining institutional ethics approval and procedures when adverse ethical events occur. An ethics of care is apparent at several levels, through relationships between the research student, participants, and supervisors. Never was this more apparent than when the potential risks of online research became a reality. A strong relationship had been fostered with the schools and participants, from the very first point of contact with school management, through the data collection phases.
These relationships meant that when the adverse ethical event occurred, they acknowledged the seriousness of the event and were concerned for the safety of their students, but also recognised that it was not the fault of the researcher. Significantly, the participants were also keen to continue with the research, enquiring via email when the second focus group would occur after the break with data collection. The trust and respect, which worked both ways, was critical to the research proceeding after the data leakage. Within a context of uncertainty and adversity, this scenario highlights how research ethics centres on care which, in turn, involves considerable work beyond institutional approval.

Online dialogic diaries were just one component of the mixed methods approach to this research. It has become apparent through this research that it is important, even when utilising traditional research methods such as focus groups and textual analysis, to also think innovatively. Deep insights were revealed by thinking beyond the spoken and written word to consider group dynamics, individual gestures, and visual data. Given that the basic premise of focus groups is to facilitate participants interacting with each other and discussing the topics at hand, analysing group dynamics and visual cues is critical to developing a complete understanding of participants’ responses. In the context of this study, a research diary, completed during and immediately after the focus group, provided opportunities to reflect on how the participants interacted and their presentation of self in the group. At another level, the interactive activities which participants enthusiastically engaged in took the focus group beyond a question and answer session. There were still elements of discussion and prompts posed, but the participants were both asking and responding to the questions. Power relations in this research were complex, as age as well as gendered and class based identities worked to shape young people’s understandings of their place in the world. By allowing participants to lead the discussion, they did not feel as if they were being questioned by an outsider, but rather simply having a conversation with classmates. The interactive activities provided many different outputs, including visual and written data which presented a layered data set. The combination of methods thus provided different ways for participants to detail their everyday lives, opinions, and attitudes. The uncertainty associated with working with teenagers and questions of how they would participate were allayed during the focus groups as all students were engaged in the activities and were more than happy to participate in the company of their peers.
9.2 Possibilities for future research

There is scope for further research to extend understandings of systems of privilege. Central to future research endeavours should be a focus on privileging the voices of the most privileged. To do this, firstly, more research is needed to understand how systems of privilege operate beyond the context of elite private schools. For example, in New Zealand, state schools in high socio-economic deciles are also very privileged institutions. Carrying out a study with students from these schools could add another layer to understandings of privilege. Secondly, moving beyond the lives of young people, and building on the work of scholars such as McDowell (2001) and Beaverstock (2005), others in elite positions within political and business institutions are additional contexts for future research. This research would enable the individual, institutional, and symbolic dimensions of privilege to be explored from different perspectives. Lastly, the operation of systems of privilege is dependent on the actions and behaviours of a wide range of actors. Developing a research project which incorporated the voices of not only young people, but their parents, teachers, and other school staff would also help to deepen understandings of privilege. This research examined school websites to gather insight into the institutional dimensions of privilege, but triangulating that by engaging with other school actors would likely reveal more nuanced understandings of all dimensions of privilege.

The operation of systems of privilege is not confined to one particular place or position in the life course. Instead, the influence of privilege is likely to change over time, as young people move through different institutions. This thesis has examined a snapshot of young people’s lives in a particular place and time. However, a longitudinal study, exploring privilege and the effects of the changing dynamics of privilege as young people move from school into tertiary education and the workforce is another possibility for future research. Retaining the focus on elite private education to engage with participants, many of the campuses have facilities catering to pre-school and primary school aged children through to high school students. This provides an opportunity to explore not only the place of privilege, but also the temporal dimension of systems of privilege. The temporal dimension of privilege could also be examined by engaging with school alumni networks to explore the effects of connections, developed by virtue of schools attended, once young people leave school.

From a methodological perspective, the use of online dialogic diaries could also be further developed through future research. The internet is always going to be a permeable
space and the possibility of leakage will continue to be an ethical issue. However, if the personal and private nature of engagement through the internet is closely controlled and possibilities for leakage mitigated, online research can be a very rewarding and productive pursuit. Most people currently have access to a digital device which opens many possibilities for research. In particular, sharing photos and comments about their lives on social media has become a normalised activity for many young people. Experimenting with ways to imitate the type of sharing young people already do as a method to collect research data has the potential to be very productive. Further, while dialogue did not materialise to the extent expected in this thesis, investigating different ways to respond to participants’ diary entries would help to encourage dialogue and more insights into the operation of systems of privilege gained through this interaction.

It is widely understood that privilege is a central component of practices which perpetuate inequality. The original idea for this thesis was to take a comparative approach, examining young people’s experiences of privilege and poverty. While the decision was made to focus only on privilege in this research, the opportunity to consider experiences of poverty and privilege in a comparative way has the potential to help further understand broader social issues such as inequalities within contexts such as housing, health, education, and employment. The findings of this thesis which contribute to understandings of privilege can be further extended by considering the relationship between poverty and privilege. Taking a comparative approach one step further, the operation of systems of privilege has been shown in this thesis to be influenced by the specificities of the local context. In this way, a transnational project which examines education and circuits of privilege between places could aid in understanding the geographies of privilege, further picking up on ideas related to the importance of ‘placing privilege’ highlighted in this thesis.

Overall, there are many possibilities for future research to further understand the geographies of privilege. While embarking on a research project which may potentially require the researcher to ‘study up’ and confront their own privilege may be unsettling, it is critical that privilege is explicitly examined along a wide range of social axes of difference. The uncertainties associated with researching privilege and incorporating innovative methodologies need to be embraced to enhance understandings. Whether future research focuses on privileging the voices of the privileged through using a longitudinal approach, a case study approach, engages with young people or a wider range of society, focuses on practices in one place, or takes a comparative approach, the possibilities for
future research emphasise the large amount of work to be undertaken to further understand the ways in which privilege has a significant effect on lived realities.

9.3 Concluding remarks

By embracing uncertainty, this thesis has examined the geographies of privilege through engagement with young people who attend elite private schools in Auckland, New Zealand. The narratives and experiences of young people provide the empirical basis for this thesis, which is situated alongside extant literatures to develop a conceptual framework of privilege as a key structure shaping the encounters of everyday life. In a context where discussing privilege is uncommon, examining the operation of systems of privilege through this research has had implications for conceptualising privilege as well as comprehending the realities of everyday life for young people. Explicitly marking the effects of privilege, understood as a system made up of institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions, on the plurality of childhoods is critical. This has been done by utilising traditional and innovative methodologies which seek to look beyond the spoken and written word to gain a deeper understanding of how privilege is reproduced through the lives of young people.

Exploring the construction, negotiation, and performance of young people’s identities shows how discourses of privilege shape individuals’ biographies, through the intersection of different social categories including class, age, and gender. In particular, the influence of structure and agency highlights some of the tensions and contradictions of privilege which arise because the young people in the study are part of the social elite by virtue of the schools they attend, but are also simultaneously disempowered in some contexts because of their age. In this way, I argue that young people are critical actors in practices which contribute to the reproduction of privilege, but do not have the status to create systems of privilege. Linked to this idea is the centrality of the institutional dimensions of privilege, which has implications for both the individual and symbolic dimensions. Institutions, elite private schools in this research, are shown to reproduce privilege through the normalisation of discourses and practices which reinforce privileged ways of knowing and being. While not all elite private schools operate in the same way, the signs and symbols of independence and exclusivity afford them the ability to prepare students for a future where success and status is continually reproduced. The symbolic dimensions of privilege are not only evident in the practices of institutions, but also in other material and metaphorical signs related to mobility and consumption which young people
actively engage with. In this way, the conceptualisation of systems of privilege emphasises how privilege does not rest with individuals, but is encoded in discourses and symbols which shape how individuals and institutions construct, negotiate, and perform privileged identities. Of most importance to understanding the operation of systems of privilege is acknowledging and examining the intersections between different components. These components fit together as a system to shape everyday life, and thus underpin a key contention of this thesis; that narratives recorded by young people who attend elite private schools reveal how practices and encounters actively construct and reproduce privilege through institutional, symbolic, and individual dimensions.
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Appendix A
Focus Group Resources

Focus Group 1: Identity and Everyday Childhood Experiences

**Who am I? Activity Worksheets and Discussion:**

This activity was designed to get children to reflect on their identity and think about who they are. Participants receive two worksheets:

1. **Who am I?** This resource focuses on participant’s personal attributes and interests.
2. **My Identity:** This resource focuses on other aspects of individual identity and provides a template for participants to express themselves however they feel comfortable (writing, drawing). (A3 sheet).

**Discussion questions**

- What is your culture?
- What are your interests?
- Why do you enjoy these interests and hobbies?
- What are your values?
- How would you describe your style?
- What did you put in the spare shape?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you proud to be you?
- What is important to you?
Who am I?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Focused</th>
<th>Risk-Taker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Focused</td>
<td>Serious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Generous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Silly</td>
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<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
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<td>Funny</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
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List 10 attributes that best describe you: (you can use the adjectives above, or any other words that best describe yourself)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

254
Five things I really enjoy doing:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

What are ten (10) things that are really important to you?
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

What three things are you most proud of in your life to date?
1. 
2. 
3. 

What are five things you love to do?
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

What makes you happy?
1. 
2. 
3. 

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**Participant led questions: Prompt Set 1 and 2**

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<td>- Describe the most difficult thing about being your age.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If you could do something that you never have done before, what would it be?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Imagine there are no cars, buses, boats, trains or planes? How would this change your life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What would you pack in your suitcase if you could not go home again?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If you had the opportunity to travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?</td>
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<th>Prompt Set 2: Everyday Lived Realities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos: Mobility, Food, Education, Consumption, Leisure, Technology, Travel, Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions to use with photos:**

- What comes to mind when you see this photo?
- How does this picture make you feel?
- What do you associate with this picture?
- What stands out for you in this photo?
- If you had a magic wand what would you change about the photo?
- How do you relate to this photo?

---

**Mobility**

![Mobility photos collage](image_url)
Technology
Travel
Housing

Education
Food
Focus Group 2: Young People and Place

If you could…

The researcher asks a question. Participants have coloured post it notes and a sheet of paper is in the middle of the table for each question. Participants note down their answer to the question and stick to the main sheet. Group discusses the statement and responses.

1. If I gave you $10,000, what would you spend it on?
2. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
3. If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
4. If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
5. If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?
6. If you could eat your favourite food now, what would it be?
7. If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
8. If you were famous, what would you be famous for?
9. What item, that you don’t have already, would you most like to own?
10. If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

Brainstorming Activity

To explore participant’s perspectives on wider social issues and other key components of their everyday lives. Participants work in groups to note down what they know, believe, and value, their attitudes or anything else they want to contribute to the topic. These brainstorms are then discussed with the whole group.

- In 10 years from now we want to…
- If I was the Prime Minister of NZ I would…
- My Perfect Day would be…
- A Typical New Zealand Teenager is…

Questions to discuss after brainstorming

- What type of things have you written?
- Why did you include these things?
- Where did these ideas come from?
Mental Map Activity: My Auckland

Participants draw their mental map of Auckland on A3 paper.

Prompt: Draw a mental map of your Auckland…

It was important to remind participants that it does not matter how well they can draw – I was not interested in their artistic skills, but what they included on their map. The mental maps were used to explore young people’s interaction with the socio-spatial environment and use as prompts for further verbal discussions

Questions to ask with Mental Maps

- What features have you included on your mental maps?
- Why did you include these features on your mental maps?
- What is significant about some of the places included on your mental map?
- How did you experience the places and routes on your mental map?
- What parts of Auckland do you enjoy going to the most?
- If you had to guide a visitor on a tour of your city, where would you take them? What would you do?
- What makes you proud to be an Aucklander?
Appendix B
Ethics Documentation
MEMORANDUM TO:

Dr Francis Collins
Environment

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 013326): Approved with comment

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.

Ethics approval was given for a period of three years with the following comment(s):

1. Please proofread the amendments made to the forms to correct a number of typing errors before using the documents.

The expiry date for this approval is 05-Dec-2017.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals if you wish to do so. Contact should be made through the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

All communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application should include this reference number: 013326.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

Secretary
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, Environment
Miss Hayley Sparks
**Additional information:**

1. Should you need to make any changes to the project, write to the Committee giving full details including revised documentation.

2. Should you require an extension, write to the Committee before the expiry date giving full details along with revised documentation. An extension can be granted for up to three years, after which time you must make a new application.

3. At the end of three years, or if the project is completed before the expiry, you are requested to advise the Committee of its completion.

4. Do not forget to fill in the 'approval wording' on the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms, giving the dates of approval and the reference number, before you send them out to your participants.

5. Send a copy of this approval letter to the Awards Team at the, Research Office if you have obtained funding other than from UniServices. For UniServices contract, send a copy of the approval letter to: Contract Manager, UniServices.

6. Please note that the Committee may from time to time conduct audits of approved projects to ensure that the research has been carried out according to the approval that was given.
CONSENT FORM
(School Principal)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why students at the school have been selected to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that children’s participation in this research is voluntary.

- I agree to allow students at the school to participate in the research should their parents provide consent for them to take part.
- I understand that students and their parents have the option of declining to participate in this research and confirm that their decision to participate/not participate will have no impact on student’s school grades or their relationship with the school.
- I understand that neither my name nor the name of the school will be used in any published reports or in the doctoral thesis.
- I agree / do not agree to allow the focus groups to occur during class time.
- I understand that students can withdraw from participating in the research without their parents/guardians permission.
- I understand that data provided by students will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- I understand that the research students may take part in will be used as part of an assessed piece of university work and subsequent academic papers.

Name ___________________________
Signature ___________________________ Date _________________

Email Address (to send summary of findings): __________________________________________________________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 FOR (3) YEARS
REFERENCE NUMBER 2014/013326
CONSENT FORM
(Parents/Guardians)
THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why my child has been selected to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child’s participation in this research is voluntary.

- I agree to allow my child to take part in this research.
- I agree / do not agree to allow my child to participate in the focus groups during class time.
- I understand that my child can withdraw from participating in the research without my permission
- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that the research my child will participate in will be used as part of an assessed piece of university work and subsequent academic papers.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.

Name ___________________________
Signature ________________________________ Date _________________
Email Address _____________________________________________________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 2014/013326.
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT
Geography, Geology, Environmental Science & Environmental Management

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
New Zealand
Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau
Human Sciences Building
Level 6, 10 Symonds Street
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 09 373 7599 ext. 888605
Facsimile 09 373 7434
Email: env@auckland.ac.nz
www.env.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142, New Zealand

ASSENT FORM
(Participant)
THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood what the research is about and why I have been selected to take part. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary.

• I agree to take part in this research.
• I understand that I do not have to take part – I am taking part because I want to.
• I understand what I will be doing as part of this research – taking part in focus groups and writing online diary entries.
• I understand that I can stop participating in the research at any time. I understand that I do not need permission from my parent/guardian to stop participating in the research.
• I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
• I agree to be audiotaped while participating in the focus groups.
• I agree to not talk about anything discussed in the focus group with those who did not take part.
• I understand that the research I am taking part in will be used as part of an assessed piece of university work and subsequent academic papers.
• I wish / do not wish to receive a summary of the findings.

Name ___________________________
Signature __________________________________   Date _________________
Email Address ________________________________________________________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 2014/013326.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(School Principal/Senior Management)

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

Introduction
Students at your school are invited to take part in a research project. It is important for you to know why this research is being conducted and what being a participant in this research will involve. Please contact us if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Thank you.

Project Description
This research is being conducted as part of the researcher’s (Hayley Sparks) PhD thesis within the School of Environment at The University of Auckland. This thesis explores the everyday experiences of privately educated young people outside the school gates. There are three primary goals for this research project. Firstly, the research aims to gain insight into and consider the power of social dynamics to influence the wellbeing, lifeworlds and identities of young people. Secondly, the research seeks to emphasise the role of place in the construction of social difference amongst children. Lastly, this research provides young people who attend private schools an opportunity to metaphorically and literally voice their stories, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their lived realities growing up in New Zealand.

Project Procedures
Student’s involvement in this research will be through two focus groups lasting approximately 90 minutes. One focus group will be conducted at the beginning of the research, and one after the diary phase has been completed. The focus groups will be conducted at school, during school time with the permission of senior management and teachers to release students. Alternative arrangements can be made if it is not possible to release the students from timetabled classes. An audio recording of the focus group will be made with a digital voice recorder. Transcription of the focus groups will be completed by the researcher. Participants will also be asked to complete one online diary entry every week for 6 weeks. Dialogic diaries will be completed through a secure website hosted by The University of Auckland. Dialogic diaries are interactive and intended to be conversational, as participants write an entry which the researcher responds to, and dialogue results. In some cases a prompt will be provided for young people to respond to, and in others they will be free to choose the focus of their diary entry. There is no specific criteria for the length of diaries, participants will be free to contribute as much or as little as they want. These diaries entries will be completed in the participants own time, and not in class time. Only the participant and the researcher will see the entries. As a token of appreciation for the time taken to participate in the research, each child will receive a $20 gift voucher at the end of the data collection process. This voucher will be presented to all participants, irrespective of whether they withdraw from the project.
The focus groups and dialogic diaries will involve questions and interactive activities which allow children to express and explore their everyday experiences outside the school gates. More specifically, discussion will focus on aspects of lifeworlds, identities and wellbeing. For example, what they enjoy doing in their spare time, what makes them who they are, their perspectives on key local and global issues, and their aspirations for the future are some of the topics of conversation. The research is not an evaluation of the school’s practices.

During the focus groups and dialogic diaries, if there is anything discussed that makes the participant feel uncomfortable, they will be advised that they can leave the focus group, or not complete the diary entry. The researcher will have information for relevant helplines (e.g. Youthline) on hand to distribute if discussions cause distress for participants. There is a chance participants will offer insights and anecdotes of limited relevance to research objectives, but of interest to third parties. Such information will not be passed on and the conditions of the consent /assent process will be maintained.

The recorded data collected during the focus groups and dialogic diaries will be stored on the researcher’s secure, password protected portable storage device, and will be kept for a period of six years. After this period of time, the data will be permanently destroyed. Documentation with participants’ details and pseudonyms will be stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland which only the researcher has access to. A summary report of the findings of this research can be provided at the conclusion of the research, whereby all efforts will be made to retain the confidentiality of your students when using information they provide in the focus groups and diary entries.

**Right to withdraw from participation**

The participants’ consent to participate in this research is completely voluntary. Participation or non-participation in this research by your students should not affect their academic record or their and their parent’s relationship with the school. Once students have participated in the focus group their contribution cannot be withdrawn, as it is difficult to accurately determine each participant’s contributions in a focus group transcript. Student’s diary entries can be removed from the data analysis if they decide during that phase of the research that they no longer want to be involved. Their diaries can be removed from the analysis, up to 6 months after the set of diary entries have been completed, as these will be identifiable based on the username each child registers when signing into the website. Students do not need the permission of their parent/guardian to withdraw from the research.

**Confidentiality**

Focus group participants will be asked to refrain from discussing what occurs in the focus groups with others, to maintain the confidentiality of other group members. Any information provided will be kept in a secure file. The name of the school will be kept confidential. At any time in the thesis where the school is mentioned in the thesis and any subsequent publications, a pseudonym will be used. Due to the age of the participants, their names and school affiliations will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be used in any written analysis of the research.

**Contact Details and Approval**

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<th>Main Supervisor</th>
<th>Head of Department</th>
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<td>Francis Collins</td>
<td>Prof. Paul Kench</td>
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830/83761. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 for (3) years, Reference Number 2014/013326.
Information Sheet (Teachers)

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

Introduction
Year 9 and 10 students at your school have been invited to take part in a research project. The Principal of your school has agreed to let the research take place and students will only participate with written permission from their parents. It is important for you to know why this research is being conducted and what students will be doing when participating in the research. Please contact us if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Thank you.

Project Description
This research is being conducted as part of the researcher’s (Hayley Sparks) PhD thesis within the School of Environment at The University of Auckland. This thesis explores the everyday experiences of privately educated young people outside the school gates. There are three primary goals for this research project. Firstly, the research aims to gain insight into and consider the power of social dynamics to influence the wellbeing, lifeworlds and identities of young people. Secondly, the research seeks to emphasise the role of place in the construction of social difference amongst children. Lastly, this research provides young people who attend private schools an opportunity to metaphorically and literally voice their stories, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their lived realities growing up in New Zealand.

Project Procedures
There is no major work required on your part. All necessary resources will be provided. Student’s involvement in this research will be through two focus groups lasting approximately 90 minutes each. One focus group will be conducted at the beginning of the research, and one after the diary phase has been completed. The focus groups will be conducted at school, during school time with the permission of senior management and teachers to release students. Alternative arrangements can be made if it is not possible to release the students from timetabled classes. An audio recording of the focus group will be made with a digital voice recorder. Transcription of the focus groups will be completed by the researcher. Participants will also be asked to complete one online diary entry every week for 5 weeks. Dialogic diaries will be completed through a secure website hosted by The University of Auckland. Dialogic diaries are interactive and intended to be conversational, as participants write an entry which the researcher responds to, and dialogue results. In some cases a prompt will be provided for young people to respond to, and in others they will be free to choose the focus of their diary entry. There is no specific criteria for the length of diaries, participants will be free to contribute as much or as little as they want. These diary entries will be completed in the participants own time, and not in class time. Only the participant and the researcher will see the entries. As a token of appreciation for the time taken to participate in the research, each child will
receive a $20 gift voucher at the end of the data collection process. This voucher will be presented to all participants, irrespective of whether they withdraw from the project.

During the focus groups and dialogic diaries, if there is anything discussed that makes the participant feel uncomfortable, they will be advised that they can leave the focus group, or not complete the diary entry. The researcher will have information for relevant helplines (e.g. Youthline) on hand to distribute if discussions cause distress for participants. There is a chance participants will offer insights and anecdotes of limited relevance to research objectives, but of interest to third parties. Such information will not be passed on and the conditions of the consent /assent process will be maintained.

The focus groups and dialogic diaries will involve questions and interactive activities which allow children to express and explore their everyday experiences outside the school gates. More specifically, discussion will focus on aspects of lifeworlds, identities and wellbeing. For example, what they enjoy doing in their spare time, what makes them who they are, their perspectives on key local and global issues, and their aspirations for the future are some of the topics of conversation. The research is not an evaluation of the school’s practices.

The recorded data collected during the focus groups and dialogic diaries will be stored on the researcher’s secure, password protected portable storage device, and will be kept for a period of six years. After this period of time, the data will be permanently destroyed. Documentation with participant details and pseudonyms will be stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland, which only the researcher has access to. A summary report of the findings of this research can be provided at the conclusion of the research, whereby all efforts will be made to retain the confidentiality of your students when using information they provide in the focus groups and diary entries.

Right to withdraw from participation
The participants’ consent to participate in this research is completely voluntary. Participation or non-participation in this research by your students should not affect their academic record or their, and their parent’s, relationship with the school. Once students have participated in the focus group their contribution cannot be withdrawn, as it is difficult to accurately determine each participant’s contributions in a focus group transcript. Student’s diary entries can be removed from the data analysis if they decide during that phase of the research that they no longer want to be involved. Their diaries can be removed from the analysis, up to 6 months after the set of diary entries have been completed, as these will be identifiable based on the username each child registers when signing into the website. Students do not need the permission of their parent/guardian to withdraw from the research.

Confidentiality
Focus group participants will be asked to refrain from discussing what occurs in the focus groups with others, to maintain the confidentiality of other group members. Any information provided will be kept in a secure file. The name of the school will be kept confidential. At any time where the school is mentioned in the thesis and any subsequent publications, a pseudonym will be used. Due to the age of the participants, their names and school affiliations will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be used in any written analysis of the research.

Contact Details and Approval

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830/83761. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 for (3) years, Reference Number 2014/013326.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(Parents/Guardians)

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

Introduction
Your child is invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to allow your child to participate, it is important for you to know why this research is being conducted and what being a participant in this research will involve for your child. Please take some time to carefully read the following information sheet before deciding whether to allow your child to participate. Please contact us if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Thank you.

Project Description
This research is being conducted as part of the researcher’s (Hayley Sparks) PhD thesis within the School of Environment at The University of Auckland. This thesis explores the everyday experiences of privately educated young people outside the school gates. There are three primary goals for this research project. Firstly, the research aims to gain insight into and consider the power of social dynamics to influence the wellbeing, identities, and everyday experiences of young people. Secondly, the research seeks to emphasise the role of place in the construction of social difference amongst children. Lastly, this research provides young people who attend private schools an opportunity to metaphorically and literally voice their stories, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their lived realities growing up in New Zealand.

Project Procedures
Your child’s involvement in this research will be through two focus groups lasting approximately 90 minutes each. One focus group will be conducted at the beginning of the research, and one after the diary phase has been completed. The focus groups will be conducted at school, during school time with the permission of your child’s Principal and teacher. Alternative arrangements will be made if it is not possible to release the students from timetabled classes. An audio recording of the focus group will be made with a digital voice recorder. Transcription of the focus groups will be completed by the researcher. Participants will also be asked to complete one online diary entry every week for 5 weeks. Dialogic diaries will be completed through a secure website hosted by The University of Auckland. Dialogic diaries are interactive and intended to be conversational as participants write an entry, which the researcher responds to, and dialogue results. In some cases a prompt will be provided for young people to respond to, and in others they will be free to choose the focus of their diary entry. There is no specific criteria for the length of diaries, participants will be free to contribute as much or as little as they want. These diaries entries will be completed in the participants own time, and not in class time. Only the participant and the researcher will see the entries. As a token of appreciation for the time taken to participate in the research, your child will receive a $20 gift voucher at the
end of the data collection process. This voucher will be presented to all participants, irrespective of whether they withdraw from the project.

The focus groups and dialogic diaries will involve questions and interactive activities which allow children to express and explore their everyday experiences outside the school gates. More specifically, discussion will focus on aspects of lifeworlds, identities and wellbeing. For example, what they enjoy doing in their spare time, what makes them who they are, their perspectives on key local and global issues, and their aspirations for the future are some of the topics of conversation. The research is not an evaluation of the school’s practices.

During the focus groups and dialogic diaries, if there is anything discussed that makes the participant feel uncomfortable, they will be advised that they can leave the focus group, or not complete the diary entry. The researcher will have information for relevant helplines (e.g. Youthline) on hand to distribute if discussions cause distress for participants. There is a chance participants will offer insights and anecdotes of limited relevance to research objectives, but of interest to third parties. Such information will not be passed on and the conditions of the consent /assent process will be maintained.

The recorded data collected during the focus groups and dialogic diaries will be stored on the researcher’s secure, password protected portable storage device, and will be kept for a period of six years. After this period of time, the data will be permanently destroyed. Documentation with participants’ details and pseudonyms will be stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland which only the researcher has access to. A summary report of the findings of this research can be provided at the conclusion of the research, whereby all efforts will be made to retain the confidentiality of participants when using information they provide in the focus groups and diary entries.

**Right to withdraw from participation**

Your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your child’s school Principal has given assurance that their participation or non-participation will not affect their school grades or relationship with the school in anyway. If your child decides they do not want to continue with the research at any time, they can withdraw from the research. Your child does not need your permission to withdraw from the research. However, their contributions to the focus groups cannot be removed from the research due to the nature of the activity. Their diaries can be removed from the analysis, up to 6 months after the set of diary entries have been completed, as these will be identifiable based on the username your child registers when signing into the website.

**Confidentiality**

Participants will be asked to refrain from discussing what occurs in the focus groups with others, to maintain the confidentiality of other group members. Any information provided will be kept in a secure file. Due to the age of the participants, your child’s name and school affiliations will be kept confidential, and a pseudonym will be used in any written analysis of the research.

If you agree to let your child participate, and they are willing to participate, please sign the attached Consent Form and return along with your child’s Assent Form. You can return these forms either by email (hayley.sparks@auckland.ac.nz), or return to school with your child in the envelope provided. The researcher will then contact you and your child to provide further details on the research process.

**Contact Details and Approval**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Main Supervisor</th>
<th>Head of Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayley Sparks</td>
<td>Francis Collins</td>
<td>Prof. Paul Kench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:hayley.sparks@auckland.ac.nz">hayley.sparks@auckland.ac.nz</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:f.collins@auckland.ac.nz">f.collins@auckland.ac.nz</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:p.kench@auckland.ac.nz">p.kench@auckland.ac.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021 114 2536</td>
<td>(09) 923 3129</td>
<td>(09) 923 8440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 FOR (3) YEARS, REFERENCE NUMBER 2014/013326.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Participant)

Life outside the school gates: exploring privately educated young people’s narratives of everyday life, identity and wellbeing.
Hayley Sparks (PhD Student, School of Environment, The University of Auckland)

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to know why this research is being done and what being a participant in this research will involve. Please take some time to carefully read the following information sheet before deciding whether you want to participate. Please contact us if there is anything you don’t understand or if you would like more information. Thank you.

Project Description

This research is being conducted as part of the researcher’s (Hayley Sparks) PhD thesis within the School of Environment at The University of Auckland. This thesis explores the everyday experiences of privately educated young people outside the school gates. A lot of research has been done with children, however, limited research has been done with children like you who go to private schools. The research aims to explore how people and places influence your everyday experiences, identities and wellbeing. This research provides you and other students at your school the chance to tell your stories and contribute to a better understanding of what it is like growing up in New Zealand.

Project Procedures

Your involvement in this research will be through two focus groups lasting approximately 90 minutes. A focus group is a small group discussion – about 6 young people will be in each focus group. One focus group will be conducted at the beginning of the research, and one after the diary phase has been completed. The focus groups will be conducted at school, during school time with the permission of your Principal and teacher. The focus groups will be audio recorded on a digital voice recorder. Transcription of the focus groups will be completed by the researcher. You will also be asked to complete one online diary entry every week for 5 weeks. Dialogic diaries will be completed through a safe website hosted by The University of Auckland. Dialogic diaries are interactive and intended to be conversational as you will write a diary entry which the researcher will respond to. In some cases a topic will be provided for you to respond to, and at other times you will be free to choose what you write about. You can write as much or as little as you want. These diary entries will be completed in your own time, and not in class time. Only you and the researcher will see what you write. To say thank you for participating in the research, you will receive a $20 gift voucher at the end of
the data collection process. This voucher will be presented to all participants, even if you decide to stop participating in the project.

The focus groups and dialogic diaries will involve questions and interactive activities which allow you to express and explore your everyday experiences outside the school gates. More specifically, discussion will focus on aspects of lifeworlds, identities and wellbeing. For example, what do you enjoy doing in your spare time, what makes you who you are, your perspectives on key local and global issues, and your aspirations for the future are some of the topics of conversation. The research is not an evaluation of your school’s practices.

If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the focus groups and dialogic diaries, you are welcome to leave the room or not complete the diary entry. The researcher will have information for relevant helplines (e.g. Youthline) to give to you and will advise that you contact an independent organisation if you want to confidentially discuss issues. Information will not be passed onto your school or parents to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

The recorded data collected during the focus groups and dialogic diaries will be stored on the researcher’s secure, password protected portable storage device, and will be kept for six years. After 6 years, the data will be permanently destroyed. A sheet with your details and pseudonym will be stored in a locked cabinet at The University of Auckland which only the researcher has access to. A summary report of the findings of this research can be sent to you at the conclusion of the research, whereby your name and school will not be linked to any information you provide in the focus groups and diary entries.

**Right to withdraw from participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your Principal has given assurance that your participation or non-participation will not affect your school grades in anyway. If you decide you do not want to continue with the research at any time, you can withdraw from the research. You do not need permission from your parent/guardian to stop participating in the research. However, your contribution to the focus groups cannot be removed from the research due to the nature of the activity. Your diaries can be removed from the analysis, up to 6 months after you complete the set of diary entries, as these will be identifiable based on the username you register when signing into the website.

**Confidentiality**

You will be asked to not discuss what occurs in the focus groups with others to maintain the confidentiality of people who participate. Any information provided will be kept in a secure file. Your name and school affiliations will be kept confidential, and a made up name will be used in any writing which comes from the research.

**Contact Details and Approval**

Researcher
Hayley Sparks
hayley.sparks@auckland.ac.nz
021 114 2536

Main Supervisor
Francis Collins
f.collins@auckland.ac.nz
(09) 923 3129

Head of Department
Prof. Paul Kench
p.kench@auckland.ac.nz
(09) 923 8440

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 5/12/14 for (3) years, Reference Number 2014/013326.
Private schools included in the sample for collection of data on the institutional dimensions of privilege.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<th>Date of access</th>
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<td>2nd December, 2016</td>
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<td>St Cuthbert's College</td>
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<td>St Peter's School</td>
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