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Reconciling educationally displaced young people and education

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Certification

I, Nicoli Humphry, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Nicoli Humphry
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Abstract

In Australia there are a significant proportion of young people existing in debilitating lives, who, for a range of reasons, are no longer attending school. In this thesis I ask, what work is required of schools to reconcile these young people with education following their, often, incapacitating engagements with educational and social disadvantage and exclusion.

This thesis comes from an eighteen month ethnographic study conducted across the four school sites of one Australian organisation, Youth Off The Streets (YOTS). Fieldwork involved the use of two ethnographic techniques: in-depth interviews with 20 young people and 18 staff, and observations of over 100 staff, young people, volunteers, parents and community members. The use of ethnographic techniques has been combined with a document analysis that argues for an understanding of these young people as educationally 'displaced'.

I have drawn predominantly on the work of Foucault and his understandings of power relations as the vehicle of analysis. In particular his work on states of domination, sovereign power, silence and freedom have been useful in developing an understanding of young people's lives as embedded in complexity and chaos through a range of debilitating relationships. This has been combined with the work of Goffman, Lyng and Hope to frame these young people as skilled 'edgeworkers'. I argue that through YOTS's construction of a number of conditions that involve the production of alternative knowledges, the realisation of *relations of care* and *practices of care*, and an innovative use of power relations that create freedom, the staff at the YOTS schools have been able to begin a process of reconciliation between these young people and their education.

Work Published from this Thesis

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Conventions and Abbreviations

I have applied a number of conventions throughout this thesis. In general, the following conventions apply to quotes taken from the interview transcripts.

Interview Transcript Conventions:

All people and place names throughout this thesis are pseudonyms except for Youth Off the Streets (YOTS), who have been named with permission (see Appendix 1).

…. Dots indicate a pause by the speaker that I considered longer than might be indicated by a comma. The more dots the longer the pause.

[…] Square brackets indicate transcript data that has been removed as it does not contribute, add or detract from the discussion. This also applies to quotes from referenced sources.

(…) Round brackets have been used to indicate interview data that could not be transcribed from audio recordings.

Italicised speech in transcriptions – I have used italics to identify my words, questions and statements from interviews as the interviewer. These have generally been removed but were sometimes needed to set the context of participant responses.

Other Conventions:

'disengaged' – Inverted commas have been used as a way of indicating contested notions throughout the thesis.

Abbreviations/Acronyms

YOTS	Youth Off The Streets
NSW	New South Wales
DEC/DET	Department of Education and Communities – formerly Department of Education and Training
DoCS/FACS	Family and Community Services and Department of Community Services
JJ's/Juvie	Juvenile Justice

Section 1 – Setting the Scene

This section presents the background to the study and an overview of the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the thesis, motivation for the study, the research questions, a brief overview of my methodological choices and theoretical conceptualisations, the literature review, and a definition of terms that form the basis of the thesis.

Chapter 2 explores the research questions, discusses my methodological approach to this research, and explains how I generated, analysed and presented the data. The chapter explores the elements that I needed to consider in terms of ethics and sensitivity, outlines my theoretical response which focuses on Foucaultian understandings of power, and explores issues that arose in the presentation of the data.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Identifying the Challenge

> I remember my first school. I went to the kindy there and the school. Um, walking up through the gate. Kids are in the sand pit and some others playing on the swings down there and you got a big green gate that goes all the way around the kindy separating it from the, the little kids school to the big kids school. And you walk through the gate and you got all these little tables and these little chairs and you got kids standing up there painting on boards. And other kids building with blocks, making things out of old boxes and stuff. […] I want to get into something. Give me something to do! (Claire)
>
> *What were you thinking that made you walk out of class?*
> The teacher's a fucking idiot. Most of the one's I knew, I always thought they were all idiots and I couldn't get along with none of them. […] I was fourteen when I left school. […] I just got the shits with the principal and I ended up just chucking stuff at the principal. And then he sort of didn't want me there anymore. And I vandalised his car and he didn't like that. […] Umm, break and enter, stealing, evading police. Ahh, assaulting a police officer after I broke into my high school and trashed it, that was the place I broke into. […] Breach of bail and AVO orders and all that. (Claire)
>
> I couldn't see nothing that could change my mind when I was back then 'cause I was still just young and wild and wanting to rebel. But now I'm older its like . . if I got now . . . I could take it back with me then . . . finish my schooling and yeah, no worries. (Claire)

These extracts were taken from interviews for a postgraduate course I was doing, conducted just prior to commencing this research. The extracts paint three very different pictures of school experience. Such vivid contrasts become even more striking when it is understood that the extracts are stories from the same young life. They start with memories Claire has of being a little girl on her first day of school – so obviously entranced with the idea of learning and the place where it is all encountered. When this is contrasted with the violence and anger that ended Claire's school life, it

raises the question as to what happened in the intervening years to cause such a brutal change. How could a young girl go from showing such delight in learning to such rebellion? Four years later, Claire had gone back to learning – just not at a school. In the interview Claire told me she would now love to work with disabled children and was completing literacy and numeracy courses run through a local programme which was helping her finish her NSW School Certificate by distance education. She also expressed sincere regret at having 'wasted' the learning time she had when she was at school. Somehow, she had come to a place in her life where she wanted to learn. Given her previous experiences, I wondered what had tipped the balance and allowed her to come back to learning?

Claire's final experiences of education expose the possibility that a young person, operating at the extremes of 'disengagement' can reclaim a desire to learn. Her circumstances illustrated for me that, despite her debilitating experiences and violent response to education at one time, it was possible to reconcile with education. In general, most of these 'types' of young people end up out of school and go on to live lives that remain just as disadvantaged and 'disengaged' as when they either left or, like Claire, were removed from school. Claire's return to some form of education after her destructive schooling experiences is not the norm. However, it does happen and can be successful.

Given that Claire was 18 at the time of this interview, her changed circumstances could be attributed to her 'maturity'. However, for me, she had inspired another set of questions. What I wanted to understand was whether it was possible for this reconciliation to happen beyond Claire's experience? And, if it were, how was it possible for other young people to become able and willing to learn when they had previously found it impossible? What now made it possible for them to 'be educated'? This thesis aims to address these types of questions.

In this thesis I am not concerned with the success or failure of a particular set of strategies and pedagogies. This has been covered extensively by researchers in the Australian context, such as McGregor and Mills (2012), Davies et al (2011), Polidano et al (2012), Smyth (2006, 2010), te Riele (2007, 2008b, 2011) and Francis and Mills (2012). Instead my aim is to explore *how* a set of conditions, established by one

organisation, functioned to promote reconciliation. My study explores *how* young people's educational connections with learning might be reconciled through an interrogation of the types of conditions that allow 'disengaged' young people to make re-connections with education. I have identified the more significant conditions that contribute to the construction of young people's educational 'disengagement' leading to their severed educational relationships, and also those conditions that contribute to young people's reconciliation with education. An exploration of these conditions exposes *how* they work to both prevent and permit educational reconciliation.

My starting assumption for this research was that such reconciliations are very difficult within the constraints of mainstream schooling. This assumption is supported by Australian researchers such as Smyth (see for example 2002, 2010, 2011), and te Riele (2006a, 2006b, 2008a, 2011), and, I would suggest, by the study described in this thesis. I therefore looked to the ways educational reconciliation might be enabled and supported in contexts outside of mainstream schooling. The Youth Off The Streets (YOTS) organisation, the site for this project, has provided that context. YOTS is an organisation that has a strong reputation for succeeding in making these types of reconnections with and for 'disengaged' young people. YOTS was established in 1991 by Father Chris Riley. His aim was to target the needs of "hardcore" young people who were homeless and "crisis affected" (YOTS 2012b: 8). Funding for the organisation came from government, from private donations and fundraising activities, and was used to support a range of programmes for the young people which included the four school sites included in this study. As I have identified YOTS as the site of this research (with YOTS approval), I have included limited information other than what is already publically available about the organisation. Briefly, the YOTS *Mission Statement* (YOTS 2012c) states "Youth Off The Streets is helping disconnected young people to discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices." The YOTS schools therefore provided a space in which young people were able to reconnect both with their education and from there, with life in general. YOTS also provided a space where I could interrogate the 'conditions' that enabled the YOTS young people to re-establish a relationship with their education.

This research seeks to both challenge significant and educationally dominant

understandings and practices about 'deficit' discourses, and to extend on a smaller but growing area of sociocultural research concerning 'disengaged' young people by addressing the question:

> *What work is required of educators to create educational contexts and conditions that reconcile educationally displaced young people with their education?*

This will be further explored through the following sub questions:

1. What discourses are drawn on in mainstream education to describe 'disengaged' young people and how do these discourses impact on the education of 'disengaged' young people?
2. What educational discourses and practices are deployed at YOTS, as an atypical educational setting?
3. How do these discourses and practices work to build reconciliation between young people and their learning?

Young People, Educational Exclusion and 'Disengagement'

Concern for the education of particular 'types' of young people – disengaged, disaffected, disadvantaged, disenfranchised, marginalised, 'at risk' are just some of the many terms drawn on – is an issue in Australia and internationally. The prominence of this concern is typified in a UNESCO report, *Focus – Educating Teenagers* (Muller and Murtagh 2003: 4), which begins,

> Classes have swollen and are increasingly filled with youngsters from more diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Teachers are hard put to deal with the problem of these teenagers at the most delicate period of their lives.

The report portrays classrooms as being places that exhibit a distinct lack of learning and where teachers appear powerless to "impose discipline in their classes. Peace and quiet seems to be especially elusive" (Muller and Murtagh 2003: 5). The realistic provision of education seems to provide significant difficulties for educators when applied to segments of the youth population, especially those young people 'disengaged' from formal schooling.

Existing statistics conservatively estimate that currently, between 20-27% of young

people in Australia experience difficulties with education. Most of the statistical data I have drawn on equates educational 'disengagement' with the numbers of young people who are no longer involved in any form of education. I have used this data while still recognising that 'disengagement' requires a far greater contextual understanding than just young people 'not attending school'. The literature draws on a range of terms to establish the set of statistical data. These include: young people considered to be 'at risk' of not completing education; educationally marginalised young people; and disadvantaged young people. Despite my aversion to these types of terminology in general, the statistics cited around this terminology do give some idea as to the numbers of young people considered to be 'disengaged' from education in Australia. When looking at proportions of Australian young people 'at risk' of not completing their education, Campbell (2004) and Smyth (2005) suggest 25%; Mosen-Lowe et al (2009) in a more recent study in Western Australia suggests 27%; McGregor and Mills (2011) suggest around 26% based on an OECD report on Australia; and the ABS (2012) states that 20% of young people did not complete Year 12 in 2011. Recent government media releases in April 2011 (Karvelas 2011) and November 2012 (Curtis, 2012) report that over 40,000 young people aged 15-17 and 27.5% of young people aged 18-24 years are considered disengaged from education, a number that continues to increase even with the reported $120 million worth of funding allocated to a number of educational programmes. These statistics do, however, need to be read with a certain amount of caution. The ABS (2012), for example, suggests that the amount of young people 'at risk' of not finishing their education is reducing. The ABS (2005) reported 33% of young people 'at risk' of not completing their education in 2004 compared with only 20% in 2011. However, this is in direct contradiction to other government reports. Reductions, based on levels of Year 12 completion, could perhaps be attributed to such changes as the recent increase of the school leaving age rather than to any real reduction in 'at riskness' or 'disengagement'. I would also suggest that despite these possible reductions, these statistics still represent far too many young lives. The majority of studies present statistics of between 25-27%, representing approximately 7–8 young people in every class of 30.

It also needs to be recognised that specific groups of young people make up a greater proportion of these numbers. 'Risk of not completing education' increases in Australia if you are male, Indigenous, from a low socioeconomic status background, or are from

a migrant background. Studies such as that of McGregor and Mills (2011) report that the 26% of 'at risk' (of leaving school early) young people in their study included these groups of young people. While Buddelmeyer et al (2011) estimate that of the 29% of 19 year olds who had not completed their school education, 55% were from disadvantaged backgrounds. On a more positive note, Polidano et al (2012) report from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth, that 82% of early leavers in 2003 did return to education within five years. However, of these only 1% returned to mainstream schools.

All these statistics relate specifically to young people who are visibly out of education. But, as McGregor and Mills (2011: 2) argue, they do not take into consideration "other young people in mainstream schools who are disengaged from the learning process but who simply endure their situations until they graduate". The implication of this is that the reported 25–27% as an estimate of 'disengagement' is, at best, conservative.

The consequences of this level of 'disengagement' for young people are dire. While the above statistics indicate that a large number of young people are no longer located in school settings, they also suggest that the young people's 'disengagement' begins much earlier. This translates into real people with real responses in classrooms across Australia. As Muller and Murtagh (2003) argue, in classrooms, 'disengagement' is linked to a diminishing "sense of direction" (2003:5). They describe students as therefore "tak[ing] out their frustration on the school as a symbol of authority" (2003: 5), and continue by naming a long list of classroom behaviours, including "rudeness, swearing at the teachers, attacks, extortion." They argue that "[s]chools concentrate every kind of social violence" (2003: 5-6). These views are supported by a proliferation of literature that depicts educational interactions with 'disengaged' young people as, at best, "disturbing" (Kelly 2001a: 24).

The importance of addressing these types of understandings of 'disengagement' and exclusion from schooling is essential and is underscored by the implication that young people's 'disengagement' not only impacts their long term educational exclusion, but has implications for their on going social exclusion and disadvantage in life. A lack of education is linked to extreme levels of disadvantage. Although it would be simplistic to set up a cause/effect relationship, it is suggested in a range of research (Thomas

2007; Jahnukainen and Jarvinen 2005; Habibis and Walter 2009; White and Wyn 2005; Connell et al 2010; Youdell 2006c) that the educational exclusion that arises from 'disengagement' is linked to long term social exclusion and social disadvantage. These studies indicate that some social exclusion happens as a direct result of a lack of education, such as reduced life choices, high unemployment and/or highly unstable employment. Other social exclusions that have links with educational exclusion but are not a direct result of it include: reduced life expectancy; a lack of access to medical and other support services; a higher likelihood of going to prison; and the generational experience of disadvantage (see for example Habibis and Walter 2009). People rarely experience just one of these factors, but usually exist in disadvantaged circumstances created by a combination of such factors. Addressing exclusion from schooling and the accompanying 'disengagement' that occurs, should therefore become a priority in education.

There are a number of explanations as to how 'disengagement' might occur. Explanations come from particular stances within areas such as education, psychology and sociology. These stances either support a 'deficit' understanding of young people, framing young people as the cause of their own 'disengagement', or critique these understandings and challenge educators, psychologist and sociologist, and the institutions they exist in, concerning their part in the formation of 'disengagement'.

Much of the general educational literature shows that young people's disengagement and subsequent exclusion stems from factors external to educational institutions. For example, a UK literature review conducted by Welsh (2003) on the causes of educational disengagement, identified factors including substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and motherhood (and fatherhood), young carers, young people in state care or incarceration, young people with learning and/or physical disabilities, criminal offenders, homeless young people, truancy or exclusion, poverty and ethnicity. These factors are well supported by other studies (see for example Shaw and Woolhead 2006; Hoggart 2006; Powell 2006; Barnes 1999; Race et al 2005; Connor and Ferri 2007; Haller et al 2007; Reid and Knight 2009; Tadema et al 2005; Copeland 1997; Taylor 2005; Hosie and Selman 2002). However, in this educational literature, the cause of these issues and the accompanying blame for 'disengagement' is sited outside education, either with the 'disengaged' young person, or their families, communities

and other environments.

Similar blame can be seen in research from the area of psychology. Such research has been exposed as giving rise to a number of deficit ways in which 'disengaged' young people are understood. Psychological and educational practices contribute to educational 'disengagement' by identifying problems and then characterising 'disengaged' young people through these problems. One significant example can be seen in the psychopathologisation and medicalisation of 'problems' in young people. Criticisms of the application of these psychological practices, which identify young people as 'psychological disordered', have also contributed to young people's 'disengagement'. These practices congregate around 'behavioural and emotional disorders' with an increasing pathology being attached to such diagnoses as: ADHD; Aspergers' and other autistic spectrum disorders; and mental health diagnoses – particularly those of bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression (see for example Crowe 2000; Baker 2002; Harwood 2006; O'Keeffe 2009; Graham 2006b, 2009; Tait 2005; Laws and Davies 2000; Thomas and Glenny 2000; Denny et al 2004) – all of which are noted to contribute to educational 'disengagement'. What this literature identifies is that these psychological and educational practices appear to identify young people's educational, medical and psychological problems as the cause of their 'disengagement' and then implement strategies that further establish educational 'disengagement'.

The contribution of mainstream schooling practices to the 'disengagement' of young people is also prominent throughout the literature. In the following two quotes, te Riele (2011) and Francis and Mills (2012) argue that mainstream practice works to increase the already burdened lives of young people, and promotes in schools the use of such strategies as punitive discipline, a lack of support, ranking and streaming.

> [M]ainstream education is inappropriate to the needs of at least some young people (Holdswork 2004) and […] schooling may play a direct or intermediary role in 'activating or enabling the risk of some young people' (Strategic Partners 2001, p.16). (te Riele 2007: 56)

> Arguably, while social inequality begins with the family, it is schooling that formalises it, certifies it, structures and entrenches it. (Francis and Mills 2012: 257)

Both te Riele and Francis and Mills reject the use of the deficit understandings that are so often taken up in mainstream schooling, arguing that deficit knowledges contribute significantly to the 'disengagement' of young people from schooling and can manifest in exclusionary practices that damage young people.

Another commonality amongst critiques of mainstream schooling is a concerted attack on the use of neoliberal policy (McGregor and Mills 2011, 2012; Smyth 2010; te Riele 2007). Such research exposes neoliberal practice as a controlling mechanism that is embedded in policy and consequently entrenched in mainstream schools. These critiques argue that neoliberal policy acts to exclude by supporting and maintaining exclusionary practices in mainstream schools. For example, te Riele (2007, 2011) argues that neoliberal policy targets certain young people as 'problematic'. When mainstream schools deploy exclusionary practices such as identifying and measuring behaviour and providing interventions, engagement becomes difficult for these young people. However, as te Riele identifies, policy simultaneously enforces attendance until 17 years of age, removes unemployment benefits for those young people under 17 and restricts welfare benefits for those under 21, forcing those young people who cannot find work to remain in a 'disengaged' state in schools. This set of policies has set up conditions ripe for creating failure; the failure of young people to gain an education in their 'disengaged' state, and the failure of schools to educate them.

Researchers critiquing mainstream schooling's use of deficit understandings, give different explanations for 'disengagement'. Critical stances within both psychology and sociology contest the understanding that blame for 'disengagement' should be placed either partially or solely with young people. Sociological research that is critical of 'deficit' understandings identifies, for example, that mainstream schools operate in a middle class mode, acting to exclude working class young people from participation (Willis 2003; Connell et al 1983; Ball et al 2000; White and Wyn 2005; Habibis and Walter 2009). Sociologists also raise concerns around gender and sexual orientation (MacGillivray 2001; Rasmussen 2004, 2006; Rasmussen and Harwood 2003; Vicars

2006); race, Indigeneity and the institutionalisation of racism in education (Noble 2005; McLeod and Yates 2003; Cole 2004), as contributing to the social exclusion and 'disengagement' experienced by these young people (Vincent and Ball 2007; Black 2007a, 2007b; Ceci and Papierno 2005; Whitty 2001). From this perspective, social structures are again seen as encouraging young people's alienation and are identified as being embedded in the very institution that is proposing to educate them.

This area of critical research also points to 'disengagement' being constructed through the use of particular types of discourses. They explain, for example, that discourses that promote 'at risk' young people (Kelly 2000a; te Riele 2006b), labelling theory (Bernberg and Krohn 2003), 'zero tolerance' (Giroux 2003) and educational triage (Hess and Greer 1986; Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Saltmarsh and Youdell 2004); all point to the educational use of understandings that young people cause their own 'disengagement'.

These criticisms of 'deficit' discourses draw out the negative impacts of such tactics as labelling on the young people they are applied to. Words such as 'at risk' (Kelly 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a; Schissel and Wotherspoon 2001) 'deviant', 'delinquent', (Kelly 2000a; Schissel and Wotherspoon 2001); 'emotionally disordered', 'conduct disordered' or 'behaviourally disordered' (Harwood 2000; Thomas and Glenny 2000; Laws and Davies 2000); and 'deficit' (Thomas and Glenny 2000) are all heavily critiqued terms in their application to 'disengaged' young people. A commonly raised issue by these researchers is the problematic theme within the psychological discourse of 'disengagement' being due to deficiencies found in young people. Such an approach, the critics argue, establishes permission for the use of deficit discourses and associated techniques. Mainstream schooling operates with deficit knowledges of young people and consequently work to 'fix' them (te Riele, 2007, 2008b, Smyth et al 2013; Smyth and McInerney 2012; Kim 2006). These understandings work to construct young people as problematic rather than "seeing the complexities and associated understandings from the vantage point of young people." (Smyth et al, 2013: 195)

While the above types of critiques are extensive, deficit understandings appear to remain entrenched in educational practice. In particular, deficit understandings alter perceptions of young people in ways that are damaging to them both personally and

educationally and work to exclude them from gaining an education and consequently, participation in the broader society, reducing life chances and life expectancy (Artiles 1998; Lawrence 2002; Hattam and Prosser 2008; Mills in Mills and Gale 2010; Zyngier 2008). These researchers agree that it is the responsibility of educators to firstly, recognising and secondly, actively disrupt deficit discourses (Barton 2003; Mills in Mills and Gale 2010).

Recent critical studies highlight a promising shift in understandings of educational 'disengagement' from a moral and medical model to a social constructivist position that proposes schooling needs to change, rather than young people (Rix 2011; te Riele 2007). Grenier (2010) suggests that both positions are currently influential. The medical model, as discussed above, is based on medical and psychological deficit, where individual "dispositions fall outside established norms, differences translate into deficits (Davis 1997)" (Grenier 2010: 389); whereas the social construction model focuses on the critique of the structures, processes, and attitudes and assumptions that create disadvantage and social justice issues and push to change schooling rather than the individual (Graham 2006b; Raffo et al. 2009; Araujo 2005; Macfarlane 2010; Ashton 2011; Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2011; Rix 2011). My study is located with those researchers whose understandings draw on the notion that 'disengagement' is a socially constructed concept in mainstream schooling, and whose critiques of educational institutions move to challenge schooling rather than the individual.

'Alternative Education' Research and Directions

In this section, I include a brief discussion of the research associated with 'alternative education', not because I have used the term but because of my deliberate decision not to deploy it. McGregor and Mills (2011: 1) identify the 'alternative' label as "a slippery one [that] is currently used to denote a multitude of practices and sites", depicting everything from democratic schooling and home schooling to behaviour management units and schools in detention centres. I would suggest that this depiction came about due to the extensive range of programmes and ideas that could be seen publically as 'schools' that do not conform to mainstream convention. The breadth of programmes included under the banner of 'alternative education' makes me reluctant to use the term in relation to the YOTS schools. Although it might be argued that YOTS is an 'alternative school' I have purposefully avoided drawing on this

term as I see the YOTS schools as something other than what might be contained in these preconceived notions.

Despite my decision not to label YOTS as an 'alternative education' site, the research in this area is still valuable in establishing examples of the ways in which concepts such 'disengagement' might be questioned. Te Riele (2007:55), drawing on the work of Raywid, suggests that 'alternative education' can be classified into two types, the division of which is "based on the focus of change […]: changing the school, [or] changing the students." I would argue, along with te Riele (2007; 2008b), that those schools/programmes, whose focus is on changing young people, act in similar ways to mainstream schooling and are drawing on deficit knowledges. These programmes may seem advantageous if one is to take account of their reported success rates, but generally they are considered to have only short term impacts (te Riele 2007), and are unable to address the endemic exclusion that leads to 'disengagement'. These programmes tend to have either a behavioural/disciplinary focus, or a therapeutic intent (te Riele, 2007; 2008b). Many appear to be just another, often more intense version of 'fixing' young people. In the US these types of schools/programmes are described by Kim (2006) as operating on a school/prison continuum where 'problematic' young people are seen as 'criminal' upon entering the programme, and strategies are then applied to fix their 'criminal' tendencies.

However, there is also significant current Australian literature in the area of alternative education that helps to locate my own research. This literature concerns those schools whose focus is concerned with changing the school rather than the young person in an attempt to redress the impact of deficit understandings and disadvantage. In particular this includes the research of McGregor and Mills (20011, 2012), te Riele (2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2011, 2012a, 2012b), Smyth and colleagues (Smyth et al, 2000; Smyth and Hattam, 2002; Smyth and McInerney, 2012, 2013; and Smyth, McInerney and Fish, 2013) among others. In combination, these researchers have conducted studies across four states in Australia – New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, and across an impressive range of schools/programmes. This research has been based on similar understandings of the purpose, outcomes, practices and understandings of alternative education that align with my own stance.

This perspective offers the understanding that alternatives to mainstream schooling are both possible and desirable, not just for 'disengaged' young people but for all young people (see for example, te Riele 2007, 2008b, 2011). Francis and Mills (2012) in particular identify current mainstream school practice as damaging to young people and advocate an approach that invests in social justice while also challenging researchers and educators to find alternatives. Te Riele, (2007) supports this, arguing for an approach that moves from one of 'uniformity' to an understanding of 'diversity'.

Te Riele (2008a: 20) also recognises that research is more helpful when it points out what is "engaging and inclusive" and focusing on the pedagogy within a positive culture. Smyth and McInerney (2013) also propose that it is necessary to go beyond typical understandings of young people being problematic. They argue that approaches addressing disadvantage in terms of low literacy, low aspirations, motivation issues and behaviour problems, are less helpful. Instead, they argue that a "focus on the larger social and institutional conditions that have to be put in place if such programmes are to make a substantive and sustainable difference in the lives of these young people" (Smyth et al, 2013: 195) is required.

McGregor and Mills (2011, 2012), te Riele (2007), Smyth (2006, 2010), Smyth and McInerney (2012, 2013), and Smyth et al (2013) all argue that educational practice needs to be different if the disadvantage created by 'disengagement' is to be addressed. What they suggest is that many 'alternative education' settings that focus on changing themselves to suit the young people they serve, already have in place many of these strategies. They argue strongly that mainstream schools can learn from these alternative sites and in fact are sites in which innovation can and has been trialled successfully. For example, from their study, McGregor and Mills (2012) found that in alternative school sites, previously 'disengaged' young people *do* want an education. They explored the factors that alternative sites have provided to overcome 'disengagement', listing factors such as: building a sense of purpose and community, providing academic learning and an environment where positive relationships, care for individuals, acceptance, support systems, celebration and a chance to start fresh in education, all work to re-engage young people. They argue that relationships are central to engagement and can be developed by simple strategies, such as the use of first names for young people and staff alike, respect, acting as family, matching

curriculum to real life and constantly asking 'why' young people respond in particular ways to particular situations.

However, Smyth et al (2013) also argue for caution and the need to be aware of the narrowness of the opportunities that can come from alternative settings. Their research raises questions concerning the outcomes of re-engagement, arguing that alternative schools can end up as a dumping ground for those young people that mainstream schools can't cope with. These educational spaces can then become places that are chronically underfunded (te Riele 2008b) with little hope of providing young people with anything more than limited access to 'low skill work' (Smyth and McInerney 2013). Such spaces continue to reinforce an already disadvantaged and disengaged position.

My research sits comfortably amongst this research, extending on the work of these researchers. In similar ways I have drawn on the assumptions that mainstream schooling can be instrumental in creating exclusion; that the deficit understandings and approaches accessed in mainstream schooling would seem to be detrimental to young people; that there is a need to work on changing the educational setting rather than forcing young people fit; and that mainstream education requires an approach of 'diversity'.

My study also takes up Grenier's (2010) challenge to go beyond traditional understandings and te Riele's (2007) encouragement to look for what is working. However, even with the research of this Australian group of researchers, there is only still only limited research that seeks to look at how educational 'disengagement' might be addressed. As te Riele (2012b: 40) in her report to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum states "[f]urther research on the key elements of school culture that impact positively on student engagement in education" is required. My research takes up this challenge to look for key elements, in this case those conditions of the YOTS schools' culture that have had a positive impact on the young people attending them. In accessing a Foucaultian approach and focusing on the use of power and social constructs within the YOTS school sites I also extend such an exploration to expose *how* such conditions work to facilitate 'disengaged' young people's reconciliation with learning.

Using a Foucaultian Analytical Framework

I have drawn principally on ethnographic principles and techniques as the vehicle for data generation. This approach has been embedded in a range of Foucaultian based research and was initially inspired by the article *Special Sport for Misfits and Losers* authored by Saltmarsh and Youdell (2004). This article critiqued the responses of a mainstream school to students who were considered to be marginalised. In this work Saltmarsh and Youdell explored how the school's executive had relegated this group of young people to a position where they were considered to deserve less resources, less aesthetic and practical spaces, less experienced teachers, and to be due less consideration of their circumstances. The paper argues this simply yet powerfully through a Foucaultian discourse analysis.

Saltmarsh and Youdell (2004) also take up the use of a discourse analysis. There are a number of different approaches to discourse analysis (Taylor in Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001) – of which Saltmarsh and Youdell's (2004) paper is one. A Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis is applied regularly (see for example the work of Ball 2009, Harwood 2006, Kelly 2011, Youdell 2006c) in tackling similar research to the one proposed here. This approach provides the means to target and question the construction of knowledge and is able to provide valuable and powerful insights into social contexts. In the following quote, Kendall and Wickham (2000), provide an apt description of the questioning, sceptical and arguably 'irreverent' manner in which a Foucaultian discourse analysis interrogates many of the social 'constructions' that society accepts and/or values as truth, often without question or consideration of the consequences.

> It is a methodological device with the same effect as a precocious child at a dinner party: [it] makes the older guests at the table of intellectual analysis feel decidedly uncomfortable by pointing out things about their origins and functions that they would rather remain hidden. (Kendall and Wickham 2000:29)

The work of Foucault has provided a persuasive, potent and often surprising pathway through a range of research studies. This theoretical stance resides within a critical tradition, which allows the social to be questioned, explored and probed on multiple

levels. From Foucault (1980, 1991, 1994,1996, 2000a, 2000b), I have primarily drawn on the notion of power relations to explore: how young people were constituted in the social contexts of both their mainstream schools and the YOTS context; the practices embedded in these contexts; and how these influenced truth, knowledge, and acts of resistance and freedom.

I have also drawn theoretically on a range of theorists from the Foucaultian tradition. Each of these theorists has taken Foucaultian thought and extended it, enabling an even deeper probing. Massey (2004a), for example, provided the mechanism to explore the space and place in which education occurs. Her theoretical understandings allowed me to conceptualise 'educational displacement', through a theoretical conceptualisation of a 'geography of belonging'. I have also drawn on Goffman (1968, 1972), who, although not Foucaultian, shares complementary notions, which co-exist well with Foucaultian thought and which open up paths allowing an exploration of the actions of individuals to their contexts (Hacking 2004). From Goffman (1972) I drew on such conceptualisations as boundary performances, cynical and sincere performances, and sign vehicles.

Foucaultian based studies are part of a growing area of critique, yet can be accused of being destructive in their deconstructions of social situations. Typically, the mechanisms of a Foucaultian critique are used to problematise the social situations they are applied to, and reveal the negative impacts that they may have. However, like Laws and Davies (2000), I contend that poststructual approaches can also be used to create, and the primary intent of my research is to use the same mechanisms of deconstruction to open up the positives and the possibilities, thereby exposing different forms of and spaces for education. I am particularly interested in exploring how educational spaces may operate to encourage the reconciliation of young people with learning and the reconceptualisations of young people required to do this (see Chapter 2 for further discussion).

To realise this purpose for my study, I drew on the ethnographic techniques of observations and interviews and the ethnographic principles of immersion, rapport and flexibility in similar ways to such researchers as Harwood (2000), Carabine (2001), Vaughan (2004), Saltmarsh and Youdell (2004), Youdell (2006c), and Hill (2009). These

techniques and principles generated the type of data from which I could interrogate the conditions and practices used by the four YOTS schools. As the range of researchers above indicates, the use of an ethnographic approach has an established and successful tradition of being combined effectively with a Foucaultian theoretical framework. Tamboukou and Ball (2003: 2) argue that the use of ethnographic tools readily "co-exist" with a Foucaultian framework and researchers are able to take up Foucault's 'toolkit' (Hill 2009: 309), or parts thereof, to explore any context.

The joining of these two methodologies (ethnography and Foucaultian discourse analysis), although not without issues, plays to Foucault's encouragement to "think differently" (Hill 2009: 310). Hill suggests that the merge of ethnography and Foucault can be a powerful tool with which to question those things that are accepted as normal – such as thinking differently about deficit notions of young people. It allows the researcher to question, to trouble, to problematise the everyday, familiar world around us, helping to "identify those discourses, be they prevailing, marginalized or otherwise, that circulate within a particular discursive context and to deconstruct the constitutive and regulatory effects of these" (Harwood 2000: 359). Poststructual ethnographies are powerful *because* they go "beyond the true and false […] We can understand ethnographic writing to be an effect of a contest of discourses; ethnography is thus a regulating fiction" (Vaughan 2004: 400). In this study, taking up this critical stance enables the challenging of deficit discourses and practices through the theoretical lens of power relations.

The Importance of Terminology

In framing my research questions I have accessed a number of contested terms. The following conceptualisations are representative of where I stand in relation to the multiple meanings surrounding these terms. In accepting one understanding over another I do not just allocate a meaning in this context, but also position myself in relation to the research. These understandings signify my position in relation to young people, their education and its influence in their lives. The conceptualisations I have adopted for my research are also heavily influenced by my stance within a Foucaultian framework. The terms education, schooling, mainstream schooling, and reconciliation are considered below.

Education and Schooling: The two terms, education and schooling, are closely related although they are often differentiated within sociological contexts. This distinction became particularly important as my analysis progressed because the staff in my study saw each term as being different from the other. I am taking 'education' to denote the learning and knowledge that occurs over a life span. It applies to all areas of life and refers to both formal and informal settings (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1999). As Moore (2006) explains, education is the method adults use to socialise younger generations into particular "physical, intellectual and moral states" (2006: 746), which are politically and socially motivated. It is "not restricted to what happens within modern education systems or schools [but] mediates between society and the self. [Education] is the process whereby […] the social becomes inscribed within the individual" (2006: 746). Education is not so much about content as it is about understanding.

In contrast, I am referring to schooling as one of the more formalised methods (although a dominant and more static one) adopted by various social and cultural groups (particularly in western cultures) for passing on knowledge that has been deemed important within a society for mass education. It tends to take on a one size fits all approach to passing on knowledge (Groundwater-Smith et al, 2007). Torrance (2006) adds that in different societies, different knowledge will be valued, often relating to the economic value it represents politically. Schooling then, tends to take on the role of instilling in young people the current understandings of social civic and economic responsibility within society (Groundwater-Smith et al, 2007).

Like Groundwater-Smith et al (2007), I argue that education is a far more valuable approach to learning than schooling for 'disengaged' young people.

> For education to transcend mere schooling it requires that students be recognised as full participants in the learning process, as they come to explore and question the many and varied experiences that they encounter in the classroom and beyond. (Groundwater- Smith et al 2007: 4)

What was obvious as my research progressed was that the YOTS schools were drawing far more heavily on understandings of 'education', whereas both the staff and

young people understood their mainstream experiences as based in efforts of 'schooling' young people (see Chapters 3-6). The YOTS context was centred on the young people and education was being done with them rather than to them.

Mainstream Schooling: 'Mainstream schooling' implies, then, the typical 'western' approach adopted for schooling large numbers of young people. It has certain structures, follows a curriculum, contains welfare and discipline elements and currently, in Australia and internationally, has embraced a neoliberal political agenda (McGregor and Mills 2012). Its purpose is to shape a child/young person as efficiently and as cost effectively as possible so that they might contribute economically and socially to society. Smyth (2005) condemns this 'modernisation' of Australian schooling. He describes it as having "gouged the heart out of teaching and learning" (2005: 223), with half of school aged young people no longer completing high school and with widening gaps in inequality.

> A long and very public shadow is being cast over Australian schools by the neo-liberal reform project of modernization, particularly the escalating number of schools and students being swept up in the increasing gradient of poverty, and the construction of the public high school as a residual place of last resort for those unable to exercise choice (or flight!) to private schooling. (Smyth 2005: 225)

Due to YOTS's explicit rejection of much of what neoliberalism represents, I see the YOTS schools as sitting outside of mainstream schooling, despite some of their structures and curriculum being recognisably derived from mainstream contexts.

Reconciliation: I was initially concerned about using the term *reconciliation* as a way of describing the changed relationships that young people might experience with their education. My concern arose from the significance 'reconciliation' has held within Australian culture and I did not want to diminish or disrespect this significance for Indigenous people. However, closer examination of Indigenous understandings of the term 'reconciliation' confirmed that this was the term I needed. To frame my use of the term, I have drawn on what I perceive as some of the core understandings within a much broader framework of my understanding of what Indigenous 'reconciliation' means to Indigenous people.

The Indigenous peoples of Australia use the term reconciliation to describe a process of rectifying or putting right damage that has been done to an established relationship. However, in Australia's colonisation, with the colonisers' declaration of *terra nullius* (Short 2003) there was not an established relationship, meaning this form of reconciliation could not exist. As Max Dulumunmun Harrison (in McConchie 2003: 1) states, "There can be no reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous people of this land because there has never been a partnership in the first place to reconcile about. So how can this word *reconciliation* come about and bring people together." In similar ways there was never a 'partnership' between schools and young people. Schools are as they are, and young people must fit them.

Indigenous understandings of reconciliation therefore concern other things. The first is that it is not about one group of people accepting the unchanged circumstances that initially caused damage. From an Indigenous standpoint the notion of 'becoming one nation' does not recognise an Indigenous position (Short 2003), "it presumes the persistence of colonial domination" (Moses 2011: 146). Similarly for disengaged young people, reconciliation with education is not about going back and accepting the same form of schooling that was initially damaging (McGregor and Mills 2011). For many of these young people, in their present circumstances, a return to the mainstream education system would only create further damage. Reconciling with education is therefore about gaining an education that is conducted in such a way that it is suitable, sensitive and relevant for these young people. It cannot be about forcing an acceptance of a mainstream form of education.

For Indigenous people reconciliation is about both groups reconciling from a common place outside the existing relationship. For Indigenous people this begins with Mother Earth as this establishes a commonality or a shared bond that could allow a place to build relationship based on an equal footing. As Max Dulumunmun Harrison explains,

> So I take this word *reconciliation* and I use it to reconcile people back to Mother Earth, so that they can walk this land together and heal one another because she's the one that gives birth to everything we see around us, everything we need to survive […] Every part of this land is sacred: this teaching is the most important part of our survival. It's our home, we live here together. This is

> reconciliation, to look each other in the eye and know this equally. (Harrison in McConochie 2003: 2)

In the case of 'disengaged' young people this commonality is education. It becomes the shared bond from which new relationships can be established, new forms of learning can begin and where the young people are respected and valued on more equal terms.

Reconciliation is also about justice concerning past wrongs. A previous Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (1990-1996), Robert Tickner, stated that, "there can be no reconciliation without justice," (Short 2003: 495). Reconciliation requires the recognition of injustice and an effort to redress it. The YOTS young people all spoke of the importance for them of gaining an education (see Chapter 3). The injustice felt by being denied this was considerable and YOTS staff worked towards redressing this injustice by providing access to education, albeit in a different form.

Finally, Max Dulumunmun Harrison (2009) explains that reconciliation begins with forgiveness on one side and true regret on the other.

> It's a pretty big call to forgive … Forgiveness is for your healing. It's your self healing, it's got nothing to do with the person that has probably done wrong. (Harrison 2009:151)

> It's the heart sorry and not the head-sorry that would mean a lot and heal people. (Harrison in McConchie 2003:3)

Whether disengaged young people forgive (or not), and whether mainstream schools will ever work towards such change is not clear as my research did not ask this, but from the changes that the young people brought about in their lives I would suggest that it is possible that they have begun to move towards forgiveness for their previous experiences, despite never receiving either a 'heart' or 'head-sorry' from mainstream education for its part in the breakdown of the young people's relationship with their education.

The complexity of a term like 'reconciliation' means this explanation only touches the surface of such a discussion. However, recognising that 'becoming one' based in the dominant culture of a particular context is not reconciliation but further domination, understanding the notions of forgiveness and regret, justice, putting right past damage, and establishing common ground; all serve to give a basis to the way in which I have used reconciliation to describe the renewed relationship 'disengaged' young people experience when they returned to education at the YOTS schools.

Reading this Thesis

My research explores how YOTS works to alter the debilitating educational and life outcomes of a particular group of young people experiencing the extremes of disadvantage. In the process it discusses some of the problems within traditional mainstream education but primarily explores how education might be approached differently to overcome some of these problems by focusing on the conditions of education at YOTS. To accomplish this the thesis is organised into nine chapters. In Chapter 2, I speak to the methodological techniques I have drawn on within this study and the broad theoretical basis of Foucaultian power relations that underpin the entire thesis.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 speak to the conditions that create what I have termed 'educational displacement'. In Chapter 3, I discuss the dominant and detrimental establishment and use of deficit knowledges to understand young people within Australian mainstream education and examine how these knowledges can be questioned via an understanding of young people as being 'educationally displaced'. In Chapters 4 and 5, I draw on a combination of Foucault's use of sovereign power and Goffman's 'boundary performances' to explore the three main relationships contained within the YOTS young people's lives (family, the law, and mainstream schools). I look at the impact these relationships have had on the young people's education, and the 'edgework' practices the young people draw on in response.

Chapters 6,7 and 8 speak to those conditions that create 'educational reconciliation'. In Chapter 6, I continue the exploration of power relations using Foucault's concepts of 'truth' and silence to explicate the impact of the YOTS staff's different way of framing the YOTS young people. In Chapters 7 and 8, I discuss how the YOTS staff's

different ways of speaking about these particular young people enables the deployment of different educational relationships and practices, exploring firstly how power relations were used to create 'freedom' via 'relations of care' and 'practices of care' and secondly how these relations and practices were realised in the YOTS classrooms. In Chapter 9, I draw the arguments from this thesis together to argue for a different way of speaking and working with educationally displaced young people and the implications this could have for educators and other professionals working with young people who exist in such extremes of disadvantage.

Beyond this general description it should also be noted that relevant literature and theoretical conceptualisations are located throughout the remaining chapters. For example, alongside the general literature discussed in this chapter, Chapter 3 contains a historical literature review of deficit understandings, and Chapters 4 and 5 contain literature reviews relevant to understandings of the young people's relationships with family and the law. Also, while Chapter 2 contains a broad theoretical understanding of Foucaultian power relations, this is expanded in Chapter 4 and 5 to include a deeper discussion and application of sovereign power and domination; again in Chapter 6 to address the power of silence; and finally in Chapter 7 to focus on how power relations can be used to establish freedom.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

Introduction

I have approached this chapter as a chronological story of how this research took place. Interspersed throughout this narrative is the methodological and theoretical reasoning behind the unfolding story, making particular note of the significant events or issues that arose during the planning, conduct and analysis of the research.

I begin the narrative by re-establishing the necessity for this research in methodological terms, discussing my reasoning for an epistemological stance in critical sociology, drawing on Foucaultian and poststructural understandings, and explain how this links to the development of my research questions.

The narrative continues in a recount concerning the accessing of relevant sites and the process of data collection. Along with site requirements and broad descriptions, I justify the choice of an ethnographic approach to data collection. I then discuss the process of data collection with a description of the ethnographic principles of immersion and rapport, both required in developing trust in a context where trust held significant currency. I also discuss the ethnographic techniques of interviews and observations that I utilised to gather data. This parallels with a discussion of issues of flexibility, gaining consent, power and vulnerability, in data collection, and my reflexivity as a participant observer.

Data analysis is where I move away from the narrative into a discussion of how I have theoretically addressed the data. Here I account for my use of data analysis tools – i.e., Foucaultian notions of power relations and the knowledge/truth nexus and to a lesser extent Goffman's use of symbolic interactionism, as tools for data analysis – and justify my use of Goffman within a Foucaultian inspired research. Along with this is a discussion of the decisions made for presenting the results of the data analysis.

What is the Problem?

The purpose of my study, as explained in Chapter 1, was to provoke an alternative understanding of the possible ways in which young people's learning can be beneficially influenced by an atypical/unconventional education context and to simultaneously

problematise current mainstream practice. The available literature taken up within mainstream contexts has focused on young people as deficit and as requiring expert 'fixing'. However, despite (or maybe because of) these understandings and approaches there are still significant numbers of young people not engaged in education. This is not a critique of the setting, but a specific and targeted exploration of the understandings and practices that create a specific set of conditions that work to reconcile a particular group of young people with their education, in a particular educational setting.

Having established this direction for my research I needed an appropriate set of questions and a recognised and rigorous approach to engage with these questions. Framing a question that encompassed this task was difficult as the question needed to frame options for an understanding of the established discourses in mainstream education, the material environment that existed, the way relationships were established and maintained, and the knowledges drawn on by the people involved in an atypical education context. To encompass these needs my research question became: *What work is required of educators to create educational contexts and conditions that reconcile educationally displaced young people with their education?*

This is a necessarily broad question but it allows a far more nuanced inquiry into what might be involved within an educational context and goes beyond more traditional approaches concerning 'what strategies might fix what problems'. This is particularly important as these traditional types of understandings are supported by contested understandings of young people, which need to be troubled. This question is further explored through the following sub questions which aimed to address the nuances embedded in the different types of discourses and the uses of power that might also have been influential in educational reconciliation. In addition, these questions also needed to allow for the questioning of educational contexts that were both detrimental and beneficial to the young people of the study.

1. What discourses are drawn on in mainstream education to describe 'disengaged' young people and how do these discourses impact on the education of 'disengaged' young people?
2. What educational discourses and practices are deployed at YOTS, as an example of an atypical educational setting?

3. How do these discourses and practices work to build reconciliation between young people and their learning?

Addressing these questions required certain methodological choices for the research, and hinged on a number of factors. A researcher's epistemological stance and preferences, the questions being addressed by the research, and practicalities such as opportunities, circumstances and location, all impact to a certain extent on the methodology taken up for a given project. Certain topics will lend themselves to certain types of research and in some cases the method is obvious – a medical question ascertaining the chemical processes of the pancreas will be most suitably addressed by a scientific/experimental research method (even if the epistemological stance may still be debated). However, questions of a social nature, such as those regularly proposed in educational research, are not so clear-cut. Certain aspects of these questions could well be addressed through a variety of scientific/positivist approaches, however, other avenues of questioning can far more effectively approach this research.

Consideration of the best choices for the most effective exploration of the above questions was required. In a broad sense, the approach I chose needed to allow a critical exploration of the nature of educational spaces whilst still aligning with my own epistemological stance. Specifically the approach I chose needed to allow three, sometimes opposing, explorations.

The first exploration required the questioning of the existing practices of traditional education. The approach I adopted needed to dissect and display the disadvantage and disengagement of young people (as suggested by the literature); and needed to expose the deficit understandings and practices created within those school spaces for certain groups of young people. The chosen approach therefore required a tool, which, in a political sense, and in line with my own agenda, would agitate the educational thinking, policy and practice already in existence to produce a political statement concerning the problems embodied in these areas.

Secondly, the approach chosen would also need to draw out the aspects of what was 'working' in atypical forms of education and how these aspects functioned to reconcile

young people with education. It needed to explore the alternate understandings and practices presented within these non-traditional forms of education.

Finally, an approach was required that would allow the exploration of the impacts of educational approaches on 'disengaged' young people, providing a research space in which these young people could be heard and respected; and the stories that they have both endured and enjoyed could be told.

Taking a Stance

The whole notion that a choice concerning a methodological stance is required is not new. However, Denzin (2008) suggests that research has moved into a third 'methodological moment' (2008: 315) where a new and superior space is opening up for qualitative researchers, allowing "moral and epistemological discourses … [to] go on, side-by side" (2008: 319) in ways that have not previously been available. Researchers operating in this 'moment', Denzin argues,

> seldom trouble terms like validity or reliability […] A disruptive politics of representation is the focus, crafting works which move persons and communities to action […] They are emphasising the political and moral consequences of the narrow views of science [and] are asking questions about the politics of evidence, about how work can be done for social justice purposes. (Denzin, 2008: 318-319)

However, he warns that although all research needs to be subject to rigorous standards, this 'different space' cannot be judged by the criteria set to judge scientific research – they are innately different and no compromise should be made. My methodological stance places me epistemologically in this 'new' research space. It provides the means to engage in questioning the political and moral spaces embedded in the educational contexts that have created notions of 'disengagement' and 'deficit' and which take this understanding beyond the scientific understandings which have previously defined these terms. This space allows for a disruptive interpretation of educational contexts without endangering the rigor of what is presented.

Research conducted in this 'new space' also points to a range of methodologies that have been drawn on successfully to expose problematic contexts and understandings (see for example, Smyth and Hattam 2002; Noble and Poynting 2003; Noble 2005; McLeod and Yates 2003; Cole 2004). Critical understandings move beyond more scientifically based methodologies whose purpose is to identify such things as educational strategies. Instead they expose the aspects of specific contexts that work together to construct unique political, moral and social outcomes. Foucaultian discourse analysis has been especially valuable in this endeavour.

My choice of approach was to take up an epistemological stance in critical sociology as espoused by researchers such as Ball (2006a, 2006b), Youdell (2006a), and Angus and Smyth (2006). A critical sociology speaks to the methodological concerns of this study, providing a number of valuable possibilities which not only allowed the probing of my research questions, but which had also been used successfully within educational research to address similar areas to my research interests and epistemological position. A critical sociology corresponds to my epistemological understandings and allows the opportunity for alternative perspectives to be illuminated and probed and for reified notions to be questioned – all vital explorations of this research.

Examples of research with similar intents shows the depth and effectiveness to which all of the above requirements can be achieved. For example, a limited selection of this type of research includes: Saltmarsh and Youdell's (2004) exploration of educational triage; Kelly's (2000a, 2001a, 2003a) problematising of school surveillance and at risk young people; Krisjansen and Lapins's (2001) problematizing of the idealised student; Lee and Burkam's (2003) exploration of the relationships between dropping out of school and school structures and organisation; Levinson and Sparkes' (2005) take on the use and effects of school spaces; Monk's (2000) focus on young people and educational law; and lastly Munn and Lloyd's (2005) understanding of the voice of the excluded student. Critical sociology has evolved through interpretive research but allows the troubling of both the 'reality' of positivist/empirical research and the 'perspectives' of relativists/interpretivists. It provides not only the mechanisms with which to analyse data but also allows the questioning of the social processes and structures within educational settings (Ball, 2006a). As Ball states,

> Sometimes it is […] violent and destructive; it challenges cherished orthodoxies and taken-for-granted practices and methods [It] can be both exciting and appropriately dangerous […] unsettling and necessary; it invigorates, it makes a fundamental contribution to the liveliness and life-blood of social disciplines. (Ball, 2006a: 1)

A critical sociological approach critiques what is 'there' whilst responding reflexively to the context being troubled. However, Ball, like Denzin (2008) above, warns of the necessity for rigor to be maintained within this approach to preserve the value it holds for educational research.

Even more appropriately for my study, Angus and Smyth (2006) have identified a critical sociology approach as being able to trouble the discourse around young people who have "been historically placed in situations of disadvantage" (2006: 2). Youdell's (2006a) work also supports this notion, identifying a critical sociology as being particularly helpful in troubling educational settings for the purpose of probing young people's disadvantage. She also stresses that this approach is effective in deconstructing and questioning long held assumptions surrounding education and the inequities found there in relation to 'certain' young people.

Critical sociology has been criticised for its unnecessarily destructive nature, which also fails to 'give' anything of value in return. Youdell (2006a) states that this unfounded criticism views poststructural research as being "apolitical; […] inappropriately positioned; and/or as irrelevant to educational practice" (Youdell 2006a: 40). Ball (2006a and 2006b), Laws and Davies (2000), Youdell (2006a), also refute this criticism. In addressing the criticism that "relativists were immoral because they were incapable of action or commitment" (Youdell 2006a: 205), Laws and Davies (2000) argue that in making visible those discourses which are educationally disabling, it is possible to work with young people in schools, in new and different ways. They suggest that left unchallenged, the power of discourses would remain uncritiqued, preventing disengaged young people from claiming alternate subjectivities such as that of 'student' and leaving disengaged young people in an oppressed and disabled state.

Ball (2006b) takes this argument one step further, suggesting that the possibility of overcoming the perceived destructiveness of critical research exists because a critical sociological stance goes beyond the limitations of "discursively constructed boxes, categories, and divisions of modernist thinking held within scientific studies … struggling against complacencies and comforts … [and] orthodoxy for its own sake" (2006b: 5). It creates an open, unbounded space that is often not safe or easy to conduct research within and a space that allows the researcher not only to deconstruct and question, but also to creatively question and think new things in new ways whilst still maintaining a necessary rigor. Youdell (2006a) also claims critical sociology as a political practice, a point which, she argues, its critics fail to recognise, forgetting that politics is "embedded in normative educational thinking and practice" (2006a: 40), and therefore any deconstruction will also necessarily be political. She argues that a poststructural politics, in educational contexts,

> does not set itself above, or in contest with, other modes of political engagement […] it is an additional set of conceptual, analytical, and political tools that might be taken up in order to generate particular types of understandings and pursue particular avenues for change […] to understand and unsettle the relationships between the subject, the institution, power, and meaning, they are critical [and] to politically engaged scholarship and action in education" (Youdell 2006a: 40-41)

Not only can social situations be drawn out by a critical sociological approach in "violent" and "dangerous" ways (Ball, 2006b: 2) but, paraphrasing Youdell (2006a), this approach can be used in the same way to draw out what is good, and positive and uplifting. It can bring to light those things not needing to be contested exposing avenues for constancy within institutional practice and identifying uses of power and meaning which might be supported. Although this approach to critical sociology is not often used, the possibility exists for research that is both "dangerous, violent and destructive but also exciting, lively and invigorating" (Ball, 2006b: 2). My research intends to take full advantage of this dual understanding of a critical sociology by using it to firstly, critically expose the detrimental elements of mainstream practice, but secondly to show how new and different ways can and have been constructed in non-traditional contexts.

In order to take up the tenets of a critical sociology, like Ball (2006a, 2006b) and Youdell (2006a), I drew on a poststructural, Foucaultian framework. Poststructuralists reject the notion of "universal truths and objective knowledge" embracing instead the notion "that truths are always partial and knowledge is situated – that is, produced by and for particular interests, in particular circumstances, at particular times" (MacLure, 2003: 175). From a poststructural point of view, language is used to construct systems of knowledge and truth. However,

> One problem with the model of language as a system is, of course, that the system is not static but is constantly changing […] over time […] and within a single interaction […] Because these new meanings are being created, and also because the language is being used to do things […] language is constitutive: it is the site where meanings are created and changed (Taylor in Wetherell et al, 2001: 6)

In a poststructural framework no one fixed reality is possible. Questions then also arise as to: how the researcher can possibly interpret someone else's reality; or, just how far any shared reality can be trusted; or where the divide between reality and perception lies? Taylor (in Wetherell et al 2000:6) argues that research can only ever be "a biased 'subjective' account". Foucaultian understandings of discourse sit within these notions of partial truths and situated knowledge. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he states that discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault1972: 49). He adds to this understanding of discourse in his later work, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* where he explains that particular historical moments are,

> marked by the articulation of a particular type of discourse, and a set of practices, a discourse that, on the one hand, constitutes these practices as a set bound together by an intelligible connection and, on the other hand, legislates and can legislate on these practices in terms of true and false. (Foucault 2008: 18)

In *History of Madness,* Foucault (2006: xxxviii) explains that discourses act as "battle and weapon, strategy and shock, struggle and trophy or wound, conjuncture and

vestige, strange meeting and repeatable scene" and are produced by "a whole constellation of convictions and images" (2006: 234) that act on each other. Discourse then becomes all these things, i.e., articulation, practices, weapons, connections, legislator and legislation, strategy, convictions, images – all of which interact to create discourse. Foucault explains that these aspects of discourse operate on one level but, in a discussion of delirium, he states that on an even deeper plane,

> there is also to be found a rigorous organisation that follows the faultless structure of a discourse. The logic of that discourse calls up a set of extremely solid beliefs, and progresses by a chain of judgements and reasoning, and is a sort of reason in act […] But at a deeper level still, that delirious language is the ultimate truth of madness in that it is its organizing form, the determining principle in all its manifestations, whether it be those of the body or those of the mind. (Foucault 2006: 234-235)

Discourse then is not just text, but text which has embedded in it the practices, beliefs, connections, convictions, images and structures that, in their totality, systematically act to create what determines true and false, what can be said and what remains unsaid and what can be known and what remains unknown. When this Foucaultian notion of discourse is taken up in the context of education, Morgan (2005: 330) suggests that what can be expected is "an alternative vision of the world of education". This type of discourse analysis provides the means to explore,

> those more dominant discourses which, through their maintenance, result in the continued marginalization and social exclusion of groups of individuals through the perpetuations of inequalities within social power relationships (Hall, 1997). (Morgan 2005: 330)

Morgan argues that "taken-for-granted assumptions [can] be deconstructed; at the very least to engender a critical perspective of such practices" (2005: 330). When combined with specific questions around both 'disengagement' and reconciliation in education and my own sceptical questioning of the status quo in mainstream schools, 'discourse analysis' provides a way to explore the multiple aspects of both traditional and atypical educational sites, thereby offering an avenue to expose both the

problematic and beneficial aspects concerning what might allow and disallow young people's reconciliation with education. This approach also allows me to address prevailing deficit notions of the young people in the study through an understanding of the discourses used to create this knowledge.

In taking on a Foucaultian approach a discursive context can be exposed and explored. Foucaultian notions of discourse invite an exploration of such factors as the understandings, the practices, the relationships involved in particular contexts, and a teasing out of how these factors might come together to produce the broader contexts and subjectivities that allow for educational reconciliation. A Foucaultian analysis does this through an understanding that discourse is also about power (MacLure 2003: 176), contained in a power/knowledge/truth nexus (Kendall and Wickham 2000).

Using a Discourse Analysis

Morgan (2005), Carabine (2001) and Harwood (2000) all suggest that Foucaultian researchers draw on a wide range of methods, creating an uncomfortable circumstance for some in that there is no 'fixed' method. The three researchers above interpret Foucault as rejecting the idea of having a series of identifying but confining steps for methodology. They argue instead for a focus on the topic or research question, allowing researchers to determine the methodological techniques that best suit the purpose of the study rather than matching the study to a prescribed methodology. A number of methods could therefore be viable.

For the purposes of this study I drew on a Foucaultian discourse analysis. The study was conducted in two phases of analysis that 'mobilised text' (Thomson et al, 2010) in three different ways: through documents, interviews and fieldnotes. The first phase involved the collection and survey of a range of documents. These documents provided the 'data' that carried the current discourses utilised in education (and elsewhere) in relation to young people who have severed relationships with mainstream schooling. This enabled me to address *Sub Question 1* and exposed an alternative understanding of young people, which I have used to address the remaining questions in the second phase. The second phase drew on ethnographic principles and

techniques applied within an atypical school. The data from this phase also spoke to *Sub Question 2* but was primarily aimed at exploring *Sub Question 3*.

Phase 1: A Document Analysis of the Discourses Framing Disengaged Young People.

My purpose in conducting a document analysis was to provide some understanding of the discourses that were at play around 'disengaged' young people in mainstream education. Document analysis has been used in combination with ethnographic techniques, in similar ways, particularly in policy analysis (see for example Morgan 2005, Lingard 2009; Thomson et al 2010). However, in this instance, policy only made up a small proportion of the documents used. The documents included in this study were selected because they had embedded in them clear examples of the historically placed language that constitutes certain ways of knowing young people and were examples of how certain practices and implications were mobilised.

My search for relevant documents deliberately targeted NSW Australia and spanned a time period of over 140 years from 1870 to 2012. Kendall and Wickham (2000) identify an issue in limiting time in this way as Foucault, they argue, sees history as having no beginning and no end. By placing an artificial start and end point on the literature to be analysed, history is effectively stopped. Foucault (2002) argues that these moments can only be attached fleetingly to the chronology of history at "two pinpoints: the moment at which they are born and the moment at which they disappear" (Foucault 2002: 183-4). Otherwise, in a Foucaultian analysis "time is avoided, and with it the possibility of a historical description disappears" (2002: 184). To overcome this, like Kendall and Wickham (2000), I acknowledge that my document analysis had no beginning and will go on changing past the end point of the research. It is effectively a snapshot in time of an eternal event.

Foucault (2003: xi-xii) explains that it is possible to take a snapshot by determining "the moment at which [a] mutation in discourse [takes] place." My reasoning for this particular 'snapshot' was the identification of, and I paraphrase Foucault (2002: 183-4), 'a moment of birth' and a 'moment of disappearance'. The 'moment of birth' was the legal introduction of compulsory education in Australia in 1872. Prior to this historical moment young people could not be characterised as being 'disengaged' from school as

there was no requirement for them to participate (see Chapter 3). However, after the advent of compulsory education, young people could be classified as not attending and therefore could be identified as 'disengaged'. This "rupture" (Foucault 2002: 184) indicated a 'moment of birth' in the educational discourse and is where I began my search. I established my own 'moment of disappearance' in 2012. This was a pragmatic decision to end the search for data, as, at the time of writing, any further moments were future moments rather than an indication of another rupture in the discourse.

Carabine (2001) argues that limiting the data to what is publicly available helps to legitimise the research. If issues can be identified relating to the research through material available for public scrutiny, then these issues will probably be so overtly obvious that they will not need additional 'oppositional' documentation to expose their dominance. What I looked for initially were documents from educational literature. These were interrogated for the nature of the discourses used around 'disengaged' young people by those in mainstream education and the possible power mechanisms deployed in constituting these discourses. The patterns and themes I drew from these early historical searches were then used to direct searches until 2012. As I followed these patterns both historically and thematically, the types of documents expanded from purely educational research to included the current Australian Education Act (2004) and relevant educational policy documents, web sites, media articles and releases, and a range of research literature from educational, criminal, psychiatric, political and medical origins that both supported and critiqued understandings of young people.

To collect the documents I described above, I first conducted a range of Google and Google Scholar searches followed by more general internet and library searches. In the Google and Google Scholar searches I initially used the search terms such as 'youth', 'adolescent', 'juvenile', 'teenager' to identify young people, combined with 'education' and 'school' to narrow this research to educational documents. I then added such terms as 'disengaged', 'disaffected', 'marginalised' to narrow the searches further by identifying the 'type' of young people I was targeting. These initial searches revealed further terms, for example, during the 1870s-1930s terms such as 'delinquent', 'criminal', 'deviant' and 'truant' were attributed to young people not

engaged in schooling. After the 1950s-60s my searches were extended to include terms such as 'at risk' and 'disadvantaged'.

I combined these terms with a search by decade, e.g. 1870-1879, 2000-2009 etc. However, I found there was much less research during earlier historical periods and, in general, from the 1870s to the 1930's, there was little change in the language and intent of these documents. Therefore, for analysis I grouped these earlier time frames into a larger timeframe of 60 years comprising 1870s to 1930s. One obvious pattern that arose in the documents of this time clustered around a combination of educational and legal notions of young people. I used this point in time to begin a new time period of 20 years, from 1930 to 1950. This was followed by another timeframe of 20 years covering the 1950s and 1960s where patterns appeared to be drawn from the amalgamation of psychology and education. In the 1950s there was also a significant increase in the quantity of research around education, young people and 'disengagement'. This quantity of literature grew exponentially in the following decades (and appears to be continuing to increase). I therefore left the searches after the 1960s in ten year timeframes from the 1970s to 2000, however, this was predominantly a pragmatic move to cope with the quantity of data generated by these searches.

Although the document search was conducted in these set time frames the analysis focused on the themes and patterns that arose in the documents. From this analysis four points of time appeared to signify significant "rupture[s], in that white, paradoxically atemporal crack in which one sudden formulation replaces another" (Foucault 2002: 184). These ruptures occurred most obviously: in 1872 – coinciding with the introduction of compulsory education; in the 1950s and 1960s – which showed a substantial shift in the patterns of 'knowing' disengaged young people through the most intense uptake of psychology in education; in the 1980s – when neoliberal practices were introduced into education; and in the 1990s – as a diverse range of discourses were identified such as 'at risk' and 'risky' young people, the 'commodified' young person, and the 'child as waste'.

With the identification of these four moments, I moved away from Google searching and included library searches for books and other internet searches for websites such

as government sites for law and education, sites for educational institutions such as the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET/DEC) and the NSW Board of Studies, as well as literature searches using terms arising in the original searches. Deficit understandings of young people and the prominent acceptance of adult expertise to inform practice were the dominant thematic patterns that I tracked throughout the document analysis. These searches and document analysis established the basis of a more comprehensive ethnographic study of the YOTS schools.

Phase 2: Using Ethnographic Principles and Techniques in Atypical Schools

For the second stage of data collection I drew on a range of ethnographic techniques. My aim was to recognise what Carabine (2001: 272) calls the "ordinary" and "everyday" experience of 'disengaged' young people and the educational environment they have appeared to connect with. When an approach primarily concerns drawing on expertise to alter the perceived deficits of young people and ordinary and everyday experience can be ignored. However, as I am addressing the problematic nature of some educational settings, these so called ordinary and everyday experiences, become vital as they expose the 'resistance' in discourses of power (Carabine 2001). Otherwise the research can become the by product of those who dominate power relations.

<u>Finding a Site</u>

The site chosen for this study had to meet the specific needs of this research. The chosen site had to provide access to young people who had been 'disengaged' from learning. These young people would be able to speak to their experiences of 'disengagement' from traditional school settings, allowing mainstream practices to be problematised. But more importantly such a site would need to allow a more positive exploration of 'disengaged' young people's educational reconciliation. A site that provided for this dual purpose would also help to address the criticisms of a critical sociology being only destructive and also allowed a political stance with beneficial outcomes.

Following an extensive search of organisations that worked with disengaged young people, Youth Off The Streets (YOTS) was the context that appeared to provide the most promising research site. I was initially attracted to YOTS as it was an organisation that had a good reputation across many fields and with the support of

many reputable people for being able to succeed in making reconnections with young people. The leader of YOTS, Father Riley, also had an established reputation as a no nonsense educator who demanded 'greatness' from the young people he cared for (YOTS 2012a), and for demanding fairness from the institutions that were supposed to be supporting these young people (Williams 2004, 2007). YOTS's reputation was supported by: information and other documentation on the YOTS website (YOTS 2012a); the publically acknowledged success of YOTS external programmes (for example The Brumby programme); and was anecdotally supported by my own educational contacts, particularly by educators I knew who worked closely with 'disengaged' young people and who had recommended YOTS for some of the young people I had taught in mainstream schools. For further background I also accessed documentation such as the YOTS schools annual reports (YOTS 2012d). What this background research indicated was that the YOTS schools provided a space in which young people were able to reconnect both with their education and with life in general and could therefore provide a rich site for my intended study.

Running concurrently with this investigation, Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Wollongong was sought for a non-specific site, giving instead a range of options that may have been possible at the time. The Ethics Committee gave approval for conducting an ethnographic study with staff and young people over the age of fourteen in a school for which specific approval would then be sought.

Entry to the YOTS site ultimately came through a colleague who was able to provide contact with staff involved directly with the YOTS schools. These people were very open to research being conducted in the YOTS schools. The subsequent completion of paperwork saw approval given for research to begin in all four of their schools. This process took almost eighteen months and included a full Police Check under the Child Protection requirements of the YOTS organisation. The Police Check alone took over three months to be approved and although I was able to be in schools I had to wait for this clearance to be able to interview young people. I was therefore able to commence fieldwork observations and staff interviews during this time but was required to be in the presence of a staff member when young people were present.

Youth Off The Streets

The YOTS organisation operated more than just the four schools (five schools are now in operation since the beginning of 2013 (YOTS 2012a)). Historically, YOTS was established in 1991 by Father Chris Riley and is described by the organisation as a,

> non-denominational community organisation working for young people aged 12 to 21 who are facing challenges of homelessness, drug dependency, disadvantage, exclusion from school, neglect and abuse. (YOTS, 2012b: 1)

The most recent information available at the time of writing states that YOTS provides over twenty five different services aimed at helping young people in a range of city and regional areas which currently include: crisis accommodation; early intervention and outreach through community engagement in metropolitan and remote communities; drug and alcohol counselling and rehabilitation; a Street Walk Program – providing a night time presence and making contact with young people on the streets; a Food Van; and residential treatment programs (YOTS 2012b: 1). Other services operate on a needs basis, for example, a crisis response team is set up whenever a crisis occurs involving young people in Australia. Responses had previously included a programme for children affected by the Victorian Bushfires in 2009 and a number of overseas programmes such as the establishment of the two orphanages in East Timor and Banda Aceh (Williams, 2007).

While the young people often accessed or were involved in helping in these programmes, the four schools were the focus of my research. The schools both contributed to these other programmes and drew on them in their school programmes. For example, young people from the YOTS schools were invited to go to East Timor to help set up the orphanage and service learning was done by young people in aged care facilities, pre schools, hospitals, disability camps and assisting on crisis teams. But, the young people were also assisted by these programmes, such as the integration programme which provides young people with independent living skills, further education and work opportunities and general support to help establish them once they leave YOTS.

The YOTS Schools

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the four YOTS schools will not be

named or described specifically and none of the data will be linked to any specific school. The overall organisation of the four schools is discussed but details that could be used to identify staff and young people has not been included.

Each of the four school sites had a different purpose and focus: some addressed different educational needs, such as Year 11 and 12 programmes, some targeted homeless young people; some were deliberately located in areas of extreme disadvantage that addressed relevant community issues. All operated in very different ways while still drawing on similar practices and sharing resources and personnel. As well as connections to the programmes mentioned above, the schools also incorporated a multitude of 'outside' services and people in their provision of their education programmes. These were very much based on the individual requirements of each young person in YOTS care at any given time.

In terms of management structures, the four school sites come under the umbrella of the Director of Education, who was also the principal of the four schools. Each school had a School Manager, who was responsible to the Principal for the day to day running of their particular school. The numbers and needs of the young people attending each school determined the number and type of staff. The teacher/student ratio was approximately one teacher for every 8-12 young people, with the four schools having 'elastic' enrolments of between 8 and 18. Some of the schools also drew on other support staff such as administrative support, cooks and youth workers in various numbers and in various methods of employment ranging from voluntary to fulltime paid positions. External sources of support tended to be specific to each school and included volunteer teachers, cleaners, administration staff, and fundraisers.

There were also a number of programmes that had been set up to run across the four schools. For example, Service Learning, Aboriginal "Respect" Programmes, psychologist support, the Integration Programme and Youth Workers all functioned across each of the schools – although their depth of involvement in each school varied. Each of the schools also had connections with the police, especially the school liaison officers from local police stations. Many of the young people were well known to police and therefore police contact with YOTS aimed at finding more positive relationships through this connection. For example at one of the schools the Police

Liaison Officer had organised excursions for the young people with the Water Police.

Vehicles were provided for the use of each of the schools and were usually the responsibility of one of the members of staff. These were used regularly for such things as transport to service learning, work experience and excursions. Access to these vehicles allowed a great deal of freedom for the schools by offering the ability to be responsive to the changing nature of the school on a moment-by-moment basis. For example, on very hot days at one of the schools it was possible to change 'sport' day and take young people to the local pool which could not have been accessed without the school's minibus. Another of the schools rang young people each morning if they had not made it to school and would then pick up (and also drop off) young people, if there was a need.

The physical spaces of each school were very different but again due to confidentiality and anonymity I have not included a description here. Despite the differences in physical spaces, all the schools ran on a structure and curriculum similar to mainstream high schools with six periods a day, recess and lunch and addressed the required range and duration of subjects to met NSW Board of Studies (NSWBOS) requirements.

Choosing a Research Approach

One of the most significant strategies employed in critical sociology is critical ethnography. The techniques of traditional ethnography are generally used to immerse the researcher within particular contexts. Critical ethnography has been used by researchers from a variety of epistemological backgrounds and has well established connections with a Foucaultian discourse analysis as a research mechanism (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003). Its use in such ethnographic studies based in education, as Youdell's *Impossible Bodies, Impossible selves: exclusions and student subjectivities* (2006c) show how an exploration of power manipulations enforce such social phenomenon as class, disadvantage and inequality in education and provide justification for its use here.

An approach was needed whereby a depth of rich data could be generated from young people and the staff working with them. It had to address the needs and sensitivities of the particular populations and the organisation chosen. It needed to allow an

understanding of the educational context that surrounded these people. As a poststructural study it also needed to provide data as text with enough depth to determine the limitations of the language accessed. As a study drawing on a Foucaultian discourse analysis, there was also a requirement for generating data that would provide an understanding of the discourse being accessed and the ways power was operating within these discourses. This then determined that the process needed to include such aspects of discourse as descriptions of context, practices, systems, artefacts, which could be used to analyse the power mechanisms embedded in these while being general and open enough in its approach to allow for the disclosure of possibilities not considered. These requirements pointed to the need for an ethnographic approach.

Ethnography "entails the extended involvement of the researcher in the social life of those he or she studies" (Bryman, 2004: 291). My approach drew on the ethnographic principles of immersion, rapport, and flexibility; and the ethnographic techniques of interviewing and observation with the aim of being as closely aligned to a 'true' ethnographic study as possible within the constraints of the study.

Immersion in the daily life of the schools provided a depth of understanding of the context. Building rapport was essential for establishing relationships with the YOTS young people who had experienced significant issues around trust. A flexible approach to research was required to take account of the specific context of YOTS and the young people's often disrupted lives. While staff were constantly responding to the immediacy of the young people's circumstances, I needed to constantly adapt my research plans to fit the immediacy of these circumstances. For example, interviews were conducted in a range of spaces and at times had to be rescheduled to be responsive to what was happening in the schools.

Observations were used to look for such data as practices, procedures and interactions between people. The field notes of these observations formed one set of textual data. In terms of generating other textual data a combination of, indepth, one on one, semi/unstructured interviews and 'ethnographic' interviews (talking to people in informal ways within the day to day interactions of each school) was used.

Ethnographic Data Generation

Following Youdell (2006c: 69), I have adopted the term "ethnographic data generation" to identify what might otherwise be called data collection. What I want to convey in using this term is the impact of all that goes into the acquisition of data and the deliberate and purposeful nature in which the data of this study was accumulated. Ethnographic data generation is not just the questioning, speaking, and recording of words in oral and written forms. As Youdell explains, by the time data has become a page of transcription ready for analysis, it has been subject to much more. For example, ethnographic data generation speaks to: the purpose of choosing particular techniques of generation; what actions/events I choose to write in fieldnotes; who I interviewed and where that might take place; my own reflexive positioning; all while acknowledging an understanding of the power such choices hold. This understanding became particularly important, as I discuss below, in my position as a 'participant observer'.

Participants and Gaining Consent

Data generation (Youdell 2006c) began with a formal meeting with the YOTS Director of Education and another YOTS staff member and was followed by a presentation to all the staff of the YOTS schools at a staff development day to explain and answer questions about the research. On this day I also arranged visits with each of the four schools and for consent to be obtained from the staff and young people prior to these visits through each of the schools Managers. This appeared to be an easy process until I arrived in schools.

On each of my first visits to the four YOTS schools I was reintroduced to staff and was given the opportunity to speak to the staff and the young people to explain the research and ask if they would participate. I also spoke about informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and their right to withdraw without penalty – which I explained again at the beginning of each interview. All the staff agreed to participate in interviews. In total, across the four schools I was able to interview 18 staff, 16 in recorded interviews, two in interviews where I took notes. Of these, there were eight males and ten females. The staff who were interviewed were those who spent the most time in the schools in direct contact with the young people. They were predominantly teaching staff (12), but also included three support staff (administrative

staff, cooks), and three other programme organisers who worked in the schools. Only two prominent staff members were not interviewed formally, however, I was able to talk to them informally at other times. In addition to this, an estimated 22 other staff across the schools were included in observational fieldwork. These staff were in regular contact with the young people and included a psychologist, a number of youth workers, and a range of volunteers including university professors, industry experts, university students who mentored, music and theatre professionals and builders. These people volunteered in a number of capacities, for example, the builders were helping with school renovations, an administrative assistant came in and did typing and other computer work. The remainder of the volunteers predominantly worked with the young people within the school environment, assisting young people with their education either one on one or in class situations. The presence of these regular volunteers tended to be on a weekly basis.

Data generation with the young people at the YOTS schools, had to take into account their circumstances, their attitudes to power relations and their vulnerability. As discussed in the introduction, the YOTS young people seemed to have encountered and embodied many exclusionary practices embedded in mainstream school structures. They were typically (although not exclusively) from working class backgrounds and had attended working class schools in working class neighbourhoods so issues around poverty and social exclusion where prominent. Many of them had experienced homelessness and incarceration or other dealings with the law. They were subject to limited understandings of gender, particularly those around hegemonic masculinities, and many of the young people were Indigenous and were also exposed to issues around race. They epitomised the young people constantly criticised by the media. They were involved to various extents in drug use and violence. Their family backgrounds were typically characterised by abuse. They were diagnosed with a range of psychopathologies including learning disabilities, ADHD, Aspergers, depression and other mental health disorders. They were young mothers and fathers. They had truanted regularly and had been suspended and usually permanently excluded from mainstream schools. These young people seemed to embody everything that invited the application of exclusionary practices, particularly in schools, but also within other parts of their lives. They had therefore become labelled and diagnosed in a variety of ways and were considered to be both 'at risk' and 'risky'.

However, there were very few of these young people who did not want to participate in interviews. Lack of participation was a problem because of the ethical requirements of consent rather than a lack of willingness on the part of the young people. On my first round of visits to the schools, one of the schools had managed to collect all the consent forms from their young people and their parents/carers before I had arrived. In another two schools other factors meant this was difficult. At one school, DoCS/FACS had initially denied consent for young people who were wards of the state despite the young people wanting to be involved. The reason given was the protection of these young people. At a following visit this decision had been reversed and these young people were able to participate and consent had been given. Another school had a focus on education for homeless young people. In this case parental/carer consent was not possible, as the young people did not have contact with either family or carers. To overcome this I reapplied for ethics approval to interview these young people without parental consent. Approval was given for young people over the age of 14 to give their own consent. Some young people still wanted to participate, however, as they were only 13, I was unable to include them. Across the four schools I was able to interview a total of 20 young people, nine girls and eleven boys. Another 30 young people (approximately) were observed during fieldwork.

Immersion

In total, I spent a period of 18 months either in one of the four schools or attending other events such as excursions, staff development days, presentation days and evenings and open days. The majority of data was collected in schools over three terms, amounting to approximately 20 weeks in total at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. I spent 3-4 days a week during this time in the schools and a total of approximately 3 weeks in each school – this varied slightly between schools. Other activities occurred both in and out of school hours. This level of immersion allowed access to the YOTS site and the range of people inhabiting the site for the observation of and participation in the day-to-day activities of the people (Creswell 2007).

Relationships and trust was established through participation in the day-to-day activities of each of the schools (every thing from cooking breakfast to helping in classes as an extra teacher). Despite this, I could still be considered an 'outsider', having taken to this field for purposes that stood outside those of the organisation.

However, Griffiths explains that no one "is a complete insider or outsider" (1998: 137). The difference between emic (inside) and etic (outside) positions, according to Pole and Morrison (2003) is blurred: "People don't clump into mutually exclusive worlds. Ethnographers and others swim in the same interconnected global group. They know things about each other even before they meet" (Pole and Morrison 2003:157). The position of both insider and outsider, combined with an open and unapologetic bias, allowed me to become both part of the field and remain separate from it. By doing such things as supporting teachers in the classroom and helping by packing away desks and chairs, I was insider. Yet I could also stand away from these roles and write about these same experiences as an outsider.

Immersion was initiated by my becoming a volunteer of the YOTS organisation. This was required for both insurance and Child Protection reasons. In practice, my volunteer status allowed me to be another staff member and this was typically taken up as my being an additional 'body' at each of the schools. I was introduced to the young people as a researcher and a teacher. Initially I would observe and write notes. This allowed contact to be less threatening but also set up a barrier between myself (as a researcher) and the staff and young people. I found I was not privy to the nuanced conversations that took place. This approach did initially give me insight into the macro aspects of how each school ran. However, once I had gained this broad understanding it was the more nuanced aspects that I required. My active participation in the events of the school allowed access to the micro relationships that operated in each school and between the actors at each site.

Bryman describes this type of immersion as "participant-as-observer" (2004: 301) as I was engaged in the context as both part of the setting but with the full knowledge of all participants that I was also a researcher. Viewed from the outside my immersion would have looked as if I was another staff member. I arrived at school at the time the other staff did. I helped set up classrooms, did photocopying for teachers, helped with food preparation for breakfast and lunches, sat in class and assisted with lessons, went on excursions, attended open days, presentation nights and staff development days. I was included in parent teacher interviews, shopping trips and service learning opportunities. However, I did not take on any more than a basic level of responsibility. For example, I did not interfere with disciplining – other than to let staff

know if there was something I thought was of concern. I did not feel it was my place to do this except on a very surface level or if something seemed dangerous. For example, on one excursion where the young people from all schools went on board a Navy ship. They had been given instructions not to smoke as it was a supply ship carrying 'fuel' and smoking was therefore dangerous. The group I was with were being shown a fire fighting demonstration and one of the young people lit his cigarette lighter and giggled with his friends while this was happening. In this circumstance I asked him to put it out – which he did. As this young person's actions became increasingly provocative, the YOTS staff then addressed them. Despite my purposeful decision not to 'interfere', it was made clear by the majority of staff that I was considered one of them and was allowed to deal with these circumstances if I chose and would be supported in doing this. This positioning had two impacts. Firstly, it established me with some measure of authority (although I was careful not to abuse this privilege particularly with the young people). Secondly, it placed me in a position to listen to the 'disqualified' and those who worked with them.

The Problem of the 'Participant Observer'

My position as 'participant observer' in the YOTS setting gained me access to an unqualified depth of data that I was totally unprepared to deal with. Developing relationships and trust, particularly with the young people, opened up pathways that allowed the sharing of a significant depth of life experience. This was extremely beneficial in generating the richness of data I had been looking for. However, it also meant that I had developed a personal relationship with these young people and I cared about them – great for data generation, not so great for leaving the field. During interviews and other discussions that I had with and about the young people of YOTS I was told numerous horror stories. The young people explained that their stories were compounded by the utter disregard that the institutions and people from their schools, families, counsellors and police had for them and their experiences. My personal role as a mother (or maybe just as a fellow human being) meant that the experience of hearing these stories exposed a range of emotions that I have found difficult to separate from the research.

Sexual and physical abuse was common, as was drug addiction, assaults, and death. Even murder was mentioned. When a young person describes how their drug

addicted step father sexually abused them, or how they watched their mother stab their alcoholic father and they were the one who had to call the ambulance, or how a 13 year old's mother was grooming her for 'street work', or how family was supplying drugs for them or forcing them to sell drugs, or of their experiences of being beaten up while trying to survive on the streets, of being kicked out of home as a 12 year old and having to find food and money; or of offering themselves to paedophiles so they could afford to eat, I responded emotionally. Although I knew that these types of things happened to young people, I had rarely had to put faces to those stories with such regularity. In my life these experiences were rare rather than commonplace. I was horrified that young people I knew and came to care about had been forced into enduring these experiences. I cried with some of them, I felt rage at the injustice of some of the responses of the people in schools, homes and in law enforcement and I often felt physically ill while listening to these young people tell their stories. This was probably not 'professional' but it did serve to firmly cement my political position in relation to this research as being an advocate for these young people. I wanted this research to reflect a very staunch position of support for these young people and I wanted the research to influence change and develop support for them in more extensive ways.

Taylor (2001:12) argues that it is not possible to offer objective knowledge. She, Scheurich (1997) and Harwood, (2004) all suggest that to overcome this, we should take on an openly biased stance, identifying as much of our 'baggage' as is possible within the research and deliberately factoring this into the research account. As Bryman suggests, research cannot be conducted without a researcher's bias and a 'side' having been taken, particularly where there is a "hierarchical relationship" (Bryman 2004: 815) such as that of student and teacher. Further, Bryman argues that when taking the side of those who are typically considered problematic, a label of bias is more likely to be applied to the researcher, reducing the credibility of the research.

> Members of the higher group are widely seen as having an exclusive right to define the way things are in their sphere and because they are regarded as having a more complete picture. In other words credibility is differentially distributed in society. (Bryman 2004: 518)

However, in taking up a position in Denzin's 'new research space' my 'bias' is both acknowledged and acceptable as it recognises and supports a range of perspectives and political objectives.

Nonetheless my emotional response, however justified, did not allow me to separate my personal response from my research response. Being able to place a theoretical framework around these personal responses and the data that produced them, helped to move the response into a more academic frame. While not taking away from the experience or the purpose that arose from these experiences, a Foucaultian framework based in a textual analysis was compelling for this purpose. Textual analysis in an education setting, as put forward by Giroux and McLaren (1987), acts to draw,

> attention to the ideologies out of which texts are produced, it also allows educators to distance themselves from the text so as to uncover the layers of meanings, contradictions and differences […] this form of analysis inheres in its potential to open the text to a form of deconstruction that interrogates it as part of a wider process of cultural production; in addition, by making the text an object of intellectual inquiry' (Giroux and McLaren 1987: 287-288)

Building Relationships and Trust

> Gaining trust is essential to an interviewer's success, and even once it is gained trust can be very fragile indeed; any *faux pas* by the researcher may destroy days, weeks, or months of painstakingly gained trust (Denzin and Lincholn, 1998:59-60)

Working with young people who have a distrust (even a healthy one), of adults can be difficult. Young people (and staff) 'tested the waters' before they were willing to trust me with even general details about themselves. Some of the things the young people initially told me were said in a way that almost dared me to be upset or angry, or in an attempt to make me respond in what they would probably considered a 'typically adult fashion' – proving my untrustworthiness. Establishing rapport and trust therefore became vital before interviews were possible. Being open and honest at the start helped. Accepting everything that staff and young people said without judgment was

also important. A few times I could hear the 'mother' in me making comments to the young people that I probably shouldn't have, although, for whatever reason, this seemed to have the effect of gaining rather than inhibiting trust.

Trust was established to varying degrees with each person, i.e., some staff were not as trusting as others and this was displayed in the depth of what they shared with me and was particularly obvious in interview situations. However, I was very open about what I intended for the research. A few staff started with scepticism but did eventually display trust. One, initially, more sceptical staff member said after an interview, that it had been "cathartic" to open up to such a level. However, the majority of staff were very willing to openly share their experiences and thoughts. Like the young people, they also did not hesitate in letting me know if I misinterpreted or said something they considered 'stupid' or 'inappropriate'. I took the attitude that they could teach me their way of 'being' at YOTS and this often led to a vastly more 'honest' conversation than I would have gained had I already had some understanding. In some ways my ignorance was therefore more of a help than a hindrance.

The young people responded similarly. With the majority of young people I developed rapport and they reciprocated with a level of trust that enabled them to share their lives, giving details I had not expected and had not asked for. This was not achieved with all young people and with two or three of the young people I failed spectacularly; gaining no trust, little in the way of disclosure about their lives, and definitely no interview.

My efforts at building relationships and trust had not been deliberately planned. In fact, I believe in this setting it would have been counterproductive to approach 'rapport building' with a deliberate tactic in mind. This approach would have been considered to be 'fake' and therefore untrustworthy, particularly in the eyes of the young people. However, on reflection, some of the attitudes and practices I drew on intuitively to build relationships and trust included such things as:

Demonstrating Care – this ranged from simple things such as asking young people how their day had been, to helping them do their work in class. It was usually a very individualised approach and could not have been predicated with prior planning. What

one young person responded to was very different to another. For example, one young man, who described himself as an 'armed robber', 'drug dealer', 'homeless', as 'causing trouble' and 'liking to hit on people', allowed me to connect with him the morning I cooked him breakfast. He received his bacon and egg roll with astonishment and once finished, he thanked me and said it had been the best one he had ever eaten. Although I am under no illusions as to the exaggeration of this comment, from this point he talked openly to me rather than exhibiting a careful avoidance. I could never have deliberately planned for this action to make a connection.

Respecting young people's 'rules of engagement' – most of the young people seemed to want me to understand their lives and were very willing to speak to me. Sometimes this had to be on their terms. In a number of instances I needed to assure the young people that if there were things they did not want to discuss then they could say 'I can't speak about that' and we would move on. I was also very careful to look for any signs of discomfort and offered during interviews to stop or talk about a different question. One young person's 'rules of engagement' was a time limit on his interview. He gave me fifteen minutes for the length of the interview and during the interview I was given 'warning bells' at 5 minutes, 10 minutes and every minute thereafter until my fifteen minutes was up, at which point he ended the interview. Another young person very aggressively told me I was not to write about him, or speak to him as he had not given his permission for me to have anything to do with him in my research, which, besides this statement, I did not. Respecting these rules allowed the young people to participate in the interviews on their own terms, giving them a sense of control over the process and the option to participate or not.

Understanding staff and young people as the experts – I approached everyone I encountered in the YOTS setting as holding knowledge that I did not have. The staff knew these young people and their education in ways I had never known and the young people had experienced life and education in ways I had never experienced. As a researcher I therefore entered the field with a definite sense of being a novice whose role it was to learn. This attitude seemed to help with the typical power imbalance between researcher and participant, particularly when it also involved accepting their criticism of me. From the young people this criticism was usually very obvious; eye's rolled at things I asked or said, groans at my incapacity to understand what they were

expressing, and use of very definitive tones of 'No, that isn't what I said/meant' and another explanation given. Staff were usually more subtle (raised eyebrows) but no less obvious.

Being sensitive to circumstances – The young people in particular were very wary of anyone 'invading their world'. I initially spent time just being in their vicinity without pushing for interaction. During interactions, I would follow their cues, stopping or progressing when they signalled they were uncomfortable/comfortable. For example, when I handed the microphone to two of the young people at the beginning of their interviews, they said it reminded them of police interviews.

> Mia: It's like being at the police station doing a report. When I got arrested at Bondi I had to have a microphone and that. Do I keep going?

I offered to write notes instead but they both assured me that the microphone didn't bother them. My initial separateness of taking notes at the back of classrooms (while waiting on child protection clearance) allowed young people to see me as less of a threat. They would talk to me about what I was writing. Ask if they could see it, to check what I was saying about them. I always said yes, but said that it must be at a time that wasn't interrupting their learning and they could only see the notes about them. The offer was never taken up but I suggest that this openness allowed for a certain amount of trust, as I was obviously not trying to hide anything from them (or perhaps they were just using the opportunity to avoid their school work).

Shared Personal Experience – This involved my participation in activities such as a class introduction where both staff and young people introduced themselves to each other at the beginning of a new school year. It also involved answering questions about my family and my life when anyone asked.

Flexibility

Despite the notion of the researcher being flexible as a way of not 'contaminating' the field (Bryman, 2004), in the case of the YOTS setting, flexibility was taken up as a necessity rather than a deliberate plan. Carabine (2001) explains that this type of unstructured approach allows the researcher to be surprised by what they find. Being

flexible allowed the experience of a range of unplanned activities with staff and young people. For example one day I was in a school doing typical 'school' activities, the next on a boat with a range of young people and elderly people on a service learning trip. Another time I planned for an interview only to find the teacher was at the police station with one of the young people. Sometimes interviews were done at a number of different times as the day permitted. Another interview was interrupted as the builders arrived and started the circular saw in the courtyard where the interview was taking place. My first interview was done without my recorder or question sheet as the staff member was available 'right then'. This flexibility was about judging the circumstances, taking advantage of opportunities as they arose and being willing to change direction immediately if that was what was required. It was about being part of the life of YOTS rather than fitting YOTS into my research, which would have in any case been impossible.

Interviews and Fieldnotes

The use of the three ethnographic principles discussed above allowed the ethnographic techniques of observations and interviews to generate an extremely rich and relevant data set.

Interviews were naturalistic, taking a form more closely aligned to a conversation than an interview schedule of questions to be asked and answered. I had planned for a series of questions that were open-ended which I used more as a guide than a controlling set of questions. The interviews with staff and young people ran for between 20 to 50 minutes. I found that the first two questions ("Tell me about your background." and "How did you come to be at YOTS?") and some prompts usually gained me most of the data I needed. Through our conversations, the staff and young people covered most of the questions I would have asked without my asking them. As I also mentioned above, the interviews required a great deal of flexibility. However, one point of note was the desire of the young people to speak of their experiences. When I asked what pseudonym that would like me to use for them their usual responses were things like 'just use my name' or 'why do I need a fake name?' They expressed no doubt that they wanted their stories told. One of the young people was very upset that she was not able to be interviewed as she wanted to have her say and

tell her story like the others had been able to. However, as she was a ward of the state and only 13, I did not have approval to do an interview.

Fieldnotes were done in one of three ways. Initially I sat and described what I was seeing as it happened in the YOTS setting. As I became more involved in the day to day activities of the schools this changed to taking notes at certain points during the day such as lunch time and at the end of the day. At the end of the day I would also note my impressions and any ideas about what I thought might be happening. These usually came from intuitive moments of surprise or unease or things that seemed to 'sit well' (or not). Other field notes came from anecdotes that I hadn't written down that became relevant during analysis.

Data Analysis

A Foucaultian discourse analysis as a methodology is a way of generating samples of 'discourse' based in theoretically informed decision-making. There are many ways to approach this task, which can appear very loose in terms of guiding what to analyse (Bryman 2004). Immersion allows this looseness to tighten around specific themes that were then exposed through scrutiny and the application of a Foucaultian theoretical framework. My analysis began with a sense of entering chaos that slowly resolved into broad themes and discourses that became firmer as the themes were subject to the theoretical boundaries I had chosen. In doing this, the issue of reality as it relates to data analysis arose.

Poststructural research immediately places the researcher in a tight spot since it claims that there is no 'reality', only individual perceptions of reality shaped by language. If this notion is carried to its full conclusion, then questions arise as to how discourse analysis can be anything but the intersection of two (or more) perceptions of something that may not even exist. Scheurich (1997), Taylor (2001), and Burck (2005) all believe that it is important to recognise that in most qualitative research multiple realities are recognised. Therefore the 'reality' of the researcher and the 'reality' of the participants will be different, requiring an acknowledgement of these differences and their effects on the resulting research. Vaughan (2004: 399) proposes that all research inevitably appeals to truth and knowledge foundations which are "inventions of the present, [which] effectively undoes our present; going back a step and making it

seem strange and unfamiliar, so that what is now cannot be taken as the result of some unambiguous path set by previous events." By accepting multiple 'realities', I am also recognising that my thesis was the product of my perspectives and my interpretation of the 'reality' of the participants' lives.

When it came time to begin analysing data the task seemed overwhelming. The looseness of data generated (Bryman 2004) had given me such a large quantity of data that was extremely rich in its content that it was difficult to see where to begin. My tactic was to read the data a number of times and begin to look for common patterns and themes from the data that I could use as a way of starting to make sense of what had been generated. I put together a list of ideas that were spoken of regularly in the data, such as the young people's hatred of their mainstream schooling experiences. I noted incidents or conversations that seemed to grate against me such as the descriptions the young people gave of the ways in which they were dealt with in their mainstream schools. Conversely, I also noted anything that appeared to be very insightful or surprised me with its unexpectedness, such as watching a class of young people that I had assumed would be out of control, sit quietly and conscientiously do a test. Initially I used ideas that had arisen during my time in the four schools. While reading the data I was then able to either extend on these ideas or discard them altogether if the data did not support my first impressions. As I became familiar with the data I was also able to build this list of ideas and ended with a proliferation of themes.

Having identified a long list of ideas, I then mapped how these might interrelate to produce a coherent argument. The enactment of this process was not quite as refined and certainly not as easy as this statement suggests. An erratic progression through trial and error, arranging and rearranging ideas, exploring theoretical understandings and accepting or discarding them, extreme frustration and overwhelming relief, and moments of total incomprehension and emerging clarity all occurred as chaos began to form into some sort of sensibility. This process was as valuable to the analysis as the end product itself.

At this point in the analysis I had mapped a very broad and basic way of pulling together these ideas. At this time these connections were still more fluid than fixed.

To firm up arguments, I began pulling apart elements of the text. I transferred all the data that spoke to each idea from documents, transcripts and fieldnotes into one document. I then differentiated the range of ways the data described the broader concepts, themes and patterns. I looked for such things as: the ways in which the text was used to speak about the thematic areas; patterns of speech; common understandings that appeared to support themes; the assumptions that were embedded in particular types of statements; the types of emotional responses that appeared when certain topics were discussed; the differences between the responses I expected and the responses I heard or read; how this data might both contribute to the overall arguments of the thesis; and, again, what surprised me. I then repeated this process to a point where I could no longer take anything further from the data. Again, this was not a linear process, nor was it as straightforward as it might sound, and I often jumped between strategies depending on what was drawn out of the data, how it influenced the overall picture of the thesis and the opportunities that emerged to track new ideas as they presented themselves.

Theorising the Analysis

I had come to a point where I had a range of themes and patterns but only a vague sense of how they might provide an understanding of the lives of the young people, their experiences of their mainstream schools, and the very different experience of being in a YOTS school. As I read through a variety of theoretical understandings, two approaches resonated with my thinking and the data: Foucault's use of power and Goffman's understandings of how the individual presents themselves.

As I have discussed previously, my personal connection to the research meant that I was taking a political stance in relation to the thesis. This stance also applied to the data analysis. My position was clearly expressed through the choices I made in relation to the particular types of patterns and themes I chose to follow from the data and also in the way I had come to organise and present my arguments that were highly critical of some educational contexts yet supportive of others. As Foucault states,

> [T]he real political task in a society such as ours is to criticise the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself

> obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight fear. (Foucault in Chomsky and Foucault 1971)

The critiques Foucault is suggesting here are important for my study as mainstream education has come to be understood as 'neutral and independent'. As I suggest in the previous chapter, to expose 'the political violence' that institutions such as mainstream schooling perpetuate is vital. Foucault's conceptualisations of power are central to his critiques of institutions such as the penal system and schools in *Discipline and Punish* (1991) and the work of asylums in *Birth of the Clinic* (2003). Power therefore was a theoretical tool that was important in exposing my political understandings of how both mainstream schools and the YOTS schools functioned. To do this I had to understand power in ways that were not necessarily 'common'. Foucault provided the difference I needed to do this. Because Foucault does not see power as an entity but as a relationship I was able to draw on his theorisations to look at power in two very different ways. One exposed the dominating forces constructed in mainstream schooling contexts, the other looked at the productive manner in which power was being drawn on it the YOTS context. To this end, the next section will provide an introduction to my understandings and use of Foucaultian power, and an introduction to, and legitimation of, my use of Goffman.

Power Relations

I aim to discuss my use of power in more detail in Chapters 4 and 6 as it applies directly to the analysis of these chapters. However, I describe here what I consider to be the base understandings of a Foucaultian notion of power. I have identified the more significant aspects as they informed the way I have drawn on power throughout the rest of the thesis. It was important to understand how schools were relating to young people and how young people were relating to schools. The theoretical understandings of Foucault (and to a lesser extent, Goffman) prompted important analytical questions (such as 'How is power working to produce this relationship?' and 'What responses are being elicited when power is applied in this way?'). This theoretical understanding of power also recognised the relationships that existed between the young people and both their mainstream and YOTS relationships.

Power is a Relationship That Exists Between People

What is fundamental to an understanding of power is the Foucaultian notion that power is inherent in all relationships as a relational process. When asked what he referred to when speaking about power, Foucault answered,

> I mean that in human relationships […] power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other. So I am speaking of relations that exist at different levels, in different forms; these power relations are mobile, they can be modified, they are not fixed once and for all. These power relations are thus mobile, reversible, and unstable. (Foucault 2000a: 292)

Power requires the meeting of people (individuals or groups) in order to come into existence. And on the reverse of this, without people there is no power. It becomes a process that arises when interaction occurs. There is no avoiding power's centrality in the relationships the YOTS young people had experienced in all areas of their lives. Power is described in terms of a sovereign and disciplinary power where the process appears more like a weapon being wielded by some or taken up in resistance by others. It may seem logical then to assume that if all relationships are influenced by power then the relationship between the YOTS staff and their young people will also be established in power relations that dominate and rebel in the same ways. This approach to power raises questions about how power is being accessed so that domination and rebellion are not the predominant forms of resistance used by young people like those they identified in their YOTS experiences.

Foucault (1980: 59) suggests that,

> power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress […] exercising itself only in a negative way […] the notion of repression which mechanisms of power are generally reduced to strikes me as very inadequate and possibly dangerous.

He did not stop his examination of power at this level of explanation. Instead, Foucault draws on a notion of power as relational (2000a), where power is not a

possibility – cannot come into existence – without people in relationship. He explains that power does not exist in its own right, as something which can simply be accessed by one person or group to dominate another, as Marxist theorists have proposed (1980), and as he suggests of Nietzsche's use of 'power as relational' that, "The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest" (Foucault 1980: 53-54). Nor, he suggests, can power be seen as a broad societal conceptualisation to be applied at will across all circumstances of power. Instead it must be viewed as a contextual relationship within specific locations. Power "designates relationship between partners" (2000a: 337), and becomes "an ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one to another" (2000a: 337). But Foucault warns that,

> The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between 'partners' individual or collective; it is a way in which some act on others. Which is to say, of course, that there is no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter […] Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures. (Foucault 2000a: 340)

Foucault does not see power as purely repressive with limited responses. When it exists in relationship it allows the people of that relationship to respond in unlimited ways producing relationships where power can, in one sense, become extremely fluid.

> Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in the same body […] But the impression that power weakens and vacillates here is in fact mistaken; power can retreat here, re-organise its forces, invest itself elsewhere […] and so the battle continues. (Foucault 1980: 56)

> This also means that power is not a matter of consent […] but it is by nature the manifestation of a consensus. (Foucault 2000a: 340)

Power Relations are Productive

There seems to be some incongruence contained in the notion of power relations producing freedom. This is particularly obvious in Foucaultian terms where research aims are often to pull apart, critique and be highly critical of the hidden effects of

power. As will be seen throughout Chapters 3,4 and 5, I have very deliberately drawn on this critical work, and used it myself, as a vital way of addressing the dominating effects so readily produced and sustained in many educational relationships through power relations. But, as Ambrosio (2010: 728) discusses, Foucault's purpose in his work was never to do just this. It was to more broadly question the impacts of what we do and say. It is a method that allows the questioning of how power relations are being used and the effects that they have. The outcome of this questioning may well be the to tear down and expose a destructive and harmful process of power relations. However, Foucault's approach also allows for the possibility of beneficence – what is exposed may well be a power relation that is favourable, advantageous and/or helpful.

As Foucault (1980: 119) suggests, these power relations produce a relationship which does not simply "weigh on us" but which "traverses and produces things". When power relations are engaged, the choice of processes to produce domination can just as easily be choices that produce freedom. In the case of YOTS, power 'traverses and produces' a relationship where learning becomes a possibility. The young people's experiences with the power relations within YOTS had moved the young people from a position where they had only experienced power as dominating to experiences of power relations that freed them from the constraints of these processes of domination. Concomitantly the young people were given access to techniques that opened up freedom for the young people – yet these were still taking place within power relations.

Power Relations are a Process of 'Action on Action'

I have drawn on the notion of the processes of power relations as 'action on action' throughout my thesis (in particular see Chapter 4). Power "acts upon their actions; an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault 2000a: 340). It is an act by one individual/group, in a relationship, which engages a corresponding act by another individual/group in that relationship (Hofmeyr 2006). If power is described as 'action on action', multiple possibilities unfold. Foucault explains that this is because,

> the 'other' (the one over who power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a

> relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results and possible inventions may open up. (Foucault 2000a: 340)

Strategies working to produce freedom can become possible when power is seen as a continuing cycle of 'action on action'. Options of 'responses, reactions, and inventions' within the exercise of power become unlimited. But in doing this, we can only act ethically while we have the freedom to do so. Once forced, via domination, a purely ethical response becomes problematic. Actions based in right and wrong become entwined with the necessity to enter a game. "We cannot move beyond relations of power, but we can struggle to achieve arrangements that 'allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible' (Foucault, 1984c p. 298, 1989)" (Kosmala and McKernon, 2010: 384).

Throughout this thesis I have termed this process of power a cycle of 'action on action' in order to explore the ways in which the power relations between the young people and those they interact with are able to produce domination. I am 'artifically' slowing down this complex set of processes in order to do the task of analysing how the 'action on action' cycle works with the YOTS young people.

Sovereign Power

Accessing 'sovereign power' as an analytical tool could be seen as problematic particularly when it comes as a consequences of seeing sovereign power as a genealogical progression in the story of power, as opposed to a technique of analysis in itself.

It wasn't until the 1990's when Foucault's use of power started to be taken up within education in a prominent way. A large portion of the educational literature around Foucaultian power in school settings draws on the notion of disciplinary power and governmentality. Many of these studies use the genealogy of Discipline and Punish (Foucault 1991) to show the historical progression of forms of government from the top down, highly visible form of sovereign power to the more subtle, often hidden, and usually intricate workings of disciplinary power. In these discussions of power, sovereign power is usually shown as having evolved into governmentality. Governmentality is then used as the basis for exploring the power relations

educational institutions deploy in their governance of students. Examples of this can be seen in Ford's (2003) article exploring technologies of power in the classroom.

> Foucault offers the story of a productive model of power that comes into effect with the organization of modern societies. Modern power is neither possessed nor sovereign: […] It is not held by certain individuals to be deployed against others, but circulates, which is to say, *it is put into effect* by particular folks situated in local contexts in response to local demands and strategies. (Ford 2003: 8)

Gore's (1995: 167) study of power relations in pedagogy is another example.

> Foucault's concept of disciplinary power explicitly shifts analyses of power from the 'macro' realm of structures and ideologies to the 'micro level of bodies. He argued that unlike the sovereign power of earlier periods, disciplinary power functions at the level of the body

This approach can be seen from early Foucaultian studies such as that by Gore (1995), through to more recent studies such as those of Levitt (2008) and Simons and Masschelein (2006). This is not to say that these studies are in any way deficient. Gore's study (1995) concerning the identification of micro techniques of power utilised in schools in order to improve school experiences showed great insight into the subtleties of disciplinary techniques of power in action in the classroom. However, in my work with the YOTS young people, this approach did not adequately explain parts of what was happening for these young people in their mainstream schools.

While remaining significantly in the background analytically, sovereign power has not remained unused. More recent work has drawn on the notion of sovereign power beyond purely genealogical recognition by acknowledging sovereign-like strategies at work within contemporary educational settings. Deacon (2002: 445) explains that this is possible as disciplinary power 'displaced' rather than 'replaced' sovereign power, leaving open the notion and opportunity for the analytical use of sovereign power and its techniques. Raby (2005) extends on this idea, making educational comparisons between sovereign and disciplinary power in an exploration of high school rules and behaviour. He suggests that drawing on both sovereign and disciplinary power in

combination is important in the exploration of institutions, especially schools.

> Governance does not replace sovereign, top-down and disciplinary power, but rather these forms of power work in combination (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Within various institutions, including schools, young people's selves are constituted through techniques that foster self-governance. However, schools also punish, through more sovereign and disciplinary means, those who fail to self-govern, dividing the "good" citizens from the "bad" (Hannah-Moffat, 2000: 528). (Raby 2005: 73)

Educational researchers such as Tikly state that even "liberal governmentality retains and utilizes the techniques, rationalities and institutions characteristic of sovereignty and discipline but repositions them" (2003:163). Alternately, Covaleskie (1993) suggests that although in the modern era disciplinary power is far more effective in exploring current social direction, within education, "it is significant to note that the power that they [schools] consciously exercise is sovereign, not disciplinary, in form; the power they wield is more susceptible to effective resistance than the power to which they are subject" (Covaleskie 1993: 4).

The combination of both sovereign and governing forms of power relations therefore provides a much more effective mechanism for analysing power. In particular, if an exploration is based solely on governmentality some things remain unexplained. For example, strategies such as surveillance or normalising strategies can suggest how students might be governed. What remains unexplained is how students might elude the effects of such strategies/techniques, or how they might resist becoming the self-governing student. However, possibilities arise to explore how this might occur by including sovereign power relations as another mechanism of exploration.

Foucault and Goffman

As I have implied, it is my intention that the specific theoretical stance that I will apply comes from Michel Foucault. However, in Chapter 3 I have supported this stance with the work of Erving Goffman. Katz's (2008: 10) statement that the purpose of her article is to "mark a path from the social to the individual to the social" is relevant here despite her comments being about discourses of childhood. My purpose in drawing on Erving Goffman in a Foucaultian frame is to do the same. Goffman's

theoretical frame adds to a Foucaultian analysis by taking analysis from an analysis of power at an institutional level to look a the impacts of this power on the individual and their return response to institutional power. Hacking (2004: 277), suggests that there is great value in "[standing] between the two men in order to take advantage of both". He explains that where Foucault approaches discourse as a way of describing "entire 'systems of thought'" (2004: 277278), Goffman's work focuses on individual's responses within and to these systems. Combined, they allow an exploration of both the system and its outplaying in the lives of the individuals. Even more applicable is that much of the work of both these theorists has revolved around institutions. Menand (2009: 296) describes Goffman as "a crossover writer" as his work has been applied in many fields. Foucault called Goffman the author of discourse. Menand (2009) explains that by being a 'crossover writer' Goffman could be drawn on across a range of contexts.

In this study the combination of institutional insights with system understandings and an exploration of individual responses, translates into a valuable analytical tool. The aim of this study is to explore how an educational organisation, such as YOTS, was able to reconcile young people with education when these young people had rejected, and been rejected by, mainstream forms of schooling. This demanded a way to explore both the YOTS organisation and mainstream schooling. But it also required a way to explore the social relations of the staff and young people within these organisations that might lead to both young people's rejection of reconciliation with education. As a consequence, throughout the analysis specific theoretical points from both Foucault and Goffman will be called upon. These will include Foucault's use of power (Foucault, 1980; 1991; 1994; 1996; 2000a; 2000b) and Goffman's notions of face-to-face interactions, focusing on cynical and sincere performances, audience segregation, and boundary performances (Goffman1971; 1968).

However, a significant criticism of Goffman's work relates to the explanation of the 'performance' of social interactions as never being honest or truthful but as 'put on' performances that deny the self. It arises from a belief in the personal essence of each person and therefore Goffman's 'self' is seen as "faked", "contrived", "dishonest", "cons" (Tseelon 1992:123) and can therefore be judged as moral or immoral. "What is common to all the above criticisms is that they are set in a dualistic ontology which

contrasts *appearing* with *being*" (Tseelon 1992:123). Goffman's focus was on the process of interaction rather than knowing the internal reality of it. The "autonomous selves with inner essence and outward expression" is changed to "a surface (screen) model of an interconnected self, constituted in a network of relations […] It is a transient self which is situationally and interactively defined; a social product which does not have existence outside an interaction" (Tseelon, 1992: 121). Our sense of self is therefore established or constructed by the interaction.

> As Bisset and Edgley note, "People's doings establish their meanings and beings" (p. 6). That is, behaviour is expressive and the other people read identities, intentions, and motives from them. (Chan 2000:272)

What we as the audience see of another's actions is just that, what we see (or hear). From a poststructural point of view whether something lies beyond that (i.e. some, essence or form of inner self) is irrelevant. We can only guess if the interaction we are having goes beyond the actions that appear on that surface level of the interaction. So this is where we must stop, thereby working with what is perceived rather than with the knowable.

Presenting the Research

Two issues arose around decisions concerning how to present data in the following chapters. The first was about maintaining anonymity and confidentiality given the very public nature of the YOTS organisation. The second was about capturing and representing young people's voices.

Naming YOTS

In beginning to describe the YOTS organisation it became clear that it was going to be hard to maintain anonymity at an organisational level. I needed to acknowledge the YOTS website and the biographical books concerning Father Riley. Referencing of these publically available resources could be used to identify schools and the principal, making it difficult to maintain anonymity. Anyone even remotely familiar with the YOTS schools would recognise even the most basic descriptions of the organisation and schools and only minimal research efforts would identify leading staff. In addition to this, Father Riley is a very public figure, using his name as a brand for the

organisation despite being a very private person. All of these things meant that he and the principal of the schools became vulnerable to identification. Fortunately the focus of this research is on how the YOTS schools work rather than an evaluation that might be detrimental. My study held beneficence for YOTS as an organisation and as a group of people, as well as having benefits for others who might want to contact YOTS for advice. I therefore made the decision to ask YOTS if I could identify them as the organisation in the first few weeks of research. Permission was given in principle. It would mean that the organisation would be named and that it would be possible for Father Riley, the YOTS Director of Education, to be identified, although what they contributed to the research would remain anonymous. I was careful not to identify the positions/roles held by the staff within the YOTS organisation and I did not identify the schools they were attached to. Readers of the research would know these staff were involved in the research however, no one would be able to identify which data was attributable to which staff member.

However, I still needed formal consent to do this. I waited for my thesis to be in draft form so that gaining YOTS consent would be with their full knowledge of how the organisation and staff had been portrayed. Permission was subsequently given and in allowing YOTS to read a draft there was also the opportunity for them to comment on the thesis. Their letter approving my identification of the YOTS organisation is included as Appendix 1.

In asking for permission to use YOTS name I made the consequences clear and was explicit about the strategies I used to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity. The confidentiality and anonymity of the remaining staff and young people was not an issue. None were identified by name (despite the young people's desire to have this happen), their school's name was not attached to any comments, nor were the dates of their attendance at the YOTS schools. Additionally, at the time of publication all the young people involved in the study were no longer attending the YOTS schools and many of the staff and school managers had changed positions within the organisation. Typical strategies I used to maintain anonymity were the use of pseudonyms, and analysis that was focused on the themes and discourses within the data rather than on the people involved. As a result of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, methodological descriptions may look thin. The research site and participant descriptions are generic

and publically available and minimally descriptive statistics have been included.

Captured Voices

As discussed earlier, there is some contention as to the ability of a researcher to fully represent the 'truth' of another person. If it is impossible to know the reality of a situation it must be even more impossible to know the reality of the person. Mertens (2005) argues that this is especially applicable when a dominant group tries to represent an oppressed group. She warns that significant care needs to be taken not to perpetuate the oppression. In line with this, choosing what to say about interview and fieldwork data is difficult, particularly when deciding how I would describe the young people and their lives and given that I believe I had only just started to touch the surface with their interviews and my observations. The portrayal of the young people could also have taken any number of forms by including/excluding a range of different 'facts', or by taking different stances around the events they described. For example, my description may have been very different had I been reporting on the impact of disengaged young people on teaching staff or on the police who had contact with them in everyday life. The tremendous responsibility of portraying data appropriately and as accurately as possible, and in maintaining its integrity was daunting. It would be very easy to manipulate the data to say anything I wanted rather than using it the way it may have been intended when it was given to me by the YOTS staff and young people. Given notions of poststructural 'reality', determining what it was that the staff and young people meant was not just impossible but almost not applicable. However, researchers still have a responsibility on behalf of both those being researched and to the research project they are working on to use data in an ethical way. By taking up a Foucaultian framework this is possible. As Foucault (2003: xvii) explains in *The Birth of the Clinic,*

> To speak about the thought of others, to try to say what they have said has, by tradition, been to analyse the signified. But must the things said, elsewhere and by others, be treated exclusively in accordance with the play of signifier and signified, as a series of themes present more or less implicitly to one another? Is it not possible to make a structural analysis of discourses that would evade the fate of commentary by supposing no remainder, nothing in excess of what has been said, but only the fact of its historical appearance? The facts of

> discourse would then have to be treated not as autonomous nuclei of multiple significations, but as events and functional segments gradually coming together to form a system. The meaning of a statement would be defined not by the treasure of intentions that it might contain, revealing and concealing it at the same time, but by the difference that articulates it upon the other real or possible statements, which are contemporary to it or to which it is opposed in the linear series of time. A systematic history of discourses would then become possible.

Ultimately, any use of data for research will be a manipulation and will therefore loose integrity, so it was vital to me to maintain as much integrity on behalf of the young people and staff as was possible by maintaining this framework. Bryman (2004: 500) explains that,

> The reflexive attitude […] is highly critical of the notion that the researcher is someone who extracts knowledge from observations and conversations […] The researcher is viewed as implicated in the construction of knowledge through the stance that he or she assumes […] and through the ways in which an account is transmitted in the form of text […] This understanding entails an acknowledgement of the implications and significance of the researcher's choices as both observer and writer.

My personal/political stance of support for these young people and the YOTS staff was and remains clear and is supported by a Foucaultian stance.

Conclusion

With these methodological and theoretical supports in place I was able to form the data into this thesis. Some elements of the data were clear from the beginning, others evolved as I became more familiar with what data had been generated and yet more was uncovered as I applied the theoretical framework. From this evolved some discrete areas of exploration that I have shaped into the following six chapters.

Chapter 3 is predominantly the result of the documents analysis, presenting a historical survey of the construction and refinement of deficit understandings of young people in

Australia. It draws primarily on the Foucaultian understandings of discourse, genealogy and offers a critique of current discourses and presents a counter discourse.

Chapters 4 and 5 establish young people as the focus. In these chapters I identify and explore the complexity of young people's lives and the impact three significant relationships (family and the law in Chapter 4, and mainstream schooling in Chapter 5) have had on their education. It is based predominantly on the data of the young people and is written from their perspectives of their lives and education. I used the theoretical frame of sovereign power, and Goffman's boundary performances to explore the young people's responses to the sovereign power inherent in the principal relationships in their lives.

Chapter 6 turns the focus of the study to an exploration of the discourses the staff of the YOTS schools applied to their young people. It stands as a challenge to the deficit understandings typically applied to these young people and interrogates how this is done and what YOTS has used that replaces deficit notions. This chapter has been drawn from the data generated by the YOTS staff's interviews and the application of a Foucaultian understanding of 'silence'.

Chapters 7 and 8 are an investigation of the relations and practices that have arisen as a result of the application of YOTS alternative understandings of the young people explored in Chapter 6. It theorises the use of power in producing freedom for these young people and suggests that this is the core of the practices drawn on by staff that allows young people to reconcile with education. These chapters draw on data from YOTS policy documents, fieldwork notes and the interviews conducts with staff and the young people.

Section 2 – The Conditions of 'Educational Displacement'

This section looks at the current conditions embedded in education that I argue have worked to establish young people's 'displacement' from education. I have emphasised the perspectives of the young people and access the young people's interview in order to explore educational displacement from the point of view of the young people.

Chapter 3 explores the establishment and use of 'deficit' understandings in education settings since the inception of education in Australia in 1872. I look at four significant points of time where discourse has been ruptured (altered and/or impacted in some significant way). I then present an alternative understanding of young people as being 'displaced' from education.

Chapter 4 brings the young people's lives into focus as something that has been 'corrupted' by the relationships and environments the young people exist in. This chapter recognises the complexities and damage presented in the young people's lives in two significant relationships – families and the law – and conceptualises young people's responses to their lives in terms of their 'edgeworking' practices.

Chapter 5 focuses on the damaged and damaging relationship young people have had with their mainstream schooling. Here again, I look at the young people's 'edgeworking' practices as a form of resistance, and power young people have come to hold in mainstream schools.

Chapter 3 – The 'Educational Displacement' of Young People

Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of an exploration of key conditions that combine to produce educational displacement via a range of exclusionary tactics. In Chapter 1, I raised concerns for what is happening in mainstream school settings. I suggested, supported by the research of others, that the 'troubling' situation presented in mainstream schools needs to be addressed. Here I continue this exploration, questioning some of the most significant discourses employed in mainstream education – in particular a lens that marks certain young people as 'deficit'. According to this discourse, the overriding explanation for young people's detachment from learning is primarily due to faults identified within them. Rather than addressing the contexts in which these young people exist, the predominant but limited response seems to be that young people's faults need to be fixed; a responsibility readily taken up by the 'experts' identifying these faults. In this chapter I begin to contest/resist this notion. I argue instead that young people do not become 'disengaged' from education because of their faults, as a 'deficit' understanding might infer, but rather, they become 'displaced' from education as a consequence of the reified 'deficit' knowledges that are applied to them, predominantly, within mainstream schooling contexts.

To make this argument I do two things. The first is to trouble the discourses drawn on by education that work to reify notions of young people, such as 'deficit'. I explore how these discourses have evolved historically in Australian educational settings by focusing on four moments of time. At each of these moments 'deficit' and other damaging discourses have influenced and been influenced by the understandings of the young people of the time. These moments are: the introduction of compulsory education in 1872; an intensified uptake of psychology by education in the 1950s; the introduction of neoliberalism in the 1980s; and the influence of discourses of fear, risk and waste in the 1990s-2000s. I argue that at each of these moments deficit understandings of young people have been extended and consolidated in education. I identify where deficit discourses are still in evidence within contemporary educational research and practice, and illustrate how these discourses continue to act to separate certain young people from education. I suggest that ultimately, the consequence of the

entrenched 'truth' of such discourses in mainstream schools is the 'displacement' of young people from education.

This leads to my second task – conceptualising young people as 'educationally displaced'. This conceptualisation is important as it acts not just to demonstrate the consequences of the acceptance of deficit knowledges, but additionally provides an alternative avenue for 'knowing' these young people.

Moments in the Construction of 'Disengaged' Young People in Australian Education

I begin this section by tracing one historical evolution of damaging knowledges of young people. I give a brief overview of how these notions of young people thread through current mainstream research and practice and how they have created a space where the consequence of these knowledges is the 'displacement' of certain young people from school. This is not to say that this discussion is a comprehensive coverage of the outgrowth of this type of discourse, or that there have not been other influences during this time frame. My aim is to identify what I consider to be some of the more significant moments in the educational uptake of a long-standing, but constantly evolving, way of understanding young people in Australian education, highlighting the subtlety of these understandings and their impact on the lives of certain young people.

Foucault, Discourse and Initial Connections Between Deficit Understandings and Education

Foucault refers to the development of discourse as having no beginning and no end (Kendall and Wickham 2000). The implications of this for my task being that at some point in its discursive evolution, the notion of young people disengaging from education became sayable. On one side of this moment, young people were spoken of as either being at school or being elsewhere. On the other side, the discourse had evolved to a point where it was now possible for young people to be seen as deliberately, disobediently and illegally, NOT attending school. This prompts questions as to how this might have happened; how were young people suddenly found to be 'disengaged'? This 'moment' in Australia could arguably be marked by the introduction and legalisation of 'free, compulsory and secular' public education in all Australian

states between 1872 and 1893, following similar legislation in the UK in the 1850s (Meadmore 2001; Portus 1937).

The notion that discourse has no beginning and no end could be taken to imply that discourse is also static and unchanging as it appears that understandings remain constant over time, rather than being influenced by the things that go on around it. However, Foucault is not suggesting that this is the case.

> Discourse is the path from one contradiction to another: if it gives rise to those that can be seen, it is because it obeys that which it hides. To analyse discourse is to hide and reveal contradictions; it is to show the play that they set up within it; it is to manifest how it can express them, embody them, or give them temporary appearance. (Foucault 1972: 151)

Discourse responds in waves of influence to the contexts and other discourses that weigh on it. This can be seen in the way discourses of deficit understandings of young people were applied to education. When compulsory education was linked to young people's educational disconnections, deficit and other discourses used to similar effect, were also drawn on. For example understandings of the moral deficiencies of the poor were evident long before the introduction of compulsory education and were used to particular effect concerning the convict population in Australia (Barcan 1988). These understandings were taken up in education and used to question the morality of young people not attending school, and applied by creating a new way to identify 'criminal' or 'deviant' behaviours (Meadmore 2001; Austin 1961). It was only when education was named 'compulsory', and when 'the law' was assigned the power to enforce young people's school attendance, that it became possible for young people to be seen as disengaged from education. Prior to this young people not attending schools was not a concern. In fact, education to this point in time, was considered a privilege reserved for the elite and was used as a power mechanism of the ruling class to govern the under class (Groundwater-Smith et al 2007; Foucault 1991). These types of understandings have been developed and honed throughout the historical literature of compulsory education and are strongly linked to both educational disengagement and underclass status.

The introduction of compulsory education in the late 1800s and the resulting discussions of attendance and truancy, combined with the new legal obligations of the state to enforce the law, now made it possible to say that young people (particularly the poor) were being disobedient at best, but usually, criminal and delinquent when they did not attend school. These knowledges and their accompanying processes of exclusion have been formed and reformed over 130 years of schooling and can still be seen at work in today's schools.

'Free, compulsory and secular' Education and the Legalisation of a 'Criminal', 'Deviant' and 'Delinquent' Student.

Australia, the UK and the US introduced similar education Acts for compulsory education at similar times. These Acts were the result of the belief that "ignorance and crime were closely related" (Meadmore 2001: 114). The Australian *Education Act 1872* (taken up by states between 1872 and 1893) was designed to specifically target the underclass and those not 'benefiting' from any kind of schooling, to produce citizens who were obedient, respectful, moral and able to contribute to the prosperity of a new nation. It came with the assumption that the provision of education would decrease criminal acts. This thinking was maintained into the 1950s where its influence can be clearly identified in the following statement from Wall (1955: 413).

> The very fact that schooling is not universal or compulsory leaves many children open to harmful influences or in relatively unsupervised idleness […] one symptom of which is an increase in delinquencies of all kinds […] Thus in itself an extension of compulsory schooling, coupled with wise social measures, may be expected to do something to diminish delinquency, especially if the accent is put, not solely upon preventative measures, but also upon a constructive attempt to help children and adolescents to adjust themselves to the new conditions under which they are growing up. (Wall 1955: 413)

In making compulsory education a legal issue, it quickly became possible for non-attendance to be seen as a crime. 'Truancy' was a legal issue with enforcement coming through the legal system. Young 'truants' at the time were seen as "juvenile criminals" (Barrett 1900: 183), and the possibilities of being labelled with this perception increased with the extension of the age for compulsory attendance in the early 1900s

(Turney 1975). As a crime, 'truancy' was equated with other criminal acts of, what might now be considered, a more serious nature. Gray, in describing his investigations of the courts dealings of delinquency in 1927, demonstrates this link. He speaks of delinquency as, "stealing in its more serious manifestations, truancy and general uncontrollableness, malicious damage, assault etc" (Gray 1927: 265-266).

This type of thinking was still in existence in the 1950s as can be seen in Wall (1955: 416) where understandings of 'delinquency' had only shifted slightly,

> difficulties of emotional development and behaviour – difficulties in learning perhaps, or petty thefts, violent outbursts of anger or aggression, lack of social contacts, truancy, undue silence or withdrawal, marked aberrations in sexual development and the like – all of them signs that something is amiss.

These types of statements suggest that a lack of school attendance was a serious deviant behaviour to be dealt with by juvenile courts, truancy officers employed by education departments, and police (Jones 1974).

'Free, compulsory and secular' education was made even more complex in some Australian states as the 'compulsory' and 'free' components of the law arrived at differing times making compulsory education for the poor a difficult option prior to the legal introduction of 'free' education. In Australia, the concept of free education was not a reality as a daily fee, although small, was charged to assist with extra costs (Gray 1927). However, this understanding of 'free', had some serious consequences for the poor. Children from the underclass couldn't attend school because they couldn't afford to; but their lack of attendance positioned them as criminal (or had the potentiality of such).

During the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century, educators had taken on this language, speaking about those who didn't attend school as 'criminal', 'delinquent' and 'immoral', and were seen as not deserving an education. Talk turned to a concern that these 'types' of young people should not be allowed to taint others and should instead be segregated and excluded from mainstream schools. In Victoria, for example,

> Dr C.H. Pearson declared that "the practice of the Department has been to abstain from sweeping these children into our schools, lest they impair their tone," and he went on to assert that the Department had actually established "ragged schools" for these children in the slums of Melbourne […] his truancy officers gave evidence that the ragged schools were flourishing and that the Department was not exerting itself to get these children into the ordinary schools. (Austin 1961: 228-229)

Such 'negative influences' meant education authorities did not fully embrace compulsory education and therefore enforcement was limited in its early days (Meadmore 2001). Each state chose to enforce the legislation in diverse ways, some more forcibly than others (Jones 1974). State enactment of the national Act, set the legal requirement for attendance at only 50% and these requirements excluded the necessity for 'gutter children' to attend at all. The negative attitude towards compulsory education for the poor was also spoken of in terms of economics as can be seen in this statement by D. Ewart the General Inspector, in his Annual Report to the Secretary for Public Instruction in Queensland for 1887.

> No Minister for Public Instruction has yet seen fit to put in operation the compulsory clauses of the Education Act, and I am not yet satisfied, from all that has come under my observation, that by so doing a public good would result which would adequately compensate for the cumbrous and costly machinery required to do the work. (Turney 1975:70)

The timeframe of 1870s-1950s suggests that the notion of non school attendance equating to the criminal, immoral and deviant behaviour of the underclass was maintained as a primary discourse in education for some 80 years, despite a lack of enforcement by some states. During this time, research opposing this stance was also evident. Schools such as 'Summerhill', set up by AS Neill in 1921, were established on democratic principles in response to what some educators at the time saw as restrictive educational practices. They endorsed practices such as freedom of choice, student governance and placement. Neill, for example, stated,

> The function of the child is to live his own life – not the life that his anxious

> parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows best. (Summerhill School 2004)

Summerhill stood in opposition to mainstream thinking about education at the time and was not received well by government authorities.

The Contributions of Developmental and Educational Psychology to 'Deficit' Understandings

During the 1950s research about young people and education appeared to make another significant shift. Educational research aligned with research from psychology, added a new level of complexity to a comparatively straightforward deficit discourse.

Psychology, as a discipline, had been in existence in education prior to the 1950s, particularly in the areas of intelligence and the diagnosis of problems, however, it was during the time from the 1950s to the late 1970s that the impacts in terms of deficit seemed to gain momentum. Outside of education the impact of understanding young people through a psychological lens can be seen in research such as the identification of young people's medical and psychological deficits (Lasswell 1957), in diagnoses of drug dependency (Ma 1969); and in the identification of eating disorders (Bruch 1962; Lilienfeld 1968). Researchers from a psychoanalytic background combined the notion of a criminal and delinquent young people, with that of disordered young people who could now exhibit a growing list of problematic traits (Blinder et al 1978). Researchers drew on such terms as mental (Geil et al 1978), personality (Woodside 1976), behavioural (McLaughlin 1970), and social (Suchman 1970) disorders to describe young people. Suicide for example, was identified as a major issue, with socially unacceptable drug use being identified as a significant factor in the suicides of young people (Oliver and Hertzel 1973; Albert and Beck 1975; Harper and Collins 1975).

In an attempt to fix 'deficits' in and around young people, research from the UK, US and Australia was focused on service provision (e.g. Wall 1955) such as psychiatric and allied services and Child Guidance Clinics. These services were located in lower class areas, targeting the 'emotionally disturbed' (e.g. O'Brien and Duffin 1951) and included such things as gymnasiums, youth and sports clubs (e.g. Hall 1968) and programmes that could lead to fulfilling employment (e.g. Mushkin 1965). In some areas of

psychiatry, young people were seen as being no worse or better than previous generations (Daseinsanalytik 1957) but in most other psychological research it was believed that young people required more discipline (e.g. Lasswell 1957). The promise that psychology could be used to address youth issues did not quite eventuate, with psychology instead advocating a deficit view of young people.

Educators became particularly enamoured with educational psychology and developmental psychology during this time. Debus and Sinclair (in Fenley 1970) argued that educational psychology would make significant contributions to the direction education was to take in the decades ahead. Behavioural, social and cognitive psychologists were prominent in education. Personality theory and its influence on mental health remained in the background but Debus and Sinclair foresaw its rise to popularity in the 1980s, suggesting it would be influenced by "an increase in the concern about the likely threat to human values and adjustment by social, economic and political forces in the years ahead" (in Fenley 1970: 86). Educators' continued use of psychoanalysis promoted a deeper entrenchment of the use of deficit through the identification of disorders and treatment options for 'disordered' young people. This was demonstrated in education through the application of IQ tests that spoke of young people in terms of a deficit of ability (e.g. Harrington and Grumpet 1972). Links were made by psychologists and educators between these deficits and disadvantage. However, the link was focused on the notion that young people were disadvantaged because they were 'lacking'. Once again, the blame for deficit was sited with the individual rather than the social structures and institutions located around the individual. This understanding has since paved the way for the establishment of psychopathologies and a medicalisation of psychologically identified disorders (see critique by Harwood 2006), which has a significant impact on young people in our current educational settings (Graham 2006a; 2006b) due to its fundamental reliance on finding and fixing 'deficit'.

During the 1950s and 1960s a deficit perspective was also supported by many researchers within sociology. Deficit here was used to explain the criminal intent and deficit of delinquency and criminality (see for example Nye et al 1958; Heidensohn 1968; Shoor and Speed 1969; Krislov 1968). In the literature a range of terms were employed to do this. Young people were spoken of as an alienated, criminal,

disordered, resistive, bored, rejecting, indifferent, defiant, inattentive, delinquent and rebellious group of hooligans and drop outs in revolt (consecutively Lipset 1959; Wall 1955; Montgomery 1955; Daseinsanalytik 1957; Lasswell 1957; Sherrill et al 1956; Kaufman et al 1963; Gault 1968; Henry 1960; Dunphy 1963; Montgomery 1955; Nancarrow 1950; Maccoby et al 1954; Shimbori 1964). The literature at this point in time connected young people's criminality and delinquency with forces such as drugs (heroin, alcohol, marijuana, sedatives and inhalants) and addiction, (Hawks 1970; Silver 1977; Douglass et al 1979); aggression (Dembo 1973); and unemployment (Phillips et al 1972; Institute of Criminology 1978; Biles 1979) – all believed to exacerbate pre-existing criminal tendencies. Political activism was labelled a criminal activity framing young people who questioned government ideology and decisions as political criminals (see for example Tygart et al 1972; Moran 1977). The response by 'experts' to these notions about young people was an even stronger move towards the establishment of services to assist and fix the disordered and disadvantaged (Gemignani 1972; Slem and Cotler 1973; Anderson 1975) with strong links being made between social class and behaviour. This picture of the young people wasn't pretty and added to the increasingly complex ways in which young people were able to be known and therefore dealt.

However, these were not the only way young people were being understood sociologically. Alongside these deficit explanations of young people's behaviour were counter discourses that questioned notions such as the 'educational eugenics' (Wall 1955; Austin 1961) that had run from the late 1800s to this point in time. As van Krieken (1986: 401) states, there was an "explosion of critical social science literature" occurring around the 'underprivileged' at the time. Social theorists coming from what might be considered Marxist and neo Marxist perspectives were heavily critical of a deficit approach and focused on processes of oppression and empowerment. These discourses recognised these supposed "menaces" (Heidensohn 1968) and their poor, marginalised and economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Rice 1950; Mushkin 1965).

These alternate explanations spoke of positions of disadvantage and deprivation as the cause of an alienated young people with researchers such as Stern and Searing (1976: 178) taking the stance that it was more important "to absolve rather than accuse the disadvantaged". Language applied to young people included the use of terms such as

marginalised, stigmatised, alienated, disenfranchised and experiencing financial and social exclusion (Coleman 1972; Slem and Cotler 1973; Farmer and Harvey 1974; Robbins et al 1975; Morris 1976; Liazos 1978). Discourses of "child saving" and "social control" (van Krieken 1986: 402) were both identified and questioned within this literature, with van Krieken critiquing the impact of psychology and other sociological research. For example, he states that

> the family had been undermined and taken over by the professional experts, with its socializing functions transferred to outside agencies like the school, the juvenile court, the child-guidance clinic […] psychoanalysis and social science served largely to reinforce the power of experts. (van Krieken 1986: 404)

The structures and processes of power, which allowed and supported defcit knowledges were also strongly critiqued. Research emphasised the power embedded in adult expertise, despite experts speaking of concern for young people. The beginnings of critical sociology and its troubling of education can be seen through the publication of influential ethnographic works such as that of Willis's (1977/2003) *Learning to Labour* and Bowles and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America*, in the 1970s and in the 1980s, Connell et al's (1983) *Making the Difference* in Australia. These addressed notions of deficit by critiquing the social environment of young people in relation to schooling.

By the 1990s two lines of enquiry in education can be argued to have emerged, with each having coalesced into a distinctive and separate area of research, with opposing intents. One line of educational enquiry remained entrenched in discourses of young people's deficit, with deficit remaining an unquestioned way of understanding young people. The other line of exploration critiqued these discourses while simultaneously providing alternatives to the 'accepted' stance of deficit. However, this critical understanding of the dominant research remained without significant influence on the status quo of mainstream schooling. When the two positions were applied to young people during the 1980s, research took on two very different forms: one maintaining its direction in deficit, the other critiquing it heavily for doing so.

The Consequences of Neoliberalism for Education

During the 1980s, in Australia, the Hawke government (a Labor government) introduced neoliberal principles which have had far reaching effects in maintaining deficit notions in education (Habibis and Walter 2009). Neoliberal philosophy supported the concept of individual success through economics. Neoliberalism proposed that the economic market, if left to itself, would support any individual to 'succeed' if they wanted to and that this success, in financial terms, would then trickle down to those not as successful – thereby allowing the economic market to support the individual, rather than the government via welfare (Habibis and Walter 2009; Katz 2008). Earlier established deficit discourses were soon complemented by these neoliberal ideologies.

The implications for education of neoliberal practice were significant, and profoundly influenced education in the 1990s and 2000s.

> The last 15 years of neo-liberal political reform have seen the application of competitive principles drawn form the private sector to public services, including state education […] across English speaking nations, the entrenchment of neo-liberal forms of government has underpinned broad moves to establish quasi-markets (Whitty et al. 1998) of schools. (Saltmarsh and Youdell, 2004: 354)

This neoliberal position has been heavily critiqued. Smyth (2005: 223), for instance, argues that these approaches to education are "grotesque distortions that are masquerading as so-called 'educational modernisation'" and that we need to "expose the corrosive manner in which the modernization project is literally gouging the heart out of teaching and learning" (Smyth 2005: 223). These implications began to take effect in the late 1980s with devolution of school management from centralised regions to individual schools (Whitty et al 1998). The intent was that schools could better manage their needs if they had control of their own finances. However, with devolution, considerable power was also lost to individual school sites. State and federal governments recouped this loss through such avenues as policy and accountability. The accountability procedures introduced brought a significant burden of paper work (Smyth 2002; Thomson 2008), and policy moved from being guiding

principles to becoming enacted in law, giving it extraordinary privilege. Political decisions tended to be responses to political motivations rather than educational research. An example of this was the implementation in 2006 of the A-E reporting system, one of the many forms of reporting the high stakes testing and assessment required to classify young people enforced by the Australian Federal government. A news release from the NSW DET/DEC in support of Federal requirements stated that,

> Almost four out of five (78%) of NSW public schools have adopted the Sate Governments new five-point grading scale as part of their end of year student reports, NSW Education Minister Carmel Tebutt announced today. "This figure was obtained from an exhaustive survey of all NSW public schools." Ms Tebett said. (NSW Department of Education and Training 2006)

What the NSW DET/DEC had omitted from this statement was that if the reporting system had not been implemented by all states, Federal funding of State education would be withheld. This had been written into the *Education Act 2004* (Australian Legal Information Institute 2012), making it a legal consideration. A monetary incentive for obedience was on offer and a withdrawal of monetary incentive acted as a sanction for disobedience. Very few schools had the economic stability to decline to participate. The actions of the Federal government in changing the *Education Act 2004* enabled them to threaten funding in order to ensure compliance, exemplifying the power they exerted.

Another significant neoliberal strategy that has maintained deficit understandings in mainstream schooling has been the eruption of 'death by testing'. The testing regime has been extended considerably. These imperatives were based on the compulsory introduction of national high stakes testing through standard assessments such as NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) and the development of the *My Schools* website, both of which have been critiqued (see for example, Redden and Low 2012 and Smyth 2010). These strategies have extended the identification of deficit young people, to also include deficit schools and through this deficit teachers. It has been suggested repeatedly by the government, that poor teaching won't be rewarded by pay increases if NAPLAN results are judged unworthy (see media release from ABC (Thompson 2011)). These moves by the government

have received significant condemnation from educators (see above, especially Smyth 2010) due to links to the promotion of continued exclusion of the most disadvantaged schools and young people in the country. This 'performative culture' impacts detrimentally on both young people and teachers (Thomson 2008; Redden and Low 2012; Smyth 2010). A literature review of the impact of high stakes testing conducted across the US, the UK and, to a lesser extent, Australia by Polesel et al (2012) reveals that it is generally accepted that not only are standardised tests considered unreliable but that they are placing significant emotional and educational burdens on the wellbeing of all stakeholders – children and young people, parents and teachers – with little to no discernable advantage.

> If we do not take into account the emotionally complex and culturally diverse aspects of education such as are inherent in testing, then 'we are not only wasting our time as a community of scholars and practioners; we may also be in danger of unwittingly unleashing a Frankenstein's monster. Indeed, we may already have done so' (Broadfoot 2002, p.288). (Meadmore 2005: 36)

This attempt to 'know' young people, via testing, only serves to further highlight their 'deficiencies' which can then be used to 'fix' them, making them educable. It further moves educational and developmental psychology into the forefront of educational strategy resulting in the types of psychopathologising/medical discourses used to define deficits and the 'fix it' strategies embedded in neoliberal school cultures.

In Australia, the political influences of neoliberalism had promoted discourses of young people that firmly established the identification of psychopathologies and medicalisation of disorders such as ADHD (Braswell and Bloomquist 1991). Researchers not only showed how ADHD could be dealt with in education but also developed ways in which ADHD could be predicted, providing an avenue to treat young people and children, as a preventative measure for only having the possibility of ADHD (St Sauver et al 2004). Although the medicalisation of ADHD has been challenged by researchers such as Tait (2005), Harwood (2006), and Graham (2006a, 2006b), these types of deficit discourses had established patterns for similar processes to be applied to other diagnoses such as the labelling of Aspergers and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (Attwood 1998; Jordan 2005; Stichter et al 2012) beginning in the 1990s, and classification and

identification of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and bi polar disorder (Guetzloe 1988; Hankin et al 1998; Lee et al 2009; Robinson et al 2010) early this century. Such discourses are drawn on within education and have profoundly influenced the structures and processes taken on by mainstream education. Deficit understandings have helped to maintain mainstream pedagogies which still predominantly insist on blaming and fixing young people.

Deficit Discourses of the 1990's-2000s

A variety of deficit discourses that have been internalised in neoliberal understandings became prominent during the 1990s and 2000s. Common across all these discourses is the blame they attach to young people. Discourses such as the 'at risk' and 'risky' young person; the commodified young person; and the young person as 'waste, have all worked to frame young people as deficit over the previous twenty years.

The 'At risk' and the 'Risky' Young Person

'Risk' discourses seemed to appear around the 1960s, corresponding with the take up of developmental and educational psychology in education. Talk of 'risk', gave rise to such discourses as young people 'in crisis' (Kelly 1998). By the 1990s two distinctive views of young people had developed – *fear of* and *fear for* young people. Both of which established the need for the control of young people. As Giroux argues,

> In a society deeply troubled by their presence, youth prompt in the public imagination a rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance (Giroux 2003: 554)

Understandings of young people as problematic has produced a picture of young people as something to be feared and "a threat to be contained" (Giroux 2010: 2). Young people as 'criminal' and 'deviant', begins to make a strong reappearance through these types of discourses. The fear of 'risky' young people "criminalizes their behavior, subjects increasing aspects of their lives to harsh disciplinary practices, and treats them as both dangerous and disposable" (Giroux 2010: 2). Fear promotes "moral panic" (Giroux 2003: 553; Katz 2008: 7), forcing the deployment of discourses such as 'zero tolerance' and the mobilisation of policy that aims at curbing young people's unacceptable behaviour (Giroux 2003). Katz argues that these understandings explain that young people are,

> imperiled, impaired, and "at risk," whether from all manner of social problems that children are routinely seen as incapable of handling, or from the nature of youth itself. (Katz 2008: 7)

Previously established disciplinary practices and punishment can then be drawn on in response to these fears, producing the need for young people to be "appropriately managed and contained" (Hill 2000: 382). Consequently, argument for surveillance and suppression is increasingly engaged (Kelly 1998, 2000a, 2003a). Both Giroux (2010) in the US and Kelly (1998, 2000a, 2003a) in Australia argue that the surveillance measures put in place to curb the mistrust and fear of young people are aimed at certain categories of young people and are generally based on race, class and gender.

Other literature focusing on social exclusion/social justice also suggests that strategies for 'early intervention' label young people's behaviour, and therefore the young people themselves, as deviant and delinquent – drawing again on deficit notions of young people. Such labelling increases the likelihood rather than prevents young people's involvement in crime (Bernberg and Krohn 2003). Discussions of criminology suggests that young people, particularly those who are considered 'risky' and 'at risk' (Kelly 1998; 2000a; 2001a; 2001b), are more likely to be found criminal due to the increased surveillance they are subjected to. Those young people being 'risky' and/or 'at risk' bring about governing techniques which create a highly scrutinised/surveilled young people, to the point where it is likely that problems will be discovered, not necessarily because they are more prevalent but because they are being looked for. Hill (2000: 369) warns that care is needed in intensifying such scrutiny as it can trap young people in escalating cycles of punishment, control and surveillance. He explains that many of these deficit discourses, "despite their liberal intentions […] dovetail neatly into various other deterministic discourses that call for greater discipline and control of problem populations" (Hill 2000: 382). Muncie (2006) argues that 'control and regulation' operate through the neoliberal principles of: the responsiblisation of young people; managerialism and efficiency; risk management; and remoralisation and conditional inclusion via 'tough love', zero tolerance and incarceration. These deficit understandings are legitimated due to fear and enable,

> a diverse and expanding array of strategies [which have] now been made available to achieve the governance of young people. It is an array that is capable of drawing in the criminal and the non-criminal, the deprived and the depraved, the neglected and dangerousness. (Muncie 2006: 787-788)

What appears to be missing from these discussions, as Muncie is suggesting, is the recognition that due to exclusionary practices, young people are placed in circumstances for which they are then blamed regardless of whether they are at fault. This leads to intervention, increased governance, punishment and a requirement for young people to 'make up' for deficiencies, for which they were not necessarily responsible for in the first place. This cycle of blame traps young people into ways of being that often have little to do with them.

Discourses of risk and fear work to demonise young people and are particularly obvious in the media. Slater (2012), explains that this demonisation of young people is established when young people choose to act outside a 'menu' of adult determined 'appropriate' activity. Zyngier (2008) adds that engagement then "becomes equated with compliance with adult-determined rules and participation in adult-determined and led activities" (Zyngier 2008: 1771), and young people are seen as deficit if this compliance is not demonstrated. These discourses become dangerous as they work to initially create new forms of risk and then apply solutions to fit these creations in an attempt to control the uncontrollable (Kelly 2000a).

The reverse of discourses of 'fear of' young people are discourses of 'fear for' young people (see Katz 2008), where young people become valorised and overprotected. Although these discourses are not negative in nature, they create other problems. Neither approach is seen as helpful. For example, Berman and Mellon (2012: 56) argue that in an attempt at undoing the negative image portrayed of young people a "positivity imperative" is engaged that acts to,

> further exclude the experience of acutely disadvantaged groups and in turn deliver an unfair expectation that all young people should have the capacity to effectively participate in social change (see Wyness 2009). (Berman and Mellon 2012: 56)

The Commodification of Young People and Becoming 'Waste'

The notion of the 'commodified' child (Katz 2008; Giroux 2003) eclipsed other discourses used to establish young people as deficit during the 2000s. Giroux argues that 'commodification' is reflected in society when,

> children seem absent from any discourse about the future and the responsibilities this implies for adult society. Rather, children appear as objects, defined through the debasing language of advertising and consumerism. (Giroux 2003: 554)

Katz's (2008: 9) work on the spectacle of the child is particularly alarming. In this discourse children and young people are seen as always "incomplete" (2008: 7) and are therefore constantly available for adult intervention. Young people come to exist only for the purposes of others with no rights of their own. As they are considered increasingly disposable they enter, as I suggested in Chapter 1, a form of exile not just from education, but from all parts of social participation and ultimately, from humanity.

The effects of imagining childhood in this way "are three interrelated configurations of the child: as accumulation strategy, as ornament, and as waste" (Katz 2008:9). Of these three configurations the most concerning is that of understanding children and young people as 'waste'. Katz speaks of this imagining as,

> The spectacles of "wasted youth" – which of course redound around a huge field of meanings – and youthful non-innocence (whether sexual, medicated, jaded, consumerist, criminal, violent, or otherwise) creat[ing] a broad and open-ended terrain for intervention, both material and spectacular. Through this intervention the social order is produced, reproduced, maintained, and given meaning. (2008:14)

Understandings of waste suggest the ultimate in deficit discourses and is particularly dangerous and alarming as it potentially nullifies young people's personhood. It frames young people as objects, thereby denying their humanity and giving permission for a whole raft of practices that work to both deny their rights (civil and social) and relieve society of its moral responsibility for the care of its young (Katz 2008).

Conclusion

This brief survey shows the development of a deficit way of understanding young people and its relationship to education. My exploration has shown how deficit has become an entrenched discourse about young people and how it has developed into a destructive proposition for the many young people. Deficit has become one of the most pervasive ways of knowing young people in mainstream education. Well over 100 years of educational research demonstrating the consequences of the deployment of deficit discourses has been virtually ignored by mainstream schooling. Despite the fact that research based on deficit assumptions has been shown repeatedly to fuel the disengagement felt by a large percentage of our young people both socially and, in particular, educationally. Pedagogy, structures, curriculum are set to move young people into certain forms of success which are judged via 'normalising' practices such as testing. When not met, these expectations and definitive knowledges create a young people who are seen to be deficient in a multiplicity of ways, leading ultimately to their exclusion from education (Walkerdine et al 2001; te Riele 2006(b); Smyth 2005; Danforth and Smith 2005; Youdell 2006c; Benjamin 2002). Suggestions from critical research calling for change continue to be ignored. Notwithstanding this negative portrayal, some non traditional schools function on very different understandings of young people and education, and have been considered successful in bringing education to those young people whom mainstream education have determined uneducable.

An Argument for Displacement

I have chosen to use the word 'displacement' to refer to the young people of this study rather than the many other terms used in the literature to describe the ways in which mainstream schooling acts that cause young people to be out of school. The use of the term displaced came about after searching for a word that didn't carry with it the connotations of the terms already attached to the young people of this study. Disengaged, disconnected, disenfranchised, disaffected are all terms, which have been used in educational research to speak about the types of young people in this study. However, each of these terms brings with it elements of deficit as each term still sites blame with young people for not being in education, implying it is their actions, choice and willingness to draw away from education. Such terms as alienated and marginalised have also been used. te Riele's (2006b) argument for the use of the term

marginalised applies to these types of terms. "This concept identifies individuals not through their personal characteristics, but through their relationship with schooling. It allows recognition that marginalisation is 'a product of the institutions, systems and culture(s) we create and sustain' (Smyth et al, 2000, p.4)" (te Riele 2006b: 60). Although terms such as alienation and marginalisation do not draw on deficit and do point to other ways in which young people may find themselves outside of education, 'displacement' carried with it much more than my original intentions.

When knowledge and truths such as those of deficit are seen as a determined, bound, static reality, it disallows other interpretations. If 'deficit' understandings remain unquestioned then options for other ways of speaking and taking action are closed. However, when knowledge and truth are seen as dynamic, contextually responsive and as filtered by language (discourse), it provides opportunities to look at young people in different ways and accept a range of truths – some of which may be seen as holding more value than others. It allows the same young people to be spoken of in different ways. Foucault's concept of non discursive materiality (Kendall and Wickham 2000) suggests that 'the material', exists outside of discourse – but it is the discourse that is applied that determines how we come to understand 'the material'. Multiple ways of knowing therefore become permissible, allowing young people (as a 'body' of non discursive material) to be seen via multiple perspectives. It does not discount 'deficit', but it does open the door to other potential conceptualisations. Current understandings of young people, our expectations of them, and such technologies as current pedagogies, structures and curriculum can then be interrupted in differing and unusual ways.

From this perspective, the current reified notion of young people as deficit is therefore neither a singular reality nor the only truth. It becomes one of multiple perspectives. I see a distinct need to view young people differently and suggest here that an alternative way of framing young people is possible. I do this in a deliberate effort to trouble/defy 'deficit' understandings as a primary way of knowing young people. Foucault (1972) argues that having interrupted one discourse it is then possible to respond in alternate ways via other discourses. I aim to provide this disruption by drawing on a conceptualisation of 'displacement', not only to critique and expose the

brutality of the current understandings of young people as 'deficit', but to provide an alternative notion of young people. As Giroux (2003: 556) states,

> there are more insightful, generous, and ethical understandings of youth that can be drawn upon to challenge the current pejorative representations of youth as dangerous, shiftless, and selfish. (Giroux 2003: 556)

Young People 'Out of Place'

'Displacement' suggests that young people are 'out of place' by drawing conceptually on notions of space and place. This in turn allows an exploration of not only a different way of understanding young people, but also the contexts they exist in.

As a concept, 'displacement' has been taken up in numerous areas of research and I have used a combination of these to theorise my own version as it applies here. An overview of the research in this area suggests that 'displacement' functions on two levels of understanding, contextual and spatial. In the fields of science, psychology and political sciences' 'displacement' is simply represented as something not being where it it should be or where it belongs. For example in science, Archimedes' displacement of water from his bath is probably the most well known, but there are numerous other applications; medicine claims 'displaced' in relation to fractured bones, and organs located in the wrong place in the human body (Westerweel and Hemmer 2004; Kurita 2001). In psychology, amongst other uses, 'displaced' emotions are used to describe atypical emotional states such as; 'displaced aggression' (Bushman and Baumeister 1998; Marcus-Newhall et al 2000; Miller et al 2003; Twenge and Campbell 2003). Without requiring a full understanding of these concepts, what these medical, psychoanalytic and scientific applications of 'displacement' all have in common is the understanding that the objects or abstractions they are dealing with, have been moved or pushed from their usual, expected or correct place (Summers and Holmes 2004). Whether the 'displaced' items are emotions and memory, bones and organs, they no longer appear to be where they are normally considered or assumed to belong. They are 'out of place'. I drew from this the notion that young people, when not in school, are 'out of place'. They are not where they are considered they should be. They are not where they belong. This prompts questions about where young people should be,

what caused them not to be there, and how might this be rectified. This understanding of 'displacement' opened up options of other ways to understand young people and informed the research by providing an alternative way of being able to think about young people.

The sense of young people being 'out of place' also has parallels with literature from political science. The attributes of a politically displaced person equally apply to young people who have been excluded from education. In particular, the outcomes of being 'out of place' in a political sense are not unlike the outcomes experienced by young people being 'out of school'. In drawing on this context, the notion of the politically displaced person adds complexity to the descriptions of displacement I gained from science and psychology. This politically contextualised view allowed me to use 'displacement' to suggest a framework which might be helpful in my own theorising of displacement.

Understandings of political displacement brings to mind such news images and stories in recent years depicting Iraqi people wandering in haphazard lines as they move to 'safer places' after their lives have been destroyed by war (Financial Times Information Limited 2007); or of the refugee camps of Dafur, filled with people trying to escape the genocide perpetrated by the Sudanese government (Rudd 2006); or the people of Banda Aceh sifting through the damage following the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami (Cogdon 2004); or closer to home, people of the tent communities set up following the 2009 Victorian bushfires and the horror stories they have told of loss of family, friends and homes (Dodd 2009). According to Kett (2007), in these situations the displaced person comes into existence due to events beyond their control through either a natural or manufactured disaster. Exclusion from education can also occur when young people end up outside of education due to factors beyond their control. We can see this demonstrated in studies which have identified factors such as neoliberalism (Smyth 2005; Thomson 2008), medicalisation and psychopathologies of behaviour (Harwood 2006), class (Whitty 2001), which are outside young people's influence, but which still act to exclude them from education. Kett explains that political displacement can be either internal, where people remain within the borders of their own country/community, or external, where international borders are crossed and people become refugees who have "to escape actual or potential persecution"

(Kett 2007: 98). Similarly young people can end up being excluded from education but still be located within the physical bounds of educational institutions – being internally displaced. Young people on suspension, who 'truant', or who are 'underachieving' are examples of this. In particular, there is educational research around the notion of the invisibility of underachievers (Jones 2005), who sit quietly in class but do not achieve, to support this idea. We can also see the concepts of external displacement and persecution played out when looking at the literature around the types of young people who end up with particular diagnoses being segregated from schools (Baker 2002) and through research around place, class, race and gender; all playing a significant role in who is targeted for exclusion (Alston and Kent 2003; Gaetz 2004; Hoggart 2006).

The most disturbing parallel however, occurs around the politically displaced person's experiences related to security. In political displacement, Kett (2007) explains security issues relate to loss of income, a lack of physical and economic access to food and a lack of clean water, air and land. Displaced people are exposed to the dangers of disease and infection, violence and threats and they experience a loss of cultural identity and violated human rights. They are described as being vulnerable people who can easily become socially excluded. Similarly, security issues are reflected in the literature around the life experiences of young people who do not receive an education. Habibis and Walter (2009) and White and Wyn (2005) suggest that those young people excluded from school, early school leavers and young people with low levels of formal education have lower levels of health and wellbeing and reduced life expectancies. They are more likely to be exposed to the dangers of disease with a lack of access to health care, and experience an increased likelihood of diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and obesity. For many young people, a lack of physical and economic access to basic necessities is compounded by the inability to gain full time work, existing instead with unstable incomes, uncertain employment opportunities, and being limited to casual/part time work and low pay. Unemployment and underemployment and its subsequent links to poverty and the decreased access to the resources required for living result in reduced life chances (Habibis and Walter 2009; and White and Wyn 2005). These same young people have a greater likelihood of experiencing violence and of being in gaol and being targeted by the law (Habibis and Walter 2009). Some young people become especially targeted – those young people

who are not seen as the "ideal student" (Harwood and Humphry 2008), and who are typically from underclass and Indigenous backgrounds are particularly vulnerable (Biddle et al 2004; Moses 2011; Cremin and Thomas 2005). Graham (2009) argues that human rights are being violated when exclusionary practices are in play around young people. Young people's exclusion from education also leads to social exclusion in many other forms (Habibis and Walter 2009).

Displacement from the Spaces of Schooling

In drawing out the elements identified here by Kett (2007), we can see them reflected in the consequences of young people being 'out of place'. The connections between the consequences of political and other forms of 'displacement' and those for excluded young people, begins to point to the possibility of young people being able to be understood as 'displaced' from education. To this point I have drawn generally on science and psychoanalysis to describe displacement and political science to demonstrate the parallels with the types of characteristics inherent in being displaced. Spatial theories, used within human geography and other areas of political science, more closely mirror my critical approach and allow me to theorise how young people's 'displacement' might come to exist. The literature in this area identifies 'displacement' as one of multiple spatial terms that resonates closely with theories of space and place (Cornwall 2002). At this deeper, more nuanced level of understanding, displacement is automatically exposed as drawing on connections between people, their identity, their relationships to the spaces they occupy, and the power held within those spaces and relationships. I found three ideas helpful in drawing out the corresponding notions of being 'out of place' in geography and political science, and young people being 'out of place', some of which have already been applied to educational spaces. To explore how certain spaces might create displacement, Massey's (2004b) notions of 'space/place as relational' and her concept of a 'geography of rejection' (Massey 1995: 196) together with Cornwall's (2002) notions of 'invited spaces' are central.

My take up of the term 'displaced' is supported by Massey's ideas of space and place as relational, mutually supportive, and co-existing concepts. Reay and Lucey describe the difference between the two terms: space being "relational" and place being "a location or a structure of feeling centred on a specific territory" (Reay and Lucey 2000: 412).

Spaces are defined by the ways in which people interact in them. Places such as hospitals, shops, schools and the internet only become a 'place' when people relate to them and to each other within them. However, all the people in a space do not interact in the same way. Each type of place requires certain identities of those who participate in them. We can see this played out in the 'place' of education. A site made up of buildings and other landscapes is a space. When such a space is named a 'school' it becomes relational. The buildings have purpose and set up relational spaces where certain identities are created, for example that of 'teacher' or 'student', which don't exist in the same form in other spaces. It also needs to be noted that even within specific spaces identities are not fixed but are political and will shift dynamically as the space around them shifts (Massey 2004b). Therefore the ways we understand the identity of 'student' or 'teacher' is not stable or fixed but constantly evolving as spatial relations play out in the school space.

Spaces then, can be seen as both relational and able to create certain identities. These identities however, should not be seen as equal. Other forces determine inequalities in the relationships conducted within spaces. Broadly speaking, spatial relations are set by forces of power allowed by the identities created in a space which are constituted by relations that range between dominating and co-operative (Reay and Lucey 2000). The interplay of space and power are what determine the identities possible in particular places. The action of these spatial relations "frame the boundaries for action through discursive processes of 'subjectification', through which particular subject positions are made available for individuals to take up" (Brock et al 2001: 5). In schools, for example, teacher identities are not available for the young people who participate in a school space. Young people are generally only able to take up the identity of student in this relationship and, through processes carried out within school spaces, are subject to the power contained in the other identities, for example that of teachers, in the school space.

Space and power together, act as a sorting mechanism through their links with specific spatial identities. These identities are used to determine who can belong and who is rejected within particular spaces. Massey describes this as a geography of belonging and rejection.

> The social definition of the place involves an active process of exclusion. And in that process the boundaries of the place, and the imagination and building of its 'character', are part and parcel of the definition of who is an insider and who is not; of who is a 'local' and what that term should mean, and who is to be excluded. It is a space of bounded identities; a geography of rejection (Massey 1995: 194).

Spaces therefore become somewhere that people can belong or not belong. More specifically, this notion of space/place brings to life the understanding that space may be used to reject. School space can then be viewed as a place of power relations, which can reject young people. The power held within a space is a single, but highly influential element shaping the ways relations are made possible or impossible. Power relations allow the determination of the 'rules' of a space. Those invested with power can influence the way in which it is used within the space, along with which identities are allowed to exist and participate, and to what level, and which are not. The possible relationships within any space are determined by those in whom the discretionary power to include and exclude resides. McGregor (2004) identifies the school as a space where the adult is in a position of domination over young people. She states that adults in education are therefore able to set rules and routines, structure movement and access, and control knowledge and expectations.

> Disciplinary institutions (such as schools, prisons or hospitals) organise physical space and time in a particular way, with activities that have been developed over time to change peoples' behaviour along a number or parameters: for example, through organising space, distributing individuals within it and subjecting them to surveillance and classification of various kinds (Foucault 1997). (McGregor 2004: 14)

In schools, adults are able to determine who can be included in a space and how these people are chosen, what relationships are eligible and, in the reverse, which people and relationships are to be excluded and the ways in which these people and relationships are disallowed within the school space. It is the adults, in setting up the 'rules' of the educational space, who are able to determine the student identities that are permitted to 'belong' and the student identities to be 'rejected', along with the strategies for

doing so (Youdell 2006c). Reay and Lucey (2000) suggest these power relations are enforced as geographies of either belonging or rejection.

Our society holds the assumption that education has worth for all. This implication is made clear in such things as the compulsory requirement for all children to attend school. Such assumptions also infer that young people belong in educational spaces and that a 'geography of belonging' should be accessible for all young people if this societal belief were in fact, in play. However, we strike a significant problem when we see the incongruence between society's value of education, and the literature that heavily implicates current mainstream schooling in the employment of exclusionary practices. As I have stated previously, many young people are not in schools and cannot therefore be seen as 'being where they belong'. Not only are these young people no longer where they are normally considered or assumed they should be, but they have been moved or pushed from their usual, expected or correct place. The educational space can therefore be seen to be drawing on a significant geography of rejection, in complete denial of a deeply held societal value. Certain young people are displaced from school, by school.

A deeper understanding of how this 'displacement' has come to be established can be achieved by considering a spatial structure Cornwall (2002) has identified as an 'invited space', which focuses on how power is established and maintained within certain spaces. In spatial geography, Cornwall describes 'displacement' as speaking "about and to issues of representation and power" (2002: 2). She also suggests that space and power "have particular relevance to an exploration of the micro-politics of participation" (2002: 1). The ability of actors to participate within a space is linked closely to the power to determine the belonging or rejection inherent in the structuring of that space. To make this link, Cornwall describes a continuum of spatial structures ranging from closed to open spaces, allowing various degrees of participation,

> contrasting versions of empowerment highlight different kinds of spaces for participation: 'sites of radical possibility' at the margins, those spaces that people make and shape for themselves, can be thus contrasted with the domesticated sites of invited, or indeed induced, participation [with]

> mainstream versions, described by some as strategies of incorporation and means of maintaining hegemony. (Cornwall 2002: 3)

Along this continuum, societal perceptions of schools as a place of belonging for young people, suggest that the place of school should tend towards being at the open end of the spectrum as "sites of radical possibility" (Cornwall 2002: 3). These more open spaces are identified by Cornwall (2002) as 'popular spaces'. Popular spaces are formed more organically, being constructed from below by those participating in the space rather than the space being created on their behalf. They are spaces where the excluded can be included and heard and in which anyone may participate (Shier 2008). School spaces align closely to what Cornwall describes as an invited space, sited somewhere between open and closed spaces where "external resource bearing agents bring them into being and provide a frame for participation within them" (2002: 17). Invited spaces are those into which only some people are able to enter a relationship (Shier 2008). Brock et al (2001) state that invited spaces are created by the powerful. Tactics are employed within these spaces, which determine how much participation and voice is allowed by the invitee. "[T]he extent to which they do so depends on the degree to which [tactics] are used by, or intersected with, other spaces and actors" (Brock et al 2001: 31). Invited spaces can therefore be ambiguous, ranging on their own continuum from places where participation is truly encouraged to places where the powerful neutralise resistance. When applied to educational contexts, different types of schools take up different positions on the spectrum. For example, mainstream schooling could take up a position closer to a closed space, whereas, I will argue, YOTS is more open than mainstream schools, while less open than something like a homework centre.

In bringing to life a notion of 'displacement', it was not my intention to remove all responsibility from young people. Their contributions to school spaces do need to be considered, just not in the context of a deficit discourse. Smyth (2006), in his discussions around 'relational power', speaks to the notion that young people within mainstream schools are not entirely powerless. He explains that young people are able to draw on what is called a 'geography of resistance', in their willingness to accept or respond to the perceived "institutional power differences between themselves and the institution of schooling" (2006: 6) which act to exclude them from school settings.

He states that some students,

> refuse to make the emotional and relational investment necessary to become engaged with the social institution of schooling in a manner necessary for learning to occur. Educational anthropologists like Ericson (1987), Ogbu (1982), and Levinson (1992) make it clear that when young people withdraw (or even disengage) from schooling, then they are resisting or withdrawing their assent. (2006: 6)

However, it does need to be noted that 'this withdrawal of assent' is likely to be due to the 'geographies of rejection' young people deal with on a daily basis within the school experiences that exclude them.

Conclusion

This chapter has had two purposes. The first was to historically trace deficit discourses as they have been applied in education since the inception of mainstream schooling in Australia in 1872. Recognition of the historical development of 'deficit' discourses is a necessary step in resisting and challenging the understanding of a reified notion of certain young people as 'deficit'.

The second purpose of this chapter was to conceptualise the notion of 'displacement'. 'Displacement' enables a 'deficit' approach to be questioned. It not only allows young people to be considered differently to 'deficit' understandings, but also opens the opportunity to explore both the impacts of deficit understandings and the range of opportunities that become available for exploring non-traditional responses to reconciling young people with education. When young people are not seen through a lens of blame and fault, attention can be turned from young people and be directed to explore the impact of other elements of young people's education.

The remaining analysis chapters (Chapter 4-8) explore the challenge to 'deficit' as it was presented in the lives of the young people in the context of the YOTS schools. In Chapters 4 and 5 I have analysed how the young people have been 'displaced' through their experiences of power in their lives and their mainstream schools. In Chapters 6-8 I have used 'displacement' as a way to understand the YOTS staffs challenge of

'deficit' understandings through a counter discourse and to explore their take up of an unconventional approach to power.

Chapter 4 – Doing Life

Introduction

The next two chapters focus on the young people of this study. I argue that the young people's lives are subject to a set of relationships that create a debilitating level of complexity in which they are forced to exist. When the interaction between this complexity and the young people's mainstream schooling experiences are brought to bear on each other the interaction acts to exclude them from gaining an education. I will argue that it is this complexity that schools such as YOTS are able to engage with that enables young people to be included in educational experiences and to reconcile with their learning. During my time with the YOTS schools, it quickly became apparent that I would first need to come to some understanding of how these young people saw themselves, as they were located within an incredibly complex set of life experiences. This seemed increasingly necessary as it became more and more obvious that the young people's lives were inextricably linked to the ways in which YOTS approached them. This chapter discusses two of the primary relationships involved in producing these young people's lives. It speaks about how these experiences produced particular responses from the young people which they appeared to draw on in an apparent attempt to survive.

The similarities in the young people's lives were not from their shared common life experiences (each young person's life was highly individualised), but were reflected in how their life experiences created complexity around particular types of relationships. These complexities were obvious through all the young people's interviews and pointed to a number of key relationships. In particular, young people's relationships with their families, the law, and their mainstream schools were common themes. I recognise that talk of school was always certain to be part of these discussions as that was the focus of the interviews. However, the other two relationships came up without direct prompting. Their mainstream school experiences appeared to hold only nuisance value (although significant nuisance value), for them by complicating an already chaotic and burdened life. By contrast, the influence of the young people's relationships with their family and the law were so dominant that the establishment of other significant relationships (like that with their schools) had become almost impossible.

Theoretical Tools

I begin the following discussion of the young people's incredibly complex lives by theorising and exploring the three prominent relationships experienced by the young people and the power relations that existed within them.

I have based the analysis of this chapter on the stories of the twenty young people I interviewed and my fieldnotes concerning them. It should be noted that in exclusively using the young people's interviews, I am only drawing on the young people's perceptions of their experiences. The incidents they describe only give their views and are expressed with their particular idiosyncrasies, perceptions, values, biases and, at times, outright lies (the ones which I identified were not included). However, their perceptions are what have created these young people's notions of 'reality'. I would further argue that it is the young people's perceptions that YOTS recognised, helping to make the YOTS schools effective in working beside them. It is important to see these perceptions 'as is' in order to attempt to understand the work YOTS does.

Theoretically, I draw on the work of Foucault, supporting this with the work of Goffman. As I explained in Chapter 2, these two theorists allowed me to combine understandings of the power relations of institutional and system contexts (from Foucault) with an exploration of individual responses to those power relations (from Goffman). The combined force of Foucault and Goffman translates into a valuable analytical tool for uncovering how the young people's experiences of their relationships have created such complex and damaging lives and how, in turn, the young people have responded to these relationships and environments. I have drawn on Foucault's concepts of 'states of domination' and 'sovereign power' in an exploration of young people's relationships with family, the law and mainstream schools. Goffman's notions of face-to-face interactions, focusing on cynical and sincere performances, allow an exploration of the complexities and the, often, conflicting responses presented by these young people to the relationships in their lives. I have also drawn on the work of Lyng (1990, 2012) and Hope (2007), both of whom have used Goffman's theoretical tools of 'boundary performances' to theorise the 'edgework' practices that the young people engaged in response to the complexity of their lives. Hope has also applied the notion of 'boundary performances' and 'edgework' to educational settings.

In Chapter 2, I discussed Foucault's understanding of power relations in the form of 'sovereign power' so I will not repeat that here. However, as the discussion in this chapter also draws on the notion of 'edgework', this still needs to be explored. Following Lyng (1990, 2012) and Hope (2007), I have drawn on the term 'edgework' (coined by Hunter S. Thompson) to help capture the ways the young people's lives appeared to become a matter of survival that could readily be described as living 'on the edge'. They therefore had developed and drew on a number of practices that could be considered 'edgework' practices in order to survive these environments.

Building on the work of Goffman, Lyng states that edgework activities "represent a distinct subset of those activities Goffman has classified as action" (1990: 863), which relate to high-risk experiences. For Lyng,

> [t]he 'edge', or boundary line, confronted by the edgeworker can be defined in many different ways: life versus death, consciousness versus unconsciousness, sanity versus insanity, an ordered sense of self and environment versus a disordered self and environment. (1990: 857)

Edgework involves activities that clearly threaten "one's physical or mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence [and is] best understood as an approach to the boundary between order and disorder, form and formlessness" (1990: 857). Edgework requires "skilled performances" (1990: 859) for high-risk experiences to be negotiated safely. "The ability to maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos, a situation that most people would regard as entirely uncontrollable" (1990: 859) is central to this 'skilled performance'.

Lyng describes edgework as "voluntary risk taking" (1990: 852), using examples such as skydiving, mountain climbing, and base jumping. Examples of equivalent activities for the YOTS young people would be their drug use and some of their sexual practices. However, I argue for a broadened understanding of Lyng's (1990) 'edgework' to include some of the high-risk experiences that young people *involuntarily* find themselves in, due to the complexity of their lives. Examples of these experiences would include negotiating abusive home environments or homelessness. In these circumstances, the YOTS young people often seemed to have little choice in

developing skilled edgework performances to survive these experiences. They were forced into developing these skills as they negotiated, for example, their lives on the streets or in a sexually, emotionally or physically abusive family environment. Therefore I am using a broadened understanding of 'edgework' here to include both the activities that these young people have intentionally engaged in (voluntary edgework), and the experiences that have been created by others and which these young people have been forced to operate within (involuntary edgework) – all of which have required the development of specialised "skilled boundary performances" or 'edgework practices' for the survival of often life and death situations. As Hope (2007: 90) explains,

> the skilled performance in such 'risky' situations lies in maintaining control over a situation verging on the chaotic, where failure may not allow the individual to return from the boundary. In this context the word 'edge' might be best understood as referring to a precipice rather than a mere border, a point of no return rather than a space to safely traverse.

These young people's skilled performances were visible in a range of contexts that saw them negotiate life and death circumstances that they may or may not win – four young people died in the time just before and during my 18 months research with YOTS. Living on the streets, drug use, violence and abuse (both perpetrated and endured), incarceration, and risky sexual practices such as street work, were all part of the environment that produced a life located on 'the edge'.

In an educational setting, Hope (2007: 90) calls these acts "boundary performances". However, I would suggest that the performances of the YOTS young people 'slid' between the low-level boundary behaviours that Hope (2007) describes, which might include the types of disruptive behaviours drawn on in school settings and which imply an apparent level of safety; and the high-risk behaviours as described by Lyng (1990), that can be life threatening. The distinction between these low and high-risk performances is dependent on the relative degree of risk involved in the activity being undertaken. The YOTS young people seemed to engage in 'edgework' at all levels in both voluntary and involuntary capacities.

I would also suggest that these young people's interactions in their mainstream schools aligned more closely to high-risk experiences than a mere 'boundary performance' of the typical behaviours being suggested by Hope (2007). Goffman (1972) argues that when we interact with others we draw on previous experience to determine how that interaction should take place. Having developed a range of skilled performances that allowed them to balance the life and death situations in their lives, particularly in their family relationships, it appeared to become easier for these young people to apply the same skills to other interactions such as those in school or in their interactions with the law.

In drawing on 'edgework' as a theoretical tool, I argue that generally, when young people were in power relations that were represented by a 'state of domination' (where one partner in a power relation has full liberty to act and the other has almost none), they tended to draw on 'involuntary edgework'; when confronted with 'sovereign power' (where the 'sovereign' acts in power and resistance is engaged with a return act of power) they turned to 'voluntary edgework'. I also argue that these 'skilled performances' or 'edgework practices' had become a tactic in the power games the young people's lives engaged them in. These tactics acted to resist both the 'sovereign power' and 'states of domination' they experienced in their relationships.

In the following sections I have tried to make sense of the convolutions of these young people's lives in the following way. I argue that their lives were predominantly made up of damaging relationships with family, the law, and mainstream schools. These relationships drew primarily on power relations that attempted to dominate the young people. In response, the young people drew on what might be considered either 'appropriate' subservience to these dominations, or an 'inappropriate' rejection of domination. Their responses were constructed around particular voluntary and involuntary edgework practices that they used to address the relationships. Family relationships seem to work predominantly through a 'state of domination' and required a set of involuntary 'edgework practices' to successfully negotiate the relationship. The young people's relationship with the law worked with sovereign forms of power and the young people constructed edgework practices that were both voluntary and involuntary depending on how close to a 'state of domination' the relationship became. Young people's relationships with their mainstream schools

operated largely in a cycle of sovereign power and rebellion. However, by the time these young people and their schools were severing relationships, the young people were drawing voluntarily on edgework practices that saw them dominate their relationship with these schools.

The edgework practices engaged in by the young people seemed to be embedded with contradictory responses and there were many ideas I could have chosen to explore. For example, contradictory experiences of, and use of, violence was prominent in their stories, as was a paradox around their experience and use of drugs. I have chosen however, to explore another contradiction: how different 'faces' and the use of 'contempt' constituted edgework practices as they functioned to gain power for young people in their complex relationships. I have drawn on a number of terms from the conceptualisation of 'edgework' throughout the remaining chapters of analysis (Chapters 4 to 8). Notions of being 'on the edge' or 'crowding the edge' have been applied to describe and explore the young people's position in the more debilitating relationships they are forced to engage in; and I have used 'edgework' and 'edgework practices' as a way of exploring the young people's responses to those relationships, and to a more limited extent the YOTS teachers position when working with the young people.

In summary, this chapter seeks firstly to explore the complex and chaotic nature of these young people's lives embodied in their relationships with their family and the law and draws on the theoretical mechanisms of various power relations and 'edgework' practices in an exploration of these complexities and the young people's responses to them.

Relationships in the Young People's Lives

The three key relationships in the young people's lives (family, the law, and mainstream schooling) were a constant and recurring theme. These relationships rarely acted in isolation, but produced life experiences that powerfully influenced the young people's lives. Individual experiences of these key relationships differed significantly, and were vastly different again to the experiences of what might be considered the 'average' young person and the average life experience. These relationships did not sit comfortably with each other or within the young people's lives, but acted to initiate

and exacerbate the complexities the young people experienced. When issues such as violence, drug use, living conditions, poverty, and 'race' threaded through these relationships, the complexity intensified. Theoretically, I have discussed two forms of power, 'states of domination' and 'sovereign power', as they pertain to each of the relationships of family and the law.

Relationships with Family

Family and family environments appeared to have the most influence on the complexity experienced by the young people and impacted all the young people in this study. For the young people, family relationships were often damaged and carried with them significant burdens. They were able to radically influence the ability of the young people to function in everyday life. From the young people's interviews a number of themes emerged that pointed to how family relationships contributed to the complex nature of the young people's lives. In general, the young people's family relationships were based in environments marked by two major issues: abuse/neglect and instability. It was within these unstable and often violent settings that the young people fought for a sense of 'normalcy' and were often pushed to extremes in order to establish some semblance of this. The burdens of living in such damaged and damaging environments stemmed from various family dynamics and characteristics. These young people were not just dealing with one problem. Where one factor was in play, there were often many other contributing issues also influencing the relationship. When these factors were combined with their negotiation of other relational settings (e.g. the law and schools) their skilled performances became increasingly desperate.

In this section I explore how the young people spoke about their family environments, identifying what parts of this particular relationship were working to produce such destructive forces. In doing this I will also juxtapose the young people's lives with their descriptions of, and an apparent appeal for 'normalcy' in their own family relationships (which also arose in the young people's relationship with the law). I suggest that it is possibly this 'normalcy' that YOTS was able to begin to provide and use to help create some form of stability to open possibilities for education.

Understandings of Abuse and Neglect

Before beginning, I need to explain the understandings of abuse and neglect I have drawn on for the following section concerning the young people's family relationships. In looking at these particular family environments it would be very easy to slide into assumptions and prejudices concerning the actions and decisions of these young people's 'family' members, particularly in relation to such entrenched factors as abuse and drug use. Assumptions made around social class, gender, poverty, race, Indigeneity and ethnicity related to family violence are common (see for example the discussions of Castelino 2009 and Braun 2002). These assumptions can be seen played out in studies concerning family violence where social work discourses of family preservation clash with discourses of parent blaming or untreatable parent psychopathologies (Brydon 2004) or in research on Indigenous family violence where narrow definitions often discount child abuse on the one hand and create broad yet incorrect assumptions of abuse in Indigenous culture on the other, often ignoring significant social and contextual issues pertaining to this violence (Taylor et al 2004). Although discussions of such issues are vital, I have made deliberate (although sometimes unsuccessful) attempts not to approach these types of discussions. Instead, I have tried to give an account of the family relationship as spoken by the YOTS young people.

Understandings of abuse and violence are contentious and as I have drawn significantly on the issue of family violence and abuse in this section I have expanded my use to an understanding of violence that goes beyond just the physical. I have cautiously taken up Price-Robertson and Bromfield's (2009) 'definition' of child maltreatment and extended it, while also acknowledging their warnings of the contentious nature of defining such terms.

> Child maltreatment refers to any non-accidental behaviour […] outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission (i.e., abuse) (Bromfield, 2005; Christoffel, et al., 1992). (Price-Robertson and Bromfield 2009:1)

Price-Robertson and Bromfield (2009) note that definitions such as this can: be culturally contested or age related; be based on perpetrator identification (who is a perpetrator and isn't); often have strict (and unworkable) cut off points identifying whether abuse has or hasn't occurred, being determined according to severity, harm or frequency; include descriptions of the behaviour (for example hitting) or be based on the results of behaviour (a broken arm); or might be based on intent. I have drawn on these notions of abuse and neglect to consider the power relations operating in young people's environments when young people are being subject to maltreatment, encompassing everything from abuse to all forms of neglect.

I have added to this understanding the notion of symbolic violence as described by Coy et al, in relation to perceptions of the sex industry where, "The concept of symbolic violence refers to unseen forms of domination that are embedded in everyday actions" (2011: 442). In this context symbolic violence is "the imposition of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate" (2011: 442), not just by those who establish oppressive and dominating relationships but through the apparently complicity of the sex workers experiencing oppression and domination. I include symbolic violence in this particular analysis as it draws awareness to the ways in which the young people can appear trapped and complicit in the abuse and neglect they experience in their family relationships.

Power Relations in Abusive and Neglectful Environments

In the context of the YOTS young people's family environments it is particularly helpful to explore what Foucault has identified as "states of domination" (1994: 3) and how this state is established and experienced by the young people of YOTS, in their family contexts. As I explored in Chapter 2, Foucault describes power relations as 'actions upon actions', where 'consensus' (not in terms of agreement necessarily but in terms of negotiation) operates between the people involved within a power relation. All power relations are forever evolving and hold some imbalance or asymmetry, taking on aspects of subordination and dominance in a constant state of flux. Foucault argues that they can be expressed by the liberty a person experiences within the relationship. However, power relations existing in a 'state of domination' occur when the asymmetry is so imbalanced that one partner in the relationship can establish a 'state of domination' over another. The dynamic negotiation of the 'to and fro' of power

relations, becomes far more static, and the "margin of liberty is extremely limited" (Lemke citing Foucault 2002: 53), solidifying into a relationship of total sub-ordinance (little or no liberty) for one, and total domination (complete liberty) for another. This domination is even more concerning when, as Lazzarato, (2006: 17) explains, such a dynamic is based purely in an asymmetry of aggression and not in sympathy as a relation of friendship might be. The YOTS young people's family relationships established a 'state of domination' through the construction of abusive and neglectful environments. The following discussion explores how the YOTS young people experienced these 'states of domination', their responses to this state of domination in the types of involuntary edgework practices they drew on to survive this type of relationship.

Abusive Environments

Abusive family environments, in all their forms and levels of severity, appeared to be a part of the family dynamics for many of the YOTS young people. These abusive environments often included drugs and alcohol. They included the severest expressions of 'states of domination' in the form of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, enforced drug use and dealing, and leaving young people alone for days at a time to fend for themselves and often, other siblings. Examples from the young peoples' stories below show the ways in which abuse/neglect marked their family environments. The outcomes of these relationships, often with the 'help' of outside agencies, increased the instability and complexity of the young people's lives.

Generally their abuse/neglect came from one family member – typically a mother or father. For example, 13 year old Bree, experienced sexual abuse in her family relationship as her mother 'groomed' her to become a street worker. Leah's mother had addicted her to 'ice' and then forced her to sell it to support her growing drug habit. Olivia, Damien and Regan had experienced physical abuse from their fathers and Mia, Kate and Angel's mothers were all drug addicted and unable or unwilling to care for them.

Despite family being central to the abuse the young people experienced, their stories revealed that the abuse also happened through others that family members had included in the family environment. For example, Bree and Kate's families had close

ties to bikie gangs and the associated drug use and violence that came with that relationship. Bree experienced sexual abuse through the men her mother organised for her to have sex with. Regan's father had forced his mother to support Regan's father's abuse of her children, and Ash experienced abuse by her mother's 'boyfriend' who sexually abused her and her younger sister after her father had 'walked out'. These relationships begin to demonstrate the multiple directions from which 'violence' was directed at the young people.

Amongst these dominating power relations, there was another power struggle that worked on the premise of keeping the young people safe. Many of the young people's experiences illustrated how prominent it was for organisations, whose role it was to help young people, to be inadvertently drawn into the abusive situation only to create even more complexity. For example, Bree's mother and Reagan's father's abuse of their children drew both DoCS/FACS and the legal system into their abuse. When Bree's mother's 'grooming' had been investigated by police, DoCS/FACS had removed her to live with her uncle and a supportive grandfather. During this period, she had also been required to maintain her attendance at the YOTS school that had been liaising with DoCS/FACS and the police. A change in staff at DoCS/FACS saw a new caseworker reverse this decision, sending Bree back to her mother and discontinuing her attendance at the YOTS school. From the perspective of the YOTS staff, DoCS/FACSsupported Bree's abuse through actions which were possibly intended to maintain the family unit.

For Regan it was the legal system that was implicated in contributing to his homelessness. Regan's father had forced the help of his wife and enlisted the external help of courts and the police in his use of power to create a 'state of domination' over him in the form of an AVO, which Reagan's father accessed repeatedly.

> Yeah, my dad tried and took an AVO out against my brother but I don't think it worked. The cops came to our house like heaps of times, like probably, like, once every three days or three nights or something. Dad always used to call them. (Regan)

In calling on the police, their father ensured that his abuse continued by the boy's

immersion in the legal system. The brothers had been arrested, transported in a caged bus, and incarcerated, despite them having been found not guilty of breaking the AVO. Regan explained the reason for this.

> If they can't find a refuge for you to stay at they take you back there [juvenile detention] and then, yeah.
> *So detention was a bit like the refuge sometimes was it?*
> Yeah. Um, not all the time, a couple of times it was. (Regan)

In this case, Regan and his brother were held in detention, not because it was their 'punishment' for criminal behaviour but because they had nowhere else to go and 'juvie' provided them with food and a bed. They were incarcerated for being homeless after their father (who had repeatedly abused them) continued his abuse by kicking them out of home. These acts of abuse/neglect were then exacerbated by the legal system.

Whether these actions of either DoCS/FACS or the legal system were right or wrong is not the key issue of concern in this discussion. What I want to draw out of these stories is the extent to which these actions, even with good intentions, added to the complexity of Bree and Regan's already chaotic lives. The young people's experiences of their family relationships were highly complex and created significant damage. The relations of power they endured come from both within their family environments and external to them, but all these power relations further increased the complexity they negotiated through a multiplicity of power manipulations. Even when intentions were to care for these young people, outside agencies could also intensify already complex environments.

Neglectful Environments

I want to reiterate here the contentiousness of the definitions of abuse and neglect. The fine line between the two is very blurred as the following stories demonstrate. I have used the young people's stories of 'neglect' to further highlight the young people's experiences of their family environments as highly unstable. The neglect demonstrated in these family environments could be described as having a range of severity. It did not just involve a simple lack of supervision, although this was certainly part of the

family environments, but included exposing, condoning, supporting and even forcing actions that the boundaries of child protection would consider harmful.

In a number of cases, the neglect was related to drugs as can be seen in the case of Ash and Katie. Ash in particular felt this neglect as she felt forced by her mother to act as 'the help' at home and as a source of money via government payments. Ash's mum had six children by a number of different 'boyfriends'. As Ash explains,

> When I was living with mum it was my responsibility to look after them 24/7 and she'd go out, get drunk, do whatever she wanted, come back two days later and it got so bad to a point where my brothers and sisters were calling me mum. (Ash)

Katie had reached a point where she had rejected her family's circumstances, primarily due to her mum's drug use.

> Um, my family is into drugs and shit … all that shit you know. […]
> *Who were you with then?*
> My mum and my little brother. And my mum you know, just stayed at home, doing what she had to do, and if she didn't have drugs it would be my fault. She would yell at me, you know. Blame me. All that sort of stuff. (Katie)

The neglect experienced wasn't always severe and sometimes appeared to be an absentmindedness on the behalf of the young people's carers. Rachel's family situation became neglectful when her mum and dad divorced and her mum began to allow her to stay home from school regularly. Rachel spoke of taking on many of the responsibilities at home, cooking and looking after children. She also spoke of her truanting, and challenging behaviour at school and home as having stemmed from a time after her parents' divorce when her mother had allowed her to stay away from school.

> *So why were you staying away [from school]?*
> I didn't really want to go … I didn't understand it. 'Cause the first …. in Year 7, the first week of school the year I started, I couldn't go cause my brother

> had Chicken Pox and me and my Mum didn't actually have it, so we actually had to stay home for a long time. Yeah and then so just 'cause I didn't go, you know, now I wasn't up to the same level and that. (Rachel)

The consequences of this time were the development of patterns of truancy and behaviours and a lack of learning that left her 'displaced' and that ultimately brought about Rachel's severed school relationships.

Instability

Abusive and/or neglectful family environments were not only damaging but created considerable instability, which was compounded by the dominating power young people had to deal with. For the families of the young people interviewed, the changes created a chronic instability. Much of the instability was caused by significant shifts in family relationships and structures, which were nearly always accompanied by a physical move. These shifts in the young people's family dynamics were triggered by substantial life events such as: illness and disability; the death of one father in a car accident and another by suicide; divorce; DoCS /FACS interventions (both helpful and unhelpful); and families' drug and alcohol use, violence, abuse and neglect. The continual changes these families moved through, as they responded to the various circumstances they were confronted with, intensified a destabilised and damaging environment.

The young people ended up in a range of 'family' structures, often experiencing more than one structure. For example they moved from their 'biological' families, into either foster families or other institutional care; or they could become 'homeless' and lived with their 'street families'. Of the young people I spoke to Mia and Taaj probably experienced the most disruption to their family structures. They went from biological families, which broke down, to foster families, which also broke down, to the streets. They had then rotated in and out of numerous refuges, rehabilitation centres and juvenile detention centres and back onto the streets.

Constant physical movement between towns and homes also meant movement between schools. Ash, for example, had attended five primary schools and had moved three times between two high schools in secondary and then into YOTS. It appeared

that the more unstable the family dynamic was the more likely it was that the family physically moved, with some of the young people moving up to 13 times in their reasonably short lives (remembering that the oldest of these young people was 18 but most were between 13 and 16).

The young people's lives were also marked by the instability of their family relationships, often with devastating results for the young people. Ash, for example, experienced a range of frequent and damaging changes in relationships. She was 15 years old and had been through ten damaging relationships, mostly with 'family', in the eight years since her biological father had left – before finding the one relationship and home that she described as 'decent'. Ash had dealt with: abandonment from her father; physical, sexual and emotional abuse from her mother's third partner; drug and alcohol fuelled neglect by her mother; broken trust with a school counsellor whom she had 'disclosed' her abuse to but who had never reported the abuse; fear of and threats from a 'family friend'; and isolation within the refuges she had lived in. Some of the young people had never experienced a non-abusive familial relationship.

The combination of an unstable fluidity created by shifting family structures and relationships and the physical mobility accompanying them created and maintained a 'state of domination' within these relationships. There appeared to be little that these young people could do against the combination of power tactics of abuse and neglect, and the instability embedded in their family environment. Never being able to find a way out of the chaos that this constant upheaval created seemed to be a significant aspect of how a 'state of domination' was created around these young people, leaving them with little choice but to be dominated. Their responses seemed limited to surviving the relationships or removing themselves from them.

Responding to Abuse and Neglect

Despite the differences in their experience and understanding of abuse/neglect all the young people interviewed had reached a point where they had started to respond. As argued in previous sections, the multiple power relations in these types of relationships had produced a 'state of domination'. Foucault however, maintains that even within a 'state of domination' there is room for action, although this appeared to only be the case when the young people became old enough for these actions to

become possible. What stood out in the young people's talk of their family environments was that abuse seemed to be so prevalent they accepted it as an everyday part of life. However, the young people's responses to their abuse and/or neglect, often led to either an impression of their complicity, for example, Bree's response to the abuse she experienced, or to their rejection of abuse as did Reagan.

The young people sometimes appeared complicit in their own abuse. At thirteen years of age, the 'grooming' for street work that Bree had received from her mother had been done in such a way that Bree now seemed complicit in supporting her relationships both with her mother and the men involved in her abuse. Bree's complicity could be seen in a number of actions. She had previously run away from DoCS/FACS care back to her mother and had fought to return to her mother's care after she had been 'found in a car with her head in some guys lap' (Fieldnotes). Even after her mother had kicked her out of home and refused to allow Bree to collect her belongings (despite a police escort) following this incident, she had eventually still returned. The YOTS staff suggested that Bree had come to equate the attention from these sexual experiences with love and affection and therefore did not want to forgo this aspect of her life. Bree also seemed to understand her actions as giving her 'standing' amongst her peers. It could be argued that her seeming willingness to accept her mother's abuse, her value adding to the 'commodity' that was being made of her body with such things as a tongue piercing, and her desire for love and affection all contributed to her seeming complicity. The power this 'state of domination' held over her is evident in her apparent acceptance and support of this family environment and the life style she now appeared to choose to live.

Similarly, other young people defended their family and family members fiercely if their family was criticised. Rachel and Tana had refused to be removed from their families when DoCS/FACS became involved and staunchly defended their families despite the abuse and/or neglect they experienced. This defence was extended to their taking part of the blame on themselves as can be seen by Rachel's example.

> Because it wasn't my mum's fault. My mum reckons that it was her fault, […] I took advantage of that and never used to go [to school]. (Rachel)

Others, however, had responded very differently to their abuse/neglect by rejecting it and the people who perpetrated it. Neither Taaj nor Regan showed any respect for their fathers in particular.

> *Do you see much of your family?*
> Ummm, (….) I don't see my dad at all. I don't talk to him. (Regan)

> My real mum and dad are …. Mum died and Dad is still alive somewhere but […] He fucked off. (Taaj)

During class Regan expressed his fear of having children as he thought he would abuse them like his father had done to him. His rejection was both of his father (by not speaking to him or seeing him) and of his father's actions (seen in his fear of being abusive towards his own children). Both Taaj and Regan had other uncertain relationships, Taaj with his foster family and Regan with his mother.

> *So what made you leave home?*
> Didn't get along with them. They weren't me real parents. (Taaj)

> I occasionally see my mum. She comes over about once a month or sometimes she might just call instead or something. And then she will probably bring my sister which is ….
> *So mum wanted to keep you?*
> Yeah … aww …. Mmmm. Probably.
> *You're not sure?*
> Nuh. […] Umm they [his dad and mum] kicked us out. (Regan)

This rejection of family was a far more common response to the young people's family relationships. Angel, Ash and Katie, all saw their family circumstances as detrimental to their lives and, except Katie, were now living elsewhere. Katie's statement below, however, was indicative of many of the young people's attitude.

> [M]y family is into drugs and shit … all that shit. And then I guess I didn't want to be nothing like them. I was born into a family I didn't want to be in. (Katie)

Edgeworking Family Environments

Bree's ability to edgework her family environment can be seen in her survival of it. Although she is arguably not 'safe' she has developed a skilled performance, through her complicity, in order to survive. Her skill has come not in walking away from this family environment, which she had the opportunity to do and which could be seen as the obvious choice. It came instead through her negotiation of her family relationship by staying and surviving the best way she could, i.e. by supporting her mother's actions in regards to their relationship. This action only stresses the enormous complexity of these family environments. Bree's edgework can be seen in her ability to take on and survive risky sexual practices and also in her willingness to living with a family member who supports and encourages these practices, while simultaneously rejecting the alternative provided by an uncle and her grandfather, both of whom were willing to care for her. This edgework is dangerous, and life threatening and Bree's complicity places her, sometimes voluntarily, and sometimes involuntarily, in an environment that operates 'on the edge'.

Regan's edgework came through his rejection of his father's abuse. In refusing to accept his family environment he and his brother have been forced to live on the streets. His edgework can be seen in his negotiation of the legal system and developing skills that allowed him to live successfully on the streets, finding food, shelter and other basic survival skills. It also included drawing on others to help negotiate the bureaucratic systems he required to access money, food, health care and shelter when necessary. This extended to his reintroduction to education in the YOTS schools.

Other edgework tactics drawn on by the young people can be seen in their replacement of family environments with 'surrogate' family environment. Their surrogate family experiences came from two sources: the refuge workers they had contact with if they lived in refuges; and the groups of 'street kids' they 'lived' with on the streets. In particular, they were drawn to 'street families' primarily for protection and safety, but the groups developed codes of conduct, which they enforced, often violently, as they worked together to feed and 'care' for each other.

> I started running away when I was like 13, 14. […]

> *What did you do in that time?*
> Lived on the streets. That sucked, mmm.
> *Where abouts?*
> Oh, in the city. […]
> *What did you do for food?*
> […] Well ***we'd*** like go steal fucking a chicken everyday from Woolworths.
> *Yeah?*
> Make sandwiches and ***we'd*** go get like a big loaf of bread and ***we'd*** get butter, and ***we'd*** camp together and that.
> *So there was a group of you that looked after each other?*
> Yeah. ***We*** all looked after each other, which was good. (Ava)

Ava's use of 'we' when she spoke of her time on the streets was never used in relation to her biological family.

The young people were clear that they wanted normality in their family relationships. They asked for very little – encouragement, physical presence, care – all aspects of family that most people would take for granted. YOTS was one of the places which could at least provide some of the care missing from family relations.

> Good encouragement and everything. I reckon every child needs that cause me, I really don't get that at home. (Jamin)

> *So, when you talk about school here being like family, how do you see family?*
> I see family as a group of people that care about you, that, you know, just know what to say at the right times, know how to push your buttons. (Ash)

Jamin identified encouragement and the physical presence of his mum as something that was important to him. Ash also identified that she thought care was important in family environments.

Relationships with the Law

In general, fewer of the young people spoke about their relationship with the law than about their relationships with school and the family. For those who did speak of this,

the impact was usually significant in some way. Of the twenty young people I interviewed twelve of them had direct contact with the police. Two of the twelve had contact with the law but did not speak of their experience as the other ten had.

In this section I write not only of the young people's dealings with law enforcement agencies but also the 'edgework' acts that young people were involved in that are considered illegal, whether or not they were 'caught'. Contact with the institution of the law, was generally with the police. Blaise was the only one of the twelve young people where the contact was as simple as being let off with a warning. He explained that he had been picked up by police for trespassing – which he denied doing – and his mum had been called to come and pick him up from the police station (Blaise). The other eleven young people had had more problematic experiences which included not just police, but the court system, juvenile justice and incarceration. Their contacts seemed to arise due to practices of exclusion "stigmatizing already marginalised groups" (Armstrong 2006: 265) and often led to incarceration.

In this section I will explore the significant factors from the literature linking these young people's actions with the law, before exploring the young people's legal relationship and consequent edgework.

Exclusion and the Law

As I have discussed previously, the young people could be clearly defined as coming from groups identified as socially excluded, disadvantaged and/or marginalised. Their relationship with the law again seemed to reinforce notions of them as epitomising young people who had significantly more dealings with the law than any other group. These interactions were reliant on particular types of factors and life experiences as "race, gender, and class [including] the types of interactions youth have with their peers, their level of educational attainment, their access to public spaces as well as the impact of media images" (Dawes 2001: 2). Besides this list of indicators, studies from Australia, the UK and the US collate numerous other factors that have commonly been shown to contribute to a greater likelihood of interactions with the law. These included social and cultural disadvantage and exclusion through: unemployment or low skill employment of either the young person or their family; drug/alcohol use; family circumstances, particularly family instability and poor family relationships; indigenous

backgrounds; refugee and minority backgrounds; homelessness; poor school relationships and low educational attainment of either parents or young people; living locations that are typically low socioeconomic/high crime/high population areas; anti social behaviour and individual characteristics such as poor self management and 'delinquent' personality traits; health and mental health issues; housing; poverty; limited life opportunities; crime victims; reoffending; and a range of barriers to addressing these circumstances, along with a lack of recognition of the rights, advocacy and participation of young people in society (Kelly 2000a; Baron 2001; Dawes 2001; Maunders 2001; Ogilvie and Van Zyl 2001; Carruthers 2002; Hansen 2003; White 2003; Day et al, 2004; Hayward and Sharp 2005), all of which are experienced to some degree by the young people of this study. Such research commonly presents the notion that young people "come to see the social system as unfair […] making it more likely they will become involved in criminal activity" (Baron 2001: 189). Processes put in place to intervene generally set young people up to be seen by society as 'at risk' and 'risky'.

The take up of young people as 'at risk' and 'risky' in criminology, typically promotes the view that a range of practices are required to overcome social exclusion with general support for strategies promoting early intervention (Carruthers 2002; Day et al 2004). The call for the implementation of these strategies tends to draw on statistics which show that young people are highly likely to reoffend once they have been incarcerated as juveniles with rates such as 96% in US, 88% in UK and 61% in Australia (Day et al 2004). Identification of young people 'at risk' and the implementation of preventative measures therefore become vital in this stance. In Australia, however, White (2003) is representative of other researchers who call for support of an alternate strategy in which restorative justice is the focus – providing young offenders with the chance to repair "social harm" (2003: 140). This process runs alongside programmes in the community to overcome social exclusion, which are aimed at preventing reoffending – a stance drawn on by the YOTS organisation.

However, there is yet another opposing literature focusing on social exclusion/social justice, which diverges in its response. The first divergence argues that most early intervention strategies draw on a deficit notion of young people and label young people's behaviour, and therefore the young people themselves, as deviant and

delinquent. The argument is that this label then works to increase, rather than prevent, the likelihood of young people's involvement in crime (Bernberg and Krohn 2003).

The other line of research stems from critiques of deficit discourses such as 'moral panic' and 'zero tolerance' as discussed in Chapter 3 and suggests that the increased surveillance and control measures surrounding 'at risk' and 'risky' young people means that they are far more likely to be caught doing something wrong, not because they do more illegal things than other young people but because they are being so closely surveilled.

> While it is clear that young people in western states are indeed facing a host of difficult issues these cannot and indeed should not be reduced to simple moral or deterministic explanations. We need instead to look at the changing contexts of young people's lives and remain sensitive to the various ways discourses surrounding this section of the population contribute to their increased control and regulation. (Hill 2000: 381)

I argue in this section is that the contexts of the young people's lives, increase their likelihood of interactions with the law. The predominant social control factors for which the YOTS young people became most marginalised, and which ultimately brought them in contact with the law seemed to relate to 'race' (particularly for Indigenous young people), poverty, and to their family circumstances. Interviews with the young people from YOTS showed clearly that they experienced this type of 'increased control and regulation'. Their interviews indicated that they also often felt targeted, lending support for the notion that current legislation and policing practices focus particular attention on the control of this 'risky' group.

A second point typifying the young people's legal relationships became apparent from the young people's interviews. Against the background of the social and legal contexts described above, the YOTS young people's experiences with the law came about due to either their economic disadvantage requiring the 'necessity' for their engagement in illegal actions and a desire to be like other young people.

'Edgeworking' the Law

Many of the young people's legal experiences intersected with a range of points of exclusion. The eight young people in these interviews were either Indigenous young people, were living on the streets, were experiencing poverty or a combination of these. The young people described a range of 'edgework' type incidents that initiated this contact and indicated a range of illegal activities that they were directly or indirectly involved in. At times, their actions appeared to be deliberately provocative of legal boundaries, showing their resistance to the 'sovereign power' displayed by legal institutions, particularly the police. Their illegal/edgework activities typically involved drugs, theft, and violence. For example Ella explained that she and her friends were arrested for "walking the streets early hours of the morning […] we were all drinking" (Ella). Often the young people did not come into contact with the police when they were engaging in these edgework practices. However, when they were caught, the police arrested and charged them with a range of offenses including, (I use here the terminology of the young people): armed robbery accompany, break and enter, trespassing, possession, possession and supply, robbery, sexual assault, assaulting police, assault, shoplifting, breaking AVO conditions, breaching bail conditions, and having warrants for arrest. This command of legal language not only displayed their experience of the legal system but the tone in which these terms were usually delivered suggested contempt for the legal institution as well.

When 'caught', the young people explained that they were taken to a police station, were interviewed, a report was written and then they were either bailed (mothers and grandmothers were the common contact for police), or detained. Once in the legal system, court responses to the young people's 'crimes' included detention in juvenile justice detention centres, cautioning, and court imposed conditions such as attending school, drug rehabilitation and accommodation requirements.

Their response to the law involved both voluntary and involuntary edgework. Their increasing knowledge of the legal system allowed them to draw on increasingly skilled performances to engage in illegal acts and to navigate the legal system to their advantage. I would argue that the power drawn on in this relationship by the legal system was sovereign in nature, with the law acting as the sovereign and the young

people resisting by engaging in these edgework practices often with the intention of provoking a response.

Experiences of 'Juvie'

Most of these young people had, at some time in their lives, been placed in a Juvenile Detention Centre (called 'juvie' by the young people). The length of their stay ranged from short term (overnight, or one or two days), up to four weeks. When reoffending was taken into consideration, these detentions amounted, at most, to approximately two months in total, and seemed to occur over a span of approximately two years.

The response of the young people to detention was noticeably gendered. The boys appeared blasé or angry about their experiences with the law, where the girls seemed far more concerned about the consequences of their contact. When I asked Regan and Taaj what it was like to be in 'juvie', Regan explained that he had been with his twin brother the first time so "it wasn't as bad as I thought […] altogether we were only in there for about two weeks or something. It wasn't that long" (Regan). As I mentioned above, much of the two weeks Regan was in 'juvie', he had not been detained due to his 'criminal' acts but because the courts refused to release him and his brother until they had somewhere to live.

Taaj responded differently to questions of what 'juvie' was like. He was quite knowledgeable in his explanations of the differences between a range of detention options that he had experienced and his willingness to share this information showed his lack of caring about being in 'juvie' and his 'fuck you' attitude to the law. When I asked him how he felt about 'juvie', his reply was,

> Didn't bother me
>
> *Didn't bother you?*
>
> Nup. I was thinking "Oh fuck you's. I'll do it again then if you's are gonna get (…)." Kick back at them again. (Taaj)

He clearly expressed his anger and took his detention as provocative – I'll do it again to show them. His time in juvie had done nothing to deter his actions and in fact had appeared to inflame the situation and encourage his 'edgework' practices. His

resistance to this act of sovereign power was to escalate rather than reduce the 'criminal behaviour' he was involved in. Like the young people in other research of offending, detention only confirmed him in his previous actions rather than acting as a deterrent or rehabilitation (Baron 2001; Day et al 2004; Muncie 2006; Bernberg and Krohn 2003; Hill 2000; Giroux 2003).

The girls' experiences of, and attitudes towards 'juvie' did not translate to responses based in resistance and were probably more in line with what the legal system were hoping for, i.e. acting as a deterrent. Ella and Ava where very open about not wanting to be put in 'juvie' despite acting in ways that provoked a reaction from the law. Ella explained how she had come close. One evening she, and a group of friends, had been stopped by police. She explained,

> We were all drinking and then um one of my friends said something and then they wanted to get our names and they said that one of my friends had a warrant and then they arrested her so then all of us jumped in and we all got arrested. (Ella)

This form of increased police surveillance of a group of 'risky' young people (indicated by their drunk state and being out late walking the streets) led to the initiation of power relations in the form of sovereign power/resistance cycle – resistance (young people drinking), sovereign power (police pull over), resistance (friend says something), sovereign power (police get names and find outstanding warrant), resistance ("we all jumped in"), sovereign power ("we all got arrested"). Once taken to the police station it was found that Ella also had a outstanding warrant for arrest for assaulting a police officer on a previous occasion. From this point the police and courts continued to apply sovereign power even without the provocation of resistance from Ella. This repeated application of repressive power appeared to create a sense of caution, if not fear, for Ella about what she had done. In explaining this situation, she had gone from being quite affronted at the initial reactions of the police to being very quiet as she described the court process she had been taken through. Being taken to the police station, having family contacted, going to court, being refused bail due to previous actions, and the threat of being detained to a 'girls home' (juvie), all combined

to create that response of caution or fear. Ella avoided 'juvie' by being bailed out by an adult family member, her grandmother.

Reasons for 'Edgeworking' the Law

Some of the young people's lives showed that their experiences with the law were the result of a combination of two or three relationships in their lives. Taaj, Tana and Regan had contact with the law due to a combination of their relationship with school and their family. For example, Regan's school contacted the police when he came back to school while he was on suspension (trespassing).

> They [the school] called the cops a couple of times as well.
> *Yeah. What were you doing?*
> Aw, because they suspended me. If you come back like every single day, if they see you there they call the cops or something. It's pretty dumb, but um ….. it was funny 'cause I went that day. But then I wagged and when I wagged that period, that's when the cops came, and then I came back. And I didn't realise that, but everyone was like "Yeah, the cops came for you." (Regan)

He found the situation amusing as it allowed him to think in derogatory terms of both the school and police; it also raised his status at school gaining him more power in his school relationship; and it justified and supported his already established contempt for his school. It was at this time that the combination of the AVO, being kicked out of home, becoming homeless, being arrested again for trespassing at the school, firmly established Regan's in his negative relationship with school as well as the law. He, like Tana and Taaj, never went back to a mainstream school and was only just beginning to try again at YOTS after a year away from any sort of education.

However, all twelve of the young people explained that most of their contact with the law came about for one of three reasons: illegal acts were understood to be a normal part of family life; the young people's longing to appear to be like everyone else; and out of necessity. These explanations came about either directly or through the stories they told of their lives. The edgework that they engaged in was in response to these reasons.

Illegal Acts As Part of Life

Three of the young people (Regan, Tana and Katie) spoke directly of how family had been at the core of some or all of their dealings with the law. Others inferred that this was the case through the stories they told of their lives (Ava, Taaj, Blaise, Ella, Ash). As I described earlier, one of Reagan's first contacts with the law had been when their father (also his abuser) had taken out an AVO (Apprehended Violence Order) against him and his twin brother when they got old enough to 'push' back.

The AVO, the constant calls to police by their father, a lack of response by their mother, and the boy's 'helpful' edgework of untying the police boat and then hiding when police went to leave their island home, all combined to establish Regan's contacts with the law. Both Regan's father and mother had been involved in his arrest and ultimately, following court appearances and detention, his living on the streets.

Tana's connections between the law and her family came in a more indirect form. Tana's family introduced her to the 'illegal', presenting it as not necessarily good, but as a part of her family's life. Tana's illegal edgework had started with her taking drugs when she was in high school and she would often truant at her Aunt's place, who was "a junky" (Tana).

> We used to go to church there and get a free feed. How stupid hey. And then um go shoplifting. And go with my Auntie to a 'meth place' [methadone clinic], so she could get her things. (Tana)

For Tana and her family, activities such as truancy, shoplifting and drugs were commonplace. This acceptance of the illegal was expressed when Tana spoke of feeling ashamed about accepting a 'free feed', but was quite blasé about the more illegal aspects of her interactions with her aunt. However, her contact with the law did not stop there. Her brother and his friends also contributed through a demonstration of their 'edgework' practices such as 'rolling' people.

> My brother and all that, they talk about "Look at what we got!" And they're showing me all this stuff. Mad stuff, like phones and everything, 'cause they roll people. And I think, "How do you do it?" (Tana)

Tana also explained that her mother's life had revolved around 'pot', and in an interesting twist of thinking, had also encouraged Tana by supplying her with marijuana and allowing her to use it at home in an attempt to keep her safe. Family actions can be seen perpetuated across generations in this scenario – in this case it was drugs and an acceptance of assault and theft as normal.

Wanting to Appear Normal

In an environment where life could be considered anything but 'normal', some of the young people drew on edgework practices that involved illegal acts, primarily out of a desire to appear normal. Shoplifting and stealing were common and was usually related to wanting to look the same as others (shoplifting clothes, jewellery, makeup), or having the same things that others had (ipods, phones, money). This appeared particularly important for most of the girls who had been living on the streets (Ava, Olivia, Mia) but also for a number of the other young people (Blaise, Tana, Ash). As Tana explained "Sometimes I'd get caught, but I was thinking […] 'All this stuff for free. Wow!'" Tana also explained that she had since 'rolled' a young woman for her iPod and some money using a screwdriver as a weapon. When I asked Tana why she had done this she said,

> I wanna like ..... it's not like I can just go buy it. […] Maybe … at that time, I didn't have a phone. Someone stole mine when I was drinking. And maybe ..... sorta like payback. […] I don't know. But that's how some of my brothers' friends are. Like, it makes them more, all cool and stuff. Yeah, I just wanted the stuff. (Tana)

This combination of wanting to have 'stuff' that other young people had but not being able to afford it, and that this 'stuff' made you look 'cool' amounted to a powerful force for illegal acts.

Necessity

For some of the young people participating in illegal activities was a necessity. Their actions were an example of their involuntary 'edgework' practices, often amounting to acts of survival. This was particularly the case for those young people who lived on the streets. Ava, for example, explained that when she had been in 'juvie' it was for trying to survive.

> Um, I got locked up, a couple of times for assault, robberies, stupid shit.
> *What was happening that caused that sort of thing at the time?*
> Nothing, I needed money. (Ava)

Sometimes the necessity was about supporting drug habits, which Ava had also been involved in, but commonly, when young people were living on the streets they required basic living needs which they had no financial resources to get. They relied on illegal methods to supply these needs. Olivia, for instance, described how she and some of her friends would sleep in the play equipment at McDonalds during the winter because it was warmer, and in the summer they would stay on the beach, which had the dual benefit of also having showers and toilets.

> Olivia: Yeah - there's showers. You know, you go to public toilets, you go to pools, scab money, steal clothes, steal make-up, steal new undies and all sorts of stuff.

Like Olivia, Ava too explained that stealing a "chook and a loaf of bread"(Ava) would feed a few of them for dinner. Necessities such as food, hygiene and shelter presented significant problems for the young people who were homeless. Without resorting to 'illegalities' such as theft and trespass they would have had difficulties in surviving. Their edgework practices had become a survival mechanism.

Conclusion

The brutality and damage that contributed to the complexity of the young people's lives was such that 'normal' was rarely a part of their experience, particularly in their relationships with their family and the law. In general, their responses became an effort to survive the best way they could rather than through deliberately manipulated and calculated actions.

I have argued in this chapter that each of the young people existed, to varying extents, in a range of dominating family and legal relationships. The domination they experienced within their family relationships can be explained as a 'state of domination'. The young people had very little choice but to endure their family relationships until they had reached the point where they recognised choices were a

possibility. Once they recognised their ability to respond, the young people had drawn on edgework that allowed them to survive the state of domination. This was expressed through a range of involuntary and voluntary actions and involved them either being complicit in their domination, taking it on as a part of a normal lifestyle, or rejecting the domination of their family environments and usually their families. I argue that both responses were examples of edgework and an act of survival.

I have also argued that the young people's relationship with the law was based on the law acting as a sovereign power, and the young people acting to resist the law's domination. In this power relation the young people generally acted to resist, regularly drawing on 'edgework' in a voluntary capacity to provoke a response from legal forces. However, there were also instances where the young people were forced, by their circumstances into illegalities. These involuntary responses were ones that the young people might not take, for example, stealing to survive on the streets, if other dominating circumstances, such as their family environments, were not also present.

What I want to emphasise from this chapter is that these damaging experiences accompanied each young person, to varying extents, to school on a daily basis. The young people could not ignore these life experiences, and to survive them they had developed a variety of 'edgework' practices that they drew on as a common response in their lives. Without trying to pre-empt the next chapter, these same responses can be seen in their reactions to their mainstream school environments when dominating tactics were employed.

The remainder of this thesis speaks primarily to the young people's educational experiences. Building on the ideas presented in this chapter of the ways sovereign power and 'edgework' responses of the young people, the next chapter speaks to how the young people saw their mainstream school experiences whilst it was both drawn into and contributed to their lives.

Chapter 5 – Doing School

Setting the Scene: Educational Exclusion

For a multiplicity of reasons, every young person from YOTS had either been told to leave by their mainstream school, or had removed themselves. In general, the reasons for the severing of ties between young people and schools were vast and ranged from a single cause to a coalescence of multiple causes. As I have previously suggested, mainstream schooling practices function as strategies that actively work to exclude the same young people for whom they exist. This ultimately produces a group of young people, who are not merely detached from education, but who become the by-products of an aggressive performance of educational displacement, creating a specific group of educationally exiled young people. Exclusionary practices stem from factors both internal and external to schools but place barriers to the possibility of young people engaging with their education.

From the descriptions the young people's experiences of domination in previous chapters, it should be no surprise to see them reject the schools that so constantly and powerfully dominated and excluded them. As I explored in Chapter 3, schools draw primarily on deficit understandings of these 'types' of young people. These understandings allow the actions of the young people to be interpreted as everything from a lack of respect, an inability to follow rules, non existent self discipline, an absence of motivation; through to diagnoses such as learning disabilities, emotional, behavioural, conduct disorders, ADHD, depression and bi polar disorder. These understandings then give rise to school locating the problem with the young people and working to fix such problems through such things as medication or the application of motivational strategies or counselling.

I argue here that an alternate perspective of their school experience is possible. By taking account of the young people's perceptions of their relationship with their mainstream schools, I suggest that their often extreme attitudes and behaviours become understandable in different ways. When these young people are understood to be "crowding the edge" (Lyng 1990: 860), their responses can then be interpreted as a way of negotiating life 'on the edge'. That is, they draw on edgework practices that help them to survive extreme life experiences. I would also suggest that

mainstream schools have, in general, static and entrenched responses to young people. This inability to adapt due to what Hattam (2012) has appropriately described as 'institutional inertia', makes mainstream schooling incapable of responding to or in changing their responses to the complexities of these young people's lives in ways that are helpful.

In this chapter I present the YOTS young people's perceptions of their previous school experience. I then argue that their response is a rejection of their mainstream experiences and the sovereign power inherent in this relationship. Their rejection can be seen in the types of edgework practices they draw on to create a power that enables their rejection. Edgework becomes a tactic the young people draw on to exert power through resistance.

Perceptions of the Excluded

Based on my conversations with the YOTS young people, I concluded that they understood their mainstream schools as not valuing them as either students or people, as not wanting to educate them and as considering them a waste of resources. To the young people, their mainstream school experiences showed them that their schools did not care about them or their circumstances. This was reinforced by the exclusionary tactics constantly used against them.

For some of the YOTS young people their experience of school had never been positive. Jalen, for example, had been diagnosed with ADHD very early in primary and was still being medicated three times a day. When he was in Year 4 he spoke of being 'molested' by a group of older boys from school. Following these experiences Jalen saw his own behaviour as becoming increasingly problematic, explaining "I was a prick before I got molested, but I got even badder after I got molested." However, many of the YOTS young people's experiences of school at one point had been 'good', although maybe not perfect. For example, Taaj, Regan, Angel, Blaise, Tate, and Ella all saw their primary education in a positive way.

However, for all the YOTS young people, there were two main periods when the deterioration started. The first was around Year 5. For example, Tana started "jigging" (truanting) in Year 5, and Ava's suspensions from school began in Year 5 –

"Yeah I got suspended a bit when I was in primary school, I think from like Year 5." This first point of detachment is supported by the youth crime literature with researchers such as Dawes (2001: 4) stating that this disengagement at the end of primary school leads to "fewer going on to complete year ten at secondary level."

The second point of school relationship breakdowns began around Years 7 and 8 in high school, with Year 8 being the most common time. As Regan states, "I was like, I was good at school up to like Year 8." While Blaise remembered Year 6 as the last time he *wasn't* getting into trouble, implying his relationship with school had deteriorated during Year 7.

The young people's reasoning for their disintegrating school relationships tended to be associated with their feelings of academic inadequacy accompanied by frustration at the lack of school support for both their learning and their lives in general. In the following quotes Tana, Rachel and Ava are very clear about their feelings of academic inadequacy:

> 'Cause the work and that, I didn't even understand it. So I just didn't listen half the time. (Tana)
>
> Understanding the work. That was my biggest problem at high school, just 'cause I didn't understand it. And when I went there, went to class, I didn't understand so I couldn't do it. (Rachel)
>
> Then I got into Year 5 and I didn't have a fucking clue about anything. (Ava)

The young people's surprise that their schools didn't respond to the gaps in their learning is implied in these comments. Tana was also upset that the school's expectations seemed to blame her for these gaps, stating, "when I went to high school I didn't even know Year 6 work, so how was I supposed to know all the high school work?" For these young people, not only did it seem that they were blamed for their early lack of learning but that the schools had no intention of helping.

These expressions of inadequacy and blame were often made more significant by what

they saw as the lack of support. Angel felt this lack of support through her 'invisibility' at school, which made her feel unimportant and not worth noticing.

> I was the quiet, little one at the back of the room that never really said anything, didn't do anything. I didn't really understand the work. I was like …. I pretty much got the drift I was invisible. […] no one even realised I didn't do anything. I could not do the work and everyone would still say, oh yeah, right. (Angel)

Tana and Katie extended this. They felt their invisibility right across their school experience, not just in relation to learning. Katie explains, "In mainstream you're just another number." When recalling her 'normal' school's response to her truancy, Tana spoke of being able to "walk out the back gate and they won't even notice." According to Jones (2005) and Campbell and Trotter (2007), for excluded young people, in particular girls, this is not an unusual response.

The lack of support was apparent to young people in other ways such as their teachers' lack of help in class. Many of the young people explained their frustration at this lack of support, as expressed below by Jalen and Sophie.

> The teachers wouldn't help you, like …. they were always grumpy. If I had questions they would just go, fuck up and all that shit, you know. (Jalen)

> *What sorts of things made school worse?*
> Hard work. And the teachers didn't help me with my work and shit. (Sophie)

The young people found this especially noticeable when they could see others getting the help they felt they were denied. Blaise noted that, "they'd [his teachers] only help certain kids" (Blaise). The young people were particularly upset when it was thought by their teachers that they were not prepared to try, "Like, we're willing to learn, we just don't. It's weird" (Rachel). The reasons for their not doing their work were, for them, self-explanatory.

> If I know what I'm doing I'll do it. If they just explain it to me then I'll fucking

> do it. But if I don't get it, of course I'm not gonna do it. (Ava)

The young people also found that teacher help, on the rare occasion it was offered, was belittling and condescending. Ava felt teachers demeaned her need for help – "and fucking they don't [need to] talk to me like I'm a dick" (Ava). Benjy found teachers 'snobby' when they helped him. When I asked him what he meant by 'snobby' he explained that the teachers, "Treat you badly. Treating you like they are better than you" (Benjy). Not only did these young people not feel supported but often felt that teachers took pointed action against them. For instance, when asked about this lack of support, Ava commented, "this one teacher just fucking targeted, like, I just hate her …. I was just in shit in high school" (Ava).

All these aspects of the young people's deteriorating school experiences point towards notions of educational triage (Saltmarsh and Youdell 2004; Gilbourn and Youdell 2000), where schools/educators place their resources (for example time, money, learning resources, knowledge, school spaces) with those students they consider will be best able to use them, rather than with those who they consider are incapable of successfully using or are wasteful of these resources. Having been understood to be 'educationally inadequate', the young people spoke of being blamed and denied education, and treated poorly when help was given. Without any understanding of the notion of educational triage, Rachel very explicitly and succinctly explained how the characteristics of educational triage operated in her circumstances. She believed that decisions around a lack of help were often based on misguided assumptions about herself and her friends. In the quote below Rachel clearly identifies what these assumptions looked like from her experience.

> Some teachers, yeah, there's some that don't care. Like if you've got your ears pierced, or you know, you got your tongue done or something like that, some teachers are just – their attitude towards you should be nice, like, not one that judges you from the way you look. (Rachel)

She then went on to make links between these judgments of her appearance with teachers' judgments of her character: "[teachers] just thought we were bad and because they thought that we were bad they never used to really care about if we

were learning or not" (Rachel). It was clear to Rachel that this character assessment was closely linked to the consequent lack of learning support that she and her friends received. Rachel also thought that these judgments were extended to other friends due to the reputation she held amongst her teachers.

> I remember, one morning in art, I had a friend who had just started there and she asked for help. The teacher told her, she said "Just do that." And the teacher walked away. And she's like, "Well she's a good help." Like yeah, 'cause you hang around me, she might think that you are bad, you know. I reckon they should teach everybody. (Rachel)

The young people also spoke of being denied support by schools in other circumstances besides their learning. For example, Jalen's deputy refused to believe he had been molested and both Angel and Tate were severely bullied and felt that they didn't receive any support from their schools.

> Toughen up or get out. That's what my principal told me to do. So I got out and then got tougher. And then I didn't trust many people and sorta realised like, there's no one really that I trust. It's like everyone for themselves pretty much. (Angel)

> I went to the principal's office and I told him and he said "Oh, I'll have a talk to him". Next day, he [the bully] keeps doing it. [The principal] did nothing. (Tate)

The responses of Angel's and Tate's schools had profoundly detrimental outcomes for their education and their lives. Angel left school spending most of her time on the streets to avoid her mother who was drug addicted and began using drugs herself. Tate became suicidal and also left school.

Regardless of whether it was the schools' role or not, the young people felt unsupported. They saw their schools as never taking into account or even recognising the impact of the relationships that they endured outside the school environment. Rachel's parents' divorce, Sophie's severe depression and issues around medicating her

condition, and Ava's "bit of drama at home" – involving her dad coming home drunk once too often and her mum taking to him with a knife and Ava having to call the ambulance (Ava) – all appeared to contribute to their disintegrating relationship with their schools. Regan very clearly links his abusive family experience with his school experience and his subsequent rejection of school.

> Then my dad started kicking me out for coming home last and stuff and that's when all the bad stuff happened. They [his school] would give me detentions, put you on like these detention cards. They suspended me … and then I used to hate school. (Regan)

For all the YOTS young people, their mainstream schools became an added burden that no longer held relevance for them. They often spoke of dealing with significantly more important problems outside of school (as I have explored in their relationships with the law and their families), which schools did not recognise or give weight to. From the young people's perspective, the schools chose to ignore those other elements of their lives that impacted on their capabilities as students.

> *So what was it like having to go to school with all that happening at home?*
> It was hard. I was always .... like every day ... late. And I'd get so many detentions because I was late. I'd have to get the kids up in the morning, have to dress them, feed them, shower them, brush their teeth, get their hair done and then put the other two to bed while I left and took the other kids to school. By the time I took the kids to school and got back to my school it was like recess time already so I'd missed out on my first two periods and, you know. (Ash)
>
> *How long did it take you before you were starting to get edgy?*
> About an hour. I would be really scared to go home in the afternoon because of my dad. Scared to go home and you know get into trouble that night, or get into trouble that morning because I didn't leave fast enough or some shit. He'd yell at me. But later on, then I'd just go to school pissed off every day. I couldn't concentrate, 'cause I just had him screaming in my ear all the time and kids from school screaming in my ear and teachers. "Why aren't you doing well? What the fuck's wrong with you?" and like … Ahhhhhhhh! (Olivia)

This lack of recognition by schools of young people's external lives left them feeling alienated, particularly when young people were dealing with what they saw as significantly more important issues. These perceptions of mainstream schooling established a range of responses that demonstrated a strong resistance to their schools' dominating power.

Edgework through Contradictory Understandings

As suggested above, on one hand the young people demonstrated a strong contempt for the school contexts they had experienced prior to YOTS. On the other hand, their talk about education in general suggested they also placed significant value on education. The young people's educational relationships seemed to operate in a paradox where they both valued what schools could give them (an education), yet were contemptuous of the ways in which it was delivered (mainstream schooling), and were angry and frustrated by the ways they were excluded through its delivery. In this section my aim is to draw out this contradiction as a vehicle for exploring the young people's responses concerning how they used their resistance to gain power through a range of edgework practices.

To enter into this discussion I will begin at the conclusion of the relationship – every one of these young people had experienced severed ties from their mainstream schools. Unlike their edgework practices in relation to their family and the law, which were primarily involuntary, the young people had come to draw on predominantly, voluntary edgework practices in their mainstream experiences. They spoke of engaging in practices such as continual nuisance behaviours, truancy, drug use, verbal abuse, and violence to express their displeasure and resistance at school. These types of edgework practices were not pleasant, and were often difficult for schools to cope with (as was usually the young people's intention). It was these practices that their schools ultimately used as reasons for their severance from the school, if young people did not leave of their own accord.

Resistance

In engaging in their edgework practices, the young people demonstrated their resistance. The conceptualisation of 'resistance' used here comes from *Discipline and Punish* where Foucault presents the notion of a cycle of power and resistance. During

his discussion of the use of public torture as a form of punishment, Foucault (1991: 73-74) states that the act of torture by the sovereign state was,

> dangerous, in that it provided a support for confrontation between the violence of the king and the violence of the people. It was as if the sovereign power did not see […] a challenge that it itself threw down and which might one day be taken up. […] In this violence […] tyranny confronts rebellion; each calls forth the other. It is a double danger.

The 'Catch 22' of this power/resistance cycle, allows the probing of those moments of power and resistance located in the young people's educational experiences and specifically, their acts of resistance to the 'challenge being thrown down' by schools. The young people's acts of resistance through their edgework, and the schools' acts of punishment, discipline and exclusion perpetuated the 'double danger' of this disintegrating relationship. I explore this power relation through the contradiction presented by the young people when speaking of their contempt for school and the edgework practices they draw on to support their contempt, all of which seemed to sit comfortably alongside their value for education.

The young people's response to mainstream schools was to operate on the precipice of education, i.e., that boundary between having and not having an education and all the accompanying social exclusion that comes with this exclusion from education. Hope (2007: 89–90) draws out the concept of "edgework" in schools as a "skilled performance" in a range of risk taking activities. Their skilled performances, which I have termed 'edgework practices' (i.e., their actions and ways of speaking about their mainstream school experience), demonstrated their rejection of this context. I am not arguing that these young people had *successfully* survived mainstream schools. The fact that they were no longer there says otherwise, as does their lack of education prior to their YOTS experience. However, I am arguing that they had drawn on a range of edgework practices in order to 'survive' their mainstream schooling environment, an environment that had already rejected and excluded them.

The 'Ugly Face'

The young people readily described presenting a particular set of responses in their previous mainstream school environments. One of the YOTS staff, Liam, described these responses as the young people presenting an unrestrained ugly behaviour. Here I draw on Goffman's notion of 'face to face' interactions to explore how this 'ugly face' produced a compelling and powerful force in the young people's relationship with their mainstream school.

The responses that the young people described was what I had expected to see at YOTS, i.e., young people who were aggressive, rebellious, angry, defensive and defiant. The edgework practices they had drawn on to produce this 'ugly face' were substantial and clearly described in their interviews. Kate and Tate's comments below are more subdued responses to the young people's feelings.

> Well in mainstream I would never listen if I was there. I'd just sit there. They can't do much. They didn't care. (Kate)

> I don't know and I don't really care 'cause I don't like that school anymore. (Tate)

The schools attitude enabled the young people to see school discipline as a nuisance rather than a deterrent to their often, outrageous behaviours.

In his book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1972), Goffman explores how a person,

> presents himself (sic) and his (sic) activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them. (1972: 9)

In any given interaction, the people involved play the parts of actor and audience. To investigate one of the faces of the young people in this research however, the focus is on young people as the actors with the audience being the people involved in the mainstream schools.

Goffman (1972) explains that social interactions involve the gathering of information about a person, defining the social circumstance of the contact, and using this interaction to predict future behaviour by the actor and thereby establishing a response. This knowledge is supported by what Goffman calls "sign vehicles" (1972: 13) which he describes as the ways actors convey information about themselves to others, helping the audience to know how to respond in unfamiliar interactions. These 'sign vehicles' tend to be stereotypical and give a "promissory character" (1972: 14), which can be verified on further interaction. Goffman warns however, that these are only inferences and that the 'gives' and the 'given off' signals can be manipulated by the actor through, "deceit" and "feigning" (1972: 14), in an attempt to mislead the audience either deliberately or unintentionally.

I have applied this analogy to the YOTS young people. Their audience, for example, a teacher or a police officer or DoCS/FACS personnel, gathers 'sign vehicles' from their 'ugly face' which indicates future interactions that promise aggression, rudeness, disobedience, arrogance and contempt. These are expressed through both their words (the gives) and their actions such as body language (the given off). The audience, a teacher for example, can then look to previous experience for a response to these sign vehicles. According to the young people I interviewed, when they drew on their 'ugly face', teacher responses were described as a returning aggression through confrontation, such as: the language of commands e.g. 'sit down', 'be quiet'; control and discipline measures, such as warnings of disciplinary action and threats; removal – 'get out of my classroom', 'go to the head teacher'; and punishments such as detentions, conduct cards, suspension and exclusion.

If however, the young people's intention was to be removed from class in a deliberate 'deceit', the 'ugly face' can then be understood as a manipulation of a preferred outcome. Jamin's interview is a good example of how this manipulation might occur. Jamin explained that he liked to play the "class clown", so I questioned him as to what this involved.

> Um … what would happen is I'd normally rock up to class late just to piss off the teachers. I mean, make a *big* distraction.
> *How?*

> Depends what I feel like. Um, I could come in acting like I fell over the chairs and tables and just land on the floor. Just to piss them off I would do something stupid. And then um, once I'd do that, they'd get pissed off and there goes my first warning, second warning, third warning ….. And then I'm out. (Jamin)

Jamin had initiated this interaction on a regular basis. Goffman (1972) explains that as the actor, it is important to control the actions of the audience to gain the response that the actor desires. This can be achieved by establishing for others the characteristics of the context that the actor has determined and by creating the kind of impression of themselves that will cause the audience to "act voluntarily in accordance with his [the actors] own plan" (1972: 15).

Jamin's *given off* strategies of 'rock[ing] up to class late' and 'acting like I fell over the chairs and tables and just land on the floor', define the circumstances for this interaction with his teacher. He does this in order to get the 'voluntary action' that Goffman describes from his audience, i.e. to 'piss off the teachers'. This meet his aims for the interaction – his planned exit from class.

I am not suggesting that the teachers involved were unaware that Jamin's actions were a deliberate manipulation of the interaction. Jamin left the teacher with little option. Once the three warning and removal process had been initiated by the teacher, the teacher was (possibly) knowingly manipulated. The teacher chose not to draw on other social experiences in order to overcome this manipulation by Jamin, thereby handing him power over their interaction.

In these types of interactions Goffman (1972) explains that the actor is performing at one end of a continuum regarding the actor's belief about their performance. He describes all performance as being either sincere (where the performer believes in the reality of their performance) or cynical.

> [W]e find the performer may not be taken in at all by his own routine […] the cynic, with all his professional disinvolvement, may obtain unprofessional pleasure from his masquerade, experiencing a kind of gleeful spiritual aggression

> from the fact that he can toy at will with something his audience must take seriously (1972: 28-29)

Jamin's performance could be interpreted as entirely cynical. He is fully aware of the process he has instigated and takes a certain pleasure in having forced the outcomes he desired from his teacher. However, Goffman (1972: 29) draws out another side to the cynic where they might be exposed to an audience who "will not allow them to be sincere" (1972: 29) as I would suggest is the case for many of the YOTS young people. Having been subject to constant exclusionary practices, many of these young people draw on a cynical performance as the result of not being allowed to be sincere. For example, when Rachel claims that she wants to learn but is denied help with her work and states that teachers "just thought we were bad and because they thought that we were bad they never used to really care about if we were learning or not" (Rachel), or when Tana and Ava know they have obvious gaps in their learning and their schools blame them for those gaps rather than filling them, a relationship is established where these young people are unable to be sincere in their role as a student, forcing them into other performances. When denied the role of student or when being sincere in that role but being excluded anyway, these young people masquerade in other roles. The young peoples' 'ugly' face is a prime example of the alternatives that gain them some measure of control.

The power they were able to exert through their 'ugly face' allowed them to direct their school experiences, though rarely towards learning. When accessing this 'ugly face', the young people drew on a skilled performance that was composed of a variety of edgework practices. The following sections look at the types of edgework they used in response to their mainstream schools rejection of them. In particular, their use of derogatory speech and sarcasm was a prominent tactic as were actions such as retaliation, physical and temporal absence, drug use and violence.

Language as Power

All the YOTS young people resisted their mainstream schooling relationships in common ways, and in every case this ended in the severing of ties between the young people and their school. A clear example was the explicit and often, savage or sarcastic language they draw on to express their dislike and disdain for school, for teachers, for the way they were dealt with, and for the reasoning behind their

treatment. When expressed, it was clear that the language used was a deliberate attempt to reduce the position of power established by those the language was directed at. Below, the language used was a vicious and decisive expression of their deliberate and total rejection of the people who had rejected them.

> In mainstream they just don't fuck off, they don't leave you alone…they don't let you muck around. The cunts there are just like dead serious. (Taaj)

> I got into trouble a lot at school, 'cause I had anger management issues, all of that …… Just sat there and pretty much told everyone to get fucked. 'Cause they're always, you know …. just being weird arseholes. Then I'd go off at them. (Olivia)

> I used to call them fucking dickheads, fuckwits, morons, gronks
> *Why did you do that?*
> Because they're assholes, I hate them. […] They're dickheads in mainstream. One teacher, […] I didn't like him because he was a faggot. He's bald, he's fat and he's a gronk.
> *What was it that happened when you finally left?*
> Um I think I called a teacher a fucking dicknob, I think. (Jalen)

Other language the young people used drew on sarcasm to demonstrate their rejection. For example, Olivia spoke about the behaviour cards, used in an attempt to govern her behaviour, as laughable. Her sarcasm is expressed here through her description of the cards by the numerous colours employed by the school, which held no meaning for her.

> *So what happened when you told someone to 'f' off?*
> You were on detention, or, you know, there were black cards and green cards and pink cards and conduct cards and ….. cards. (Olivia)

It was the accompanying tone of dismissal that reinforced Olivia's sarcasm in relation to the use of cards. By being sarcastic or savage in the type of language the young people used, they established their disdain for their mainstream schools.

Actions as Power

Retaliation could come in a number of forms. Regan felt so little respect for the discipline being given him (also involving behaviour monitoring cards), his retaliation was to ignore whatever was done, even as the school escalated disciplinary actions. His sarcasm and disdain were also demonstrated through his accompanying actions.

> They would always give me detentions and stuff for swearing at teachers and stuff but I would never go. So then they put you on like these detention cards, which are like Level 1, Level 2, Level 3. And after three you're suspended. And I was like on Level 3. And when they suspend me I would still come back. (Regan)

Alternatively, Jamin drew on responses that returned like behaviour for like.

> I used to be like, there was not limit. Whatever she'd say I could say something really bad that could hurt her or him. I didn't care. Honestly. […] the teachers I had no respect for.
> *Why was that?*
> I didn't like authority. You know, didn't like them. I think they took authority in the wrong way. You earn respect. You don't demand it. And that's not easy to do either. Like, they don't ask if you can move, they tell you. But I treated them ten times worse than they treated me. (Jamin)

These young people also displayed their alienation through their behaviour by either physically or 'temporally' absenting themselves (being present in school by not engaging in school activities). All the young people at YOTS had been away from schooling for significant periods of time. Their physical absence was achieved when they truanted, moved or left permanently in a physical sense. Many of the young people had been absent from school for more than a year. Angel said she had hung out on the streets for most of the year, while Ava explained that she,

> had a really big problem with truanting. At high school, my group of people, I was the Queen of Truanting. Notice this crown [points to her head]. I was the queen. I influenced everyone. (Ava)

In response to the young people absenting themselves, schools re-entered the 'sovereign power' cycle and tried to reassert power through surveillance measures such as SMS messages and CCTV.

> Like at normal school they always used to SMS your parents if you never came there and stuff. (Regan)

> They just kept busting me. They put, like they put cameras in now and like they started getting more stricter and they started like getting us more. And I started to get in trouble more, 'cause it started getting tighter. (Rachel)

However, the introduction of this technology seemed to have little impact, other than to create more opportunities for the young people to be caught doing something wrong and reinforce the young people's alienation. Such actions produced the types of 'temporal' severing of ties I describe below. Being forced to be in school physically, the young people then behaved in ways, which demonstrated their 'temporal' absence by choosing to no longer participate in the educational life of the school even when physically present. They worked to disrupt not only their learning but the learning of those around them as well. For example, nuisance behaviours appeared to be drawn on by the young people to achieve a number of aims. They interrupted and distracted the class, they 'annoyed' the teacher, and they provided entertainment value for both the young person and their classmates. More importantly for the young people, these behaviours openly displayed that they held power and the teacher did not, at least in the context of classroom relations. I have used Regan's story below to demonstrate this.

> *What happened if you were throwing that pen up and trying to hit the roof, like today?*
> One of the teachers would be telling me to stop it and I'd just keep throwing it. Then she'd probably come over and take the pen off me. Then, I would find some other pen and do it. […] Then I would just sit there trying to make extra noise. […] Yeah, it's just fun doing that and they like kick you out and then I'm like, "Nuh, I'm right." and stuff like that. (Regan)

Regan's escalation of his behaviour and his final refusal to leave when 'kicked out' demonstrated both his resistance and the power this gave him over his interactions with mainstream school teachers. His nuisance behaviour showed that he didn't care, and therefore that it didn't matter if he got kicked out. By staying, when being asked to leave the impact was reinforced.

This approach by young people was also reflected in their use of drugs and violence at school. Their resistance to schools in this 'display' was a further demonstration of their resistance and their alienation through voluntary 'edgework'.

> Yeah, like I had my first bong with Jill […]. I remember we went to our Year 6 formal stoned. […] Yeah I was stoned in the school hall during my Year 10 Certificate, it was so funny. It was funny like 'cause the whole group was like all scattered and like we'd all like … the random laugh and like you could just hear our little laughing around the whole hall. I was so stoned, and like the teacher would look at us and we'd just be like ha ha ha ha. (Ava)

> I was expelled for smoking pot in school and, you know, I was taking drugs and I'd take drugs before I got to school. […] I was doing um pot, umm goey and pills. And then half way through the day I'd start coming down and I'd take it out on everyone else and end up getting into fights and the teachers said they can't do it, you know? (Ash)

Ella, Kadin, Mia, Jalen and Blaise had all been in fights or engaged in other violence with other young people while at school. However, teachers were also targets. Ava for example, had thrown a chair at a teacher; Tana had been expelled for having a fight with a teacher and hitting him; while Regan was expelled "for like chucking a bin off the balcony trying to hit my Deputy Principal. I wasn't trying to. I threw it next to him just to scare him." (Regan).

The young people's resistance strategies were often what led to their final exclusion from school. The display of this 'ugly face' seemed to be developed by the young people as a way of forcing the severing of their school relationship. By the time they expelled the young people, they had already left education in vital ways. Their

edgework practices were an attempt to move this process to a faster conclusion.

Contempt and Power

The contempt young people held for their schools was clear in their disregard for their mainstream schools and teachers. They found mainstream worthless and beneath their regard in the same way they considered their schools had treated them. Contempt was one way that the young people employed to distance themselves from their schools. It acted not as a passive division but as a solid barrier that separated them from yet another relationship that caused them damage. For the young people, contempt had the dual purpose of also showing their mainstream schools just how meaningless their contribution to their lives had become.

Strategies such as their 'ugly face', their use of language and other actions discussed above were the young people's way of expressing their contempt for their mainstream schools. The constant use of these tactics was usually what led to the severing of their relationships with school. I argue here that through deploying this contempt the young people gained power in a relationship that had previously dominated them. They did this on two levels; on an individual level in the classroom and on an institutional level in the school.

On an individual level, Vanderstraeten (2001), drawing on Goffman, makes it clear that although there are many factors that influence school interactions (e.g. structural arrangements, timetables, discipline polices), these are still not enough to control the relationship of the teacher and individual students in individual classrooms – the teachers themselves must establish their own authority. The effects of this in the classroom is to burden the teacher to establish control – "One might conclude that it is the controller who is being controlled" (2001: 273). The notion that interactions in classrooms can be independent of the institution despite the control measures set in place by the school is representative of the ways in which the YOTS young peoples' resistance is capable of holding such power. The interaction boundary allows the teacher to become controlled by the student, even while the structures of the school are working in direct opposition to this.

At an institutional level, Foucault's work on power becomes useful in looking at how

contempt, as a mechanism of power, played out in these young people's school relationships. I suggest that these young people were acting on a far more sophisticated level than mainstream schools ever imagined, which ultimately gained them power over their school relationship. Young people's continual refinement of their contemptuous attitude seemed to act as a way of forcing the gradual severing of the relationship they had with school. By the time these young people were 'expelled' they had already severed their school relationship, rendering their schools' actions in the relationship ineffective. Schools had failed to establish any meaningful relationship, allowing the power held by the young people over their mainstream schools to become dominating. Young people had rejected school, they had rejected its form of delivering education, they had rejected its teachers, they had rejected its discipline, they had rejected its judgment of them as 'uneducable' and they had carried out this subversion from within the mainstream schooling institution. Their rejection of the school as 'sovereign' gave them power at least in relation to their mainstream school relationship.

The conduct of this openly hostile relationship with mainstream schools suggested that the young people held power in ways that the school did not. What the schools did not respond to were the early stages of the young people's separation from schooling. By the end of their mainstream schooling, the young people were not 'resisting' at all; but held a dominant position of power. Once they came to the conclusion that they were being prevented from participating in school, their time then seemed to be spent accessing and refining their resistance via their 'ugly' face. The disdain and contempt these young people felt had removed what Vinson has termed, the schools "holding power" (Vinson 2002) over them.

To theorise the power relations occurring in this relationship, I argue that the young people's establishment of their contempt has placed them in a position of domination within the relationship. In a discussion of rebellion, Foucault (2000b) states that in dominating power relations there is always,

> the possibility of that moment when life can no longer be bought, when the authorities can no longer do anything, and when, facing the gallows and the machine guns, people revolt. (Foucault 2000b: 449-50)

For the young people of YOTS, the moment when their lives "can no longer be bought" (2000b: 449) was the moment when they realised schools no longer wanted them to participate. At that moment they choose to oppose the schools rejection of them. From this point onwards, an escalating power/rebellion cycle persisted between the young people and their schools. But at some point in this 'game' the young people had negotiated their way out of the power relation while their schools, found "themselves firmly set and congealed" (Foucault 1994: 3) in the continuing cycle. As the 'sovereign', the institution of mainstream schooling appears to be locked into this power/resistance cycle which they continue to operate with 'resisting' students.

When drawing on this repressive type of power schools become active in a game of power where limits are established that create 'congealed' responses. Foucault states that when,

> [a] relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to break it down. (2000a: 340)

What was clear from their interviews was that the 'game' operating between mainstream schools and the young people, had allowed young people to 'resist' the usual regulating strategies such as surveillance (Kelly 2000a; 2001b), normalisation practices, the medicalisation and psychopathologies developed and used for labelling, and the production of deficit subjectivities (Harwood 2006; Graham 2006b; Saltmarsh and Youdell 2004; Youdell 2003; Youdell 2006c) utilised by their schools. In doing so, they put themselves in a position outside the schools ability to regulate their behaviour in any circumstance. Every tactic their schools had used to manage these young people's resistance/rebellion had only reinforced their alienation.

Typically, a repressive relationship might play out in schools as follows: a student acts in a way that is considered inappropriate; the school draws on some form of regulating power (for example, discipline procedures such as monitoring cards, detentions) which is used to induce a 'suitable' response of obedience from students; the student is considered censured and behaves appropriately. However, as can be seen from the

examples I have drawn from the young people's interviews, they would not consider 'obedience' an appropriate response to their schools use of power. As Foucault (2000a) observes, in this kind of relationship, when the body refuses to bend to force, then the only option for schools is to try and 'break' the resistance, which in the case of these young people had been with escalating levels of discipline culminating in expulsion. When their schools functioned with this form of power, it trapped the young people into limited responses that would 'break' resistance. School for the YOTS young people then turned from a place of learning into an attempt by the school to 'break' them. Schools therefore end up 'congealed' in the misconception of their own sovereignty, whereas the young people still existed in the 'game' but could 'no longer be bought'.

Once the young people realised their exclusion, they acted in a way that cemented this exclusion by resorting instead to a responsive (as opposed to congealed) game of rebellion. In this circumstance, the schools were invested in a game they could not afford to lose. Whereas the young people, who have already been excluded from playing the game of 'school', no longer had any interest in playing and therefore had nothing either to lose or gain. Rather they exerted their own power by engaging in edgework practices as a way of rejecting the schools manipulation of them, using whatever avenues of power the school had left open. One example of this was Regan's actions of physically removing and presenting himself at school and in class at whim and his accompanying derision at the schools attempt to deal with this.

For the young people, taking themselves outside this repressive cycle garnered them power over their relationship with the school. When the young people discovered they could 'successfully' challenge school procedures or discipline they maintained the behaviour – their actions got them what they had rarely experienced; power in a powerless situation. They had managed "to block a field of relations of power, to render [school] impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement" (Foucault 1994: 3).

Other examples of edgework showed the young people as inventive and non-exhaustive in their responses. Tana, for example, drew on derogatory and sarcastic language about school and staff, she absented herself physically by truanting and

temporally as she employed dangerous behaviour such as the flame thrower she made of the science gas taps, taking drugs, and being violent towards both other students and her teachers. Her actions showed her contempt for the school by demeaning the reason for its existence, by rejecting, in derisive ways, their effort to educate not just her but those around her as well.

I argue that mainstream schools use of expulsion to deal with these young people's contempt and accompanying edgework can be equated to the "public execution" Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* (1991: 48). The young people's contempt has caused what Foucault identifies as 'injury' to the sovereign, requiring that the sovereign act to rebuild its power "over and above the crime that has placed the sovereign in contempt" (Foucault 1991: 48) in an act of saving face. Expulsion removes the 'problem' of the young person from the school just as public execution acted for the sovereign. It served to punish the young person being removed by officially denying them an education, arguably acting as a social 'death' by condemning young people to a lifetime of exclusion not only from school but also the life opportunities that accompanying those who have limited education. As the young people had already removed themselves and rejected mainstream forms of education, this action seems pointless. The redundant nature of these purposes, therefore reduces young people's expulsion to an act of "public spectacle" (Foucault 1991: 7) – an attempt purely to discourage others from the same actions. This final purpose clearly reflects those described by Foucault when he looks at the sovereign's use of public execution.

> In the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was the people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance. An execution that was known to be taking place, but which did so in secret, would scarcely have had any meaning. The aim was to make an example, not only by making people aware that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person (Foucault 1991: 57-58)

Expulsion therefore becomes an act to deter other 'problem' young people rather than as a punishment to the young people being 'expelled'.

The Importance of Education

Despite this rather comprehensive rejection of mainstream schooling by the young people – every one of them made a deliberate choice and went to significant lengths to return to their education in the YOTS schools via an extensive enrolment process (see Chapter 8). I suggest that this was due to the interesting contradiction they held concerning their understanding of education; that although they held their schooling experience in contempt, they also valued something they understood as 'education'. This value was powerful enough to ensure these young people returned to education, despite the damaging relationships they described in this and the previous chapter.

> I reckon it's just important. Education is important. (Jamin)

Connell et al (1983), in *Making the Difference*, suggest that educators incorrectly assume that working class parents do not value education, when they do in fact value it strongly as a way for their children to attain a better life than they themselves had been able to achieve. In this study education was described by working class parents as being essential to getting ahead in life. I would suggest that the same, incorrect, assumption has been made by mainstream schooling about the YOTS young people. All of the young people I interviewed were adamant that education held value for them. What they had found contemptible was the forms in which mainstream schools had previously used to present it to them.

The young people's underlying assumption of the value of education was consistently expressed throughout their interviews. Education was important for Kate, Tana and Jamin because without it they were 'stupid', 'a total dumbarse', 'a no one' and 'a nobody'.

> And you need it because if you want to do something, your gonna be so stupid [without it]. You'd be like a total dumbarse. (Kate)

> Yeah, like all of my family said I needed to pull up my socks and wake up and shit, cause I'm gonna be a no one.
> *Why was that important?*
> Because I didn't want to be a nobody. (Tana)

> Without education you're just a stupid guy, you know. People won't look at you and respect you. But if you've got something to offer, they'll respect you more. (Jamin)

However, they also clearly saw that in contrast to being 'a nobody', an education gave them a chance of earning 'respect', 'doing something' and 'having something to offer'. An education was the difference between being worthless (as their mainstream schools had painted them) and being valued as a part of society.

The young people also spoke of the impact they anticipated education could have on their futures. They made very strong connections between a successful future and having educational credentials.

> I want to get my HSC and I want to do something so that I can get lots of money so that I can eventually have a house. (Mia)

> 'Cause when you grow up, like you need a good report from school so you can go and get a good job. (Kaden)

> *What stops you from mucking up here?*
> I just want to get my Year 10. Because most of the jobs these days want Year 10 Certificate and higher. (Benjy)

They also made the point that having an education gave them skills for both a social future, and an economic future,

> I mean, without education you won't be able to do a lot of stuff like um …. while you learn at school you also learn how to socialise. (Jamin)

> Well, you know, in like every job you want to get, you've got at least to know something. And I just think that, the more you know the more, like, chances you have of getting a job and, you know without a job, without money, the world doesn't really go round. (Ash)

These young people also saw education as a way of overcoming what they saw as the negative relationships in their lives. They described their current lives as 'wasted', 'boring', and monotonous. It gave them 'nothing' and took them 'nowhere'. They were 'pulled into' it and 'pulled down' rather than being there by choice. It made them invisible. It was like they were describing their future as an empty void and it seemed to frighten many of them. They often expressed their concerns in a tone of desperation, sometimes sadness and often with a resigned acceptance that they 'didn't want' the circumstances they were in, but felt they had little choice. The young people had little hope of their situations changing but they gave the impression that they were trying hard to make it happen. They identified education as their ticket out of the void. An education allowed them to 'get to places', 'get back up', get 'out of the cycle'. It had a promise of a 'good life' attached to 'money' and 'jobs' and 'homes' and 'being somebody'. Education for these young people changed the future from something that was empty to something that had the things and people in it that many people take for granted. It was implied that these things and people would make them happy. Education gave them choices that they didn't currently have and a way out of their present circumstances.

Conclusion

I have argued throughout the last two chapters that the lives of the YOTS young people were complex. The combined effect of the three prominent relationships created constant chaos, damage and significant burden for them. As I described in this and the previous chapter, their family relationships were marked by abuse, neglect and instability. Their relationship with the law was negotiated around their need to establish a sense of normality and around necessity, while their mainstream school relationships had established them as inadequate, unnecessary and excluded.

The young people responded to these relationships in contradictory ways. In their relationship with family and the law they tended to be either complicit or rejecting. However, their unanimous contempt for their mainstream schooling is a damning indictment of this education system. Rather than a place of safety, growth and learning, for these young people it had become just one more place that rejected and excluded them, adding to the burden of an already overburdened life. These lives presented a complexity that could not just be dropped at the school gate each day.

I have used power to explore and expose the damage of relationships that were embedded in 'states of domination', and sovereign power/rebellion cycles. In resisting these forms of power, the young people drew on a range of edgework practices, both voluntarily and involuntarily to survive these relationships. In particular the young people's use of contempt was obvious especially in their school relationships, however, it was a tactic that allowed them to survive the relationship, although perhaps not successfully.

On the basis of this analysis I would argue that for schooling to succeed with these young people a number of issues need to be countered. Young people's constitution as deficit, the challenges presented by their complex and dominated lives, and an understanding of how power has previously operated in their relationships particularly in connection with mainstream schools are all vital.

It is fortunate that Foucault's notion of power relations does not restrict me to viewing the relationship between schools and young people as solely about the dominator using repressive techniques over the dominated – although this can certainly be seen from the above discussion. Instead, Foucault's understandings of the microphysics of power opens up the opportunity to interrogate how relations of power might shift and change between 'partners' in a power relation. It allows power relations to be seen as a productive experience that can be beneficial to all partners involved in the power relation. It is this last point which I will now turn to, to explore how the YOTS schools were able to reconcile these young people with their education.

Section 3 – Conditions of 'Educational Reconciliation'

This section turns to the YOTS schools to look at the conditions established in the YOTS setting that have reconciled the young people with their education.

Chapter 6 focuses on the discourses used in the YOTS schools that allow young people to be understood in ways that are beneficial for the young people and that are different to the 'deficit' discourses dominating mainstream education. I look at how YOTS has interrupted deficit understandings and then focus on what understandings the YOTS staff have used to replace 'deficit' in a counter discourse.

In Chapters 7 and 8 I theorise the power relation established by YOTS as one that creates freedom for young people rather than the domination they experience in their other relationships. I establish how YOTS have been able to realise the types of conditions that are required to 'reconcile' educational relationships. I argue that the realisation of these conditions is based in a very different sort of 'care' of young people. Over these two chapters I explore how the YOTS staff *journey with* the young people by establishing what I've called *relations of care* (Chapter 7) and *practices of care* (Chapter 8). I've argued that these relations and practices work together to provide a set of conditions that allow young people to reconcile with education.

Chapter 6 – Re-speaking Young People

Introduction

> Helena begins to review the previous lesson. The young people are mostly quiet. James and a friend are a little unsettled but are responding to questions from Hannah even while they draw on the desk, scribble on their worksheet. This is a typical 'chalk and talk' lesson. It involves a work sheet, writing on the board, the teacher asking questions and the young people answering. Yes, two of the boys are fidgeting, and making a few 'smart' comments but overall this appears not much different to me than any other mainstream class I have taught in. Much better than some. (Fieldnotes).

This is just one description of many from my fieldnotes giving a picture of what it was like to be in many of the classrooms in the YOTS schools. What I found so surprising about these descriptions was the utterly mundane nature of young people being in class, participating in learning. Or maybe the real surprise should be identified as my own astonishment that these young people could possibly function this way. My disbelief comes through very clearly in my writing:

> The kids have worked solidly until 11:00am. That's two hours without a problem!!!
>
> Lucas and Ella are straight into answering the test. James settles after a moment. The kids are silent!
> (Fieldnotes).

These young people just shouldn't have been like that – yet clearly they were! The descriptions above are of the very same young people whom I have just described in the previous chapter. These are the same young people who have readily admitted that at their previous schools they made flame throwers out of Bunsen burners, who verbally abused, physically assaulted, threw things at, and threatened teachers and other young people, who made deliberate efforts to constantly and comprehensively disrupt every class they walked into, who had been suspended and expelled from all their mainstream schools, who truanted regularly and had, in general, not even been

attending school – probably to the relief of many of their mainstream teachers. They had regularly expressed their anger at, and contempt for, school and teachers and yet here they were sitting quietly, learning. How could these two pictures, of the same young people, sit side by side? What was happening in the YOTS space that had allowed them to be so different, particularly when the teaching method did not appear to be important.

I believe there were a set of conditions in operation at YOTS that allowed these young people to be very different in a YOTS classroom, that were totally unrelated to teaching strategy. If these conditions had been purely about employing specific pedagogical techniques then a chalk and talk lesson should have been a clear failure (as it had been in mainstream classrooms) – but at YOTS it wasn't. This is not to suggest that YOTS staff only drew on a 'chalk and talk' pedagogy or that every lesson ran smoothly – far from it. What I am suggesting here is that conditions set up in the YOTS staff's relationship with the young people, such as their ability to 'know' these young people differently and their very different responses to young people, rather than their employment of certain teaching strategies, was key to their success. Their different way of speaking established a new 'truth' about these young people, which not only impacted on who the staff were as people within a classroom setting, but also informed their classroom practice.

In this chapter I explore how the YOTS staff's resistance to deficit notions of young people produced a different 'truth' about the young people. To do this I have theorised Foucault's use of 'silence' as a mechanism drawn on by the staff to disrupt and resist the power of the deficit understandings of young people. I then explore the understandings the staff accessed to replace deficit understandings, establishing a counter discourse that encouraged power relations with young people that established freedom for the young people rather than the domination experienced in many of their other relationships.

Rethinking Power

The staff's "speaking", "being" and "doing" differently in the school context could be theorised in terms of power relations. I argue, in this and the following chapters, that from my analysis of the interviews and observations, the young people's previous

experiences of power relations (domination, subordination, resistance and rebellion) were disrupted in the YOTS setting. However, as Foucault contends, the notion of power requires an exploration of power relations that are not focused soley in the type of extreme conflict described in Chapters 4 and 5. For Foucault, power relations do far more than just repress, and dominate. He argues (1980: 119), that in order for power to be acceptable to others, rather than dominate, it must be productive.

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things. (Foucault 1980: 119)

In the relationships the young people had experienced, as I described in the previous two chapters, 'repressive' power had been a central and distinctly brutal relation. The "action upon an action" (Foucault 2000a: 340) of constant retaliation held in a repressive power relation had been produced through a continuous cycle of sovereign and rebellious actions. It was enacted in order to exert domination in the family/child, the legal/criminal, and the school/student power relations that existed in the lives of these young people. The previous chapter explored these power relations though the complexity of the relationships the young people had experienced, and I drew on the Foucaultian notions of states of domination and sovereign power – which the young people experienced from both the subordinate and dominant positions of the power relation – in considering these dynamics. What was significant in these previous discussions was that power was experienced at the extremes of power relations.

In the following chapters, however, I propose that YOTS staff acted to disrupt these extremes of power relations. I am suggesting that theoretically, much of the success of YOTS came from their use of power relations in ways that were foreign to the young people and which were fundamentally absent from most of the significant relationships in the the young people's lives. I argue that what YOTS appeared to be doing was drawing on power relations where "an action upon an action" (Foucault 2000a: 340) that held similar levels of power. The resulting resistance and liberties within the relationship were, therefore, similarly aligned. The relationships seemed to be built predominantly around an 'action on action' of consensus and negotiation as opposed to domination and subordination. This did not eliminate tension altogether as power

relations were still in operation and therefore resistance was always present in some form (Foucault 1994). But what these power relations did allow was for a space to open up in which the YOTS staff were able to work alongside the young people, rather than working in constant and extreme tension against them. A totally new power relation was established, creating relational options not experienced by the young people before. It was a relationship which, as Foucault (1980: 119) suggests, did not simply, and I paraphrase, "weigh on them" but which "traversed and produced things". In this case the power 'traversed and produced' a relationship and a space where learning became a possibility when it never had been before. This chapter explores how this space was made possible through the ways in which the staff understood and spoke about young people. Central to this was their rejection of deficit and the alternate understandings they drew on to reframe the young people. These resisting tactics subsequently informed the practices staff drew on to establish a workable power relation in these particular young people's lives.

Disrupting Deficit

To explain the disruption of a deficit discourse I need to first briefly return to the previous chapters. I argued that deficit knowledge of young people is a powerful discourse, entrenched in the conduct of mainstream education. It acts as a regime of truth (Foucault 1980: 33) that displaces other ways of knowing young people. The impact of the primacy of a deficit discourse is the damaging, exclusionary practices brought to bear on certain young people who are exemplified by the YOTS young people. These understandings consistently produce the sovereign power employed by mainstream schools to control or remove these young people from mainstream school environments and produced the corresponding rebellion of students. YOTS staff act to disrupt these understandings and actions when they resist the primacy of a deficit discourse. They broke the hold of the 'to and fro' of a sovereign power/rebellion cycle of power relations by operating outside this dominant understanding. However, I argue here that within the 'back and forth' of these types of responses, there is still a certain reliance on the existence of a deficit discourse for the existence of a counter discourse. A different way of knowing young people is contingent on the existence of a deficit 'other'. Without the 'truth' of a 'deficit other' to be resisted a new truth could not have been established. It is in the recognition and the resistance of this dominant truth that options for new knowledges/truths could begin.

This chapter begins with an exploration of how these new power relations are established by YOTS and how they are able to open up new opportunities to work with this particular group of young people. My first task is, therefore, to illustrate the YOTS staff's total rejection, yet grudgingly conditional inclusion of deficit truths in the way they spoke. In doing so, I draw on Foucault's notion of 'silence' to explore the power of different knowledge(s) that have been established around these young people and to draw out the production of a different 'truth' that impacted on these young people and the staff who worked with them.

The regime of a deficit truth displaces other ways of knowing young people and works to subjugate other knowledge. *But*, just by its existence, deficit understandings also demand resistance through alternate (though subjugated) knowledge. The YOTS staff demonstrated this resistance in their deliberate silencing of the primacy of deficit discourses by drawing on an alternate discourse. Within the YOTS setting, a counter, subjugated, resistive and negotiated discourse did not appear to have been firmly established or recognised and was therefore sometimes cumbersome or difficult in its expression. Despite this apparent difficulty, the counter discourse had certain elements by which it might be identified. The basis of the disruption of the dominant deficit discourse could be clearly seen in three understandings embedded in the staff's way of speaking: firstly in what I am describing as 'the pause'; secondly in the staff's negotiation of 'deficit' understandings; and thirdly in their use of alternative understandings that replaced deficit knowledges.

The Pause

> There are times when silence has the loudest voice. (Brownlow 1961)

Brownlow speaks here to the notion of silence communicating and influencing as powerfully, and sometimes even more powerfully, than words. It is this notion of silence that I refer to in this section. I have drawn on silence to explore how it can be both active and powerful in resisting the deficit knowledges that seem to be attributed to certain young people. This particular resistance makes its appearance through an active silence I have termed 'the pause'. The notion came from my analysis of staff interviews. I drew on the Foucaultian notion of silence to suggest that 'the pause', as an active form of silence, is one tactic deployed by the YOTS staff to both resist and disrupt the dominance of deficit knowledges. Silence was therefore not just a space of

static domination, but a space that shifted and changed with the power deployed within it. I explore the notion that although 'the pause' initially acted as a space of dominating silence it was simultaneously drawn on to recreate certain truths concerning certain young people, providing a challenge to that silence. I argue that this deployment of 'the pause' is also a signifier of a space where different language about the YOTS young people was engaged to re-speak them.

What first attracted my attention to the possible influences of silence was depicted by the following quotes. I had asked every staff member I interviewed to describe the young people they worked with. It was supposed to be one of those questions that allowed me to fill in some of the context of the schools I was researching – in this case the backgrounds of their students. However, what I kept coming up against were significant pauses like these.

> [4 second pause] … Ummm … [4 second pause before I interrupt] (Sharon,)
>
> [2 second pause] … Oh jeez … [5 second pause] … ummm … (Scott)
>
> [1 second pause] … Wow! … [1 second pause] … If I had to generalise … [2 second pause] … ahh … [1 second pause] … (Jeremy)
>
> [1 second pause] … Awww … [2 second pause] … Wow, ummm … [2 second pause] … They're just … [1 second pause] … Look … (Meg)

Each of the teachers quoted above took considerable time before they began, in a tentative way, to describe the young people they were working with. These lengthy pauses appeared repeatedly throughout the staff interviews (16 out of 20 interviews). Times for 'the pause' ranged from five to over ten seconds in length. If you count out ten seconds, it is an uncomfortable length of time for silence in an interview. It was the feeling of disquiet that these repeated silences gave me that alerted me to something happening. From my own perspective at the time, the question I was asking did not appear to be difficult. Given I was interviewing some very experienced educators I had assumed that they would quite easily address the question of what the young people they worked with were like. However, the apparent difficulty experienced by the staff in answering (signified by their lengthy pauses), raised rather

than addressed questions. What 'the pause' involved and how 'the pause' was used in the YOTS environment is the focus of this discussion. What I am proposing is that 'the pause' acted as both a silence that provided a space for these staff to challenge the truth of a deficit discourse and as a signal of something to come. They appeared to use this space with intent – their intent being either an outright rejection of deficit language, or the access of deficit knowledges with the ultimate aim of rejecting them. The space provided by 'the pause' also seemed to allow time where a different truth was being accessed about young people, which stood outside of deficit knowledges. It was not the uncomfortable, vacant silence I had first thought but, I argue, a silence where active and complex work was being done.

To tackle this particular silence, I will briefly examine a number of related notions. I will draw on Foucault's notion of silence as the theoretical basis for an exploration of the way power was embedded and accessed in 'the pause'. In deploying the notion of silence, I explicate how deficit truths may have been challenged within the silence of 'the pause'; how 'the pause' acted as a precursor to the use of language challenging deficit notions; and how this challenge was extended into a counter discourse used by these particular staff. Central to this discussion is how 'the pause' became a supporting tactic, deployed by staff to both resist and disrupt the dominance of deficit knowledges in their schools. I argue that what is happening in this particular exploitation of 'the pause' is the utilisation of a space where the rejection of a dominant discourse, and the accessing of a counter discourse, is engaged. This exploitation results in classrooms where language that challenges deficit also encourages the construction of different truths and ultimately, different practice.

Silence

The extended condemnation of deficit notions has done little to change the way society in general, and education, in particular, has drawn on deficit language to the detriment of young people. Brown (1996) suggests that the lack of change to a dominant discourse, such as deficit, is not uncommon as silence is a significant tool in the enforcement of any dominant discourse. She argues that when silences are broken they,

> do not shatter the moment their strategic function has been exposed but must

> be assaulted repeatedly with stories, histories, theories, discourses in alternate registers until this assault finally triumphs such that the silence itself is rendered articulate as an historically injurious force (Brown 1996: 186)

The repeated battering of deficit understandings of young people has yet to shatter its use. However, its critique appears to be gaining momentum and while silence does act to enforce this dominance it can also be used to contest it. I draw on this dual role to explore both how silence comes to dominate and how it can be used to resist.

Foucault's notion of silence as a mechanism of discourse has significant implications for questioning the power relations and truths produced by such knowledges. In *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (2003) speaks of silence not as a singular notion but as a "double silence" that includes both the "absolute silence of all language that is anterior to that of the visible", as well as "the relative silence of theories, imaginings, and whatever serves as an obstacle to the sensible immediate" (2003: 108). Silence can therefore be seen as both the absence of sound and the absence of "theories" and "imaginings" within discourse, particularly those "theories" and "imaginings" that could oppose "privileged, dominant discourses" (Simpson and Lewis 2005: 1261). Foucault explains that by identifying this 'double silence', "things seen can be heard at last, and heard solely by virtue of the fact that they are seen" (Foucault 2003: 108). Silence begins to speak purely by what is absent. Silence exists just as the words of a discourse exist, because silence exists between, within and around words making strong connections between discourse and power. We can therefore begin to hear what is contained within a silence as it becomes visible through the act of being identified. 'The pause' is indicative of the "absolute silence of all language", and contains within it not just the lack of sound, but also the absence of missing theories and imaginings excluded by the discourse of deficit. Through the recognition and exploration of 'the pause', the space that this silence fills can become visible.

In *The History of Madness,* Foucault (2006) links silence to power, speaking of silence as a mechanism of domination and a pedagogy that becomes unthinkingly applied through an unopposed 'sovereignty'.

> I would say that it [silence] is a historically well-determined little pedagogy, which manifests itself here in a very visible manner. A pedagogy which teaches the student that there is nothing outside the text, but that in it, in its interstices, in its blanks and silences, the reserve of the origin reigns; that it is never necessary to look beyond it, but that here, not in the words of course, but in words as crossings-out, in their lattice, what is said is 'the meaning of being'. A pedagogy that inversely gives to the voice of the masters that unlimited sovereignty that allows it indefinitely to re-say the text. (Foucault, 2006: 620)

These silences hold the power to marginalise others.

> It follows that to be powerful and privileged, dominant discourses must be able to suppress and silence other, contradictory or competing meanings. Therefore, as Gabriel et al (2000) point out, meanings and assumptions created by a discursive regime are inevitably based on omissions and evasions. By foregrounding and privileging some interpretations, others are silenced as unsuitable or excessive. (Simpson and Lewis 2005: 1261)

For 'the pause' to exist as a challenge to silence, the use of silence to dominate had to exist first. To this end, in the next section I explore how the staff seemed to be, initially, forced, by a dominating silence, into using 'the pause'.

Domination Through Silence

Although my aim here is to argue that silence can be used to resist deficit knowledges, the existence of resistance is contingent on the existence of the dominance that deficit knowledges hold. Resistance cannot exist if there is nothing to resist. The staff interviews demonstrated the underlying domination of deficit knowledge contained within 'the pause'.

During the staff interviews it quickly became apparent that in describing the young people, staff were giving me far more than just 'background'. There was something in their answers that pointed to a very different understanding of the young people they were working with. I anticipated that a typically deficit notion of young people would

be particularly concentrated in this setting, and had expected staff to launch into descriptions drawing on words such as behaviour problems, disrespectful, ADHD (and all the other D's, see Baker 2002), bad backgrounds, drug addicted, abusive and violent – painting a common picture concerning this particular group of young people. However, what I was confronted with was 'the pause'. It suggested a number of things. It could have been that the staff just couldn't think of anything to say, but I discounted this as every teacher was – subsequent to 'the pause' – quite articulate in describing the young people. What happened initially during 'the pause', suggested the presence of the domination of deficit understandings.

To begin exploring the significance of 'the pause', I return here to the staff's responses to the question of how they would describe their young people. Initially, 'the pause' appeared as a quiet contemplation before speaking, as Sharon's response indicates.

> [4 second pause] … Ummm … [4 second pause before I interrupt] (Sharon)

In Sharon's case there were almost ten seconds of silent pause time, punctuated only by 'Ummm' in the middle of the silence, before I interrupted. My interruption then gave her even more time before she started to describe the young people.

However, when this happened repeatedly, it appeared that an active and complex work was occurring within this space, including a struggle with subservience to the dominance of deficit understandings. This struggle could be identified by the use of two different responses these staff chose to use within 'the pause'. Scott's and Jeremy's responses exemplified one approach.

> … *how would you describe them?*
> [2 second pause] … Oh jeez ... [5 second pause] … ummm ... (Scott)

> [1 second pause] Wow! … [1 second pause] … If I had to generalise … [2 second pause] … ahh … [1 second pause] … (Jeremey)

It appeared that not only was my question not as basic as I had thought, but the staff's responses of 'Oh jeez' and 'Wow' indicated that it was actually hard work to answer and they were not sure where to start their description.

At other times, 'the pause' was highlighted with multiple 'fill in' words as can be seen by Meg's response. Like Scott's and Jeremy's responses, Meg's pause and fill in words seemed to signify the difficulty she had in finding the right words to describe the young people.

> *…these kids ... can you describe them for me?*
> [1 second pause] … Awww ... [2 second pause] … Wow, ummm … [2 second pause] … They're just … [1 second pause] … Look ... (Meg)

Meg also took over ten seconds to begin to respond. Her 'fill in' of 'the pause' is particularly indicative of a search for what she considered an appropriate response. She and Jeremy try out different words and phrasing ('They're just…', 'Look…', 'If I had to generalise…') that would allow them to enter into a description of the young people. They both seemed to find it difficult to access words that represented the young people in the way they 'knew' them.

Overall, the act of pausing appeared important as it preceded a very careful, deliberate, and purposeful choice of words and phrasing. But to begin, it seemed the staff were missing the words that they could readily draw on to express what they wanted to say. The dominance of deficit language appeared to be making the staff's intent to challenging it, extremely difficult. There was little common language they could utilise that would allow an alternative description to be entered into.

Resisting a Dominant Silence Through 'The Pause'

In this particular context, the silence contained in the act of pausing can also be seen as an act of resistance. Here, 'the pause' was always antecedent to a resisting discourse; it held significant power as a mechanism in resisting deficit knowledges of young people. In mainstream settings, the dominance of deficit understandings can be seen through educators having at hand a number of commonly used and understood educational terms based in deficit knowledges. Descriptions drawing on words such as

those I used above – criminal, behaviour problems, ADHD, drug addicted, deviant, abusive, violent – are easily accessed descriptions that educators (and others) can quickly understand and which are often used to identify these 'types' of young people in the Australian education context generally. However, despite the links I have just made between silence and dominating power, Foucault (1978) also states that silences are not always just subservient or dominant in a power relation. Instead they exist as "complex and unstable processes" (1978: 101), which can act as

> a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point or an opposing strategy. [...] silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (1978: 101)

'The pause' seemed then to have a dual purpose. Contained within its space was the dominance of deficit knowledges, but there was also the challenge and resistance to this domination. 'The pause' was not just about acknowledging the subjugating dominance of deficit understandings but was also a tactic drawn on to resist these same understandings. 'The pause' became a part of the 'hindrance', 'stumbling block' and 'opposing strategy' identified by Foucault. In its 'tolerance', it provided staff the time to find alternate, yet uncommonly used words that allowed them to paint an alternative picture of the YOTS young people. What I was seeing in the staff's struggle to describe the young people was people encountering a demanding task – one which required careful consideration of the language to be accessed before it was spoken.

Silence, then, goes beyond just existing as a passive, powerless state. Gal's (1989: 1) acknowledgment of silence as not only producing powerlessness, but as "a strategic defense against the powerful", supports this. From a Foucaultian standpoint, power is seen as a relationship where, "[f]or each move by one adversary, there is an answering one by the other" (Foucault 1980: 57). Again, it is "an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (Foucault 2000a: 340). Silence therefore constitutes a powerful tactic within both a dominant discourse to maintain dominance, and a resisting discourse to challenge dominance. One form of silence (the passive which allows for, and is created by the existence of silence) can be answered by another form of silence (the assault which exposes and challenges silence); while both

forms rely on each other to speak and become visible. In this way 'the pause' as a form of silence can be both subservient and dominant. It becomes an equally powerful mechanism in maintaining deficit's dominance as it is in defying deficit knowledges.

Directly following 'the pause' staff drew on a more expansive and less common language as they establish a different truth around the young people. This occurred both directly following their pause and at other points during their interviews.

When speaking about the young people, staff often identified a number of attributes they saw as being held by the young people in relation to their environments. The language they used described the young people in positive ways, avoiding the deficit language regularly applied. Words such as 'stunning', 'refreshing', 'effervescent', 'really good kids' were regularly used by staff in the space following their pause. Hannah's use of 'amazing', 'huge', 'refreshing' (see below) place young people in a very positive light. This language described the types of personal characteristics that allowed the young people to negotiate and survive their environments, for example,

> Courage is a very definite word that we need to use more often. (Grace)

In addition to drawing on a list of positive attributes, Hannah, below, also describes the young people's situations, contextualising their lives.

> I think they are amazingly resilient. They've got huge resilience. All the problems that go on, they still keep bouncing back. Even kids that have left us and haven't done well, they pop in and they are amazing. They are. And they can be satisfied with their life. Amazing. I think very honest, maybe they're not on the surface, but I think generally they are quite honest kids. Refreshing, I find them very refreshing. They don't tend to write stilted stuff as much as school kids do I find. I find that quite often it's ummm … it's quite open. Yeah. And I find that refreshing. I really do. So I think they cover up a lot of their sadness well. (Hannah)

Hannah and Grace accessed a number of terms: resilience, bouncing back, satisfied, very honest, open, sad; which all build a picture of how the young people come to survive their environments.

In addition the staff were very open in describing the young people's environments. For example, Hannah used 'homeless' to describe the living circumstances of the young people at her school. Other words that I have drawn on in previous chapters are words such as family violence or abuse. The staff rarely hid behind 'niceities'. They are open, honest and often confronting in their use of these descriptions which did not allow anyone to hide behind other descriptions of the young people as angry or violent or criminal. This way of speaking about the young people clearly identify circumstances beyond the control of the young people. Fault could therefore not be attributed to them through such descriptions.

The descriptions that followed the pause seemed to have a specific intent. They exposed a very different understanding of these young people. In terms of resisting the silence created by deficit, they acted in a number of ways. They balanced the overtly negative descriptions that were typically ascribed to these young people by drawing on overtly positive language. The staff's expectation seemed to be that the young people would automatically be judged according to 'deficit' standards. Therefore their descriptions provided a challenge to a deficit way of speaking purely by the act of being spoken aloud. Simultaneously they replaced deficit language, giving access to an alternative and perhaps more beneficial set of words to draw on.

Having identified 'the pause', I was interested to see if the challenge to deficit and the re-speaking of young people through a resisting silence went beyond these initial responses. It required a closer examination of where else in the YOTS staff's interviews this disruption might occur. On further exploration, it became evident that 'the pause' was just one in a range of tactics that the staff drew on to challenge the silence created by deficit understandings. In combination, these tactics gave credence to an "opposing strategy" (Foucault 1978: 100) by filling in the "omissions and evasions" (Simpson and Lewis 2005: 1261) of a privileged interpretation. These tactics gave voice to "contradictory or competing meanings" (Simpson and Lewis 2005: 1261) and defied "that unlimited sovereignty that allows it [deficit] indefinitely to re-say the

text" (Foucault 2006: 620). The YOTS staff had moved from 'the pause' to permeating talk that influence their practice.

The re-speaking of the YOTS young people by the staff, accessed four other tactics concerning the language that staff either chose or excluded in order to break the silence around deficit. The first was to *challenge deficit* language used by others. The second was a deliberate and outright *rejection of deficit*. Thirdly, staff *negated deficit,* and finally, staff employed a deliberate, considered *use of deficit* in specific circumstances and contexts. These four tactics continued the work of 'the pause' to subvert deficit practices.

Challenging Deficit

The staff sustained an on going challenge to deficit understandings. This was evident in a presentation at an Open Day for the organisation. One of the staff was explaining a residential treatment programme set up to treat the 'sexually problematic behaviours' of young people who had been convicted of a sex offence. An invited DoCS/FACS worker next to me questioned the staff member.

> DoCS/FACS Worker: So they're sexual offenders?
> YOTS Psychologist: No they have sexually problematic behaviours.
> DoCS/FACS Worker: But they've abused someone.
> YOTS Psychologist: No they display sexually problematic behaviours.
> DoCS/FACS Worker[mumbles under his breath]: But they're still sexual abusers. (Fieldnotes)

In this exchange the YOTS psychologist deliberately and publically challenges the DoCS/FACS worker's use of deficit language in accessing 'sexual abuser', although clearly not changing the DoCS/FACS worker's understandings. However, in speaking in this way the psychologist did far more than just challenge the notion of deficit. She was able also to distance the behaviour of the young person from the identity of the young person. As the psychologist continued to explain, the programme (and by extension, the term) was based around the notion that it was about "good people who have made bad choices" (Fieldnotes). This way of knowing these young people had the added bonus of allowing a space for the young person to be known differently and

therefore to be different. The silence established by the knowledge contained in 'sexual abuser' is broken by this psychologists challenge. It allowed the young people NOT to be tied to one action by an identity that had been constructed around deficit. A deficit way of knowing was rejected and replaced with words that reframed the way these particular young people were known. In drawing on a term like 'sexually problematic behaviours', there was never an acceptance or condoning of the act of sexual abuse but there was acceptance of the person, allowing space for that person to be spoken of differently; not just by the identity consuming term of 'sexual abuser' used by the DoCS/FACS worker. It allowed for the recognition of the young person's own life experience within the context of their unique life circumstances and allowed for the possibility of change. The deficit notion of 'sexual abuser' only allows a response of punishment and a locking in of the identity of 'sexual abuser'. 'Sexually problematic behaviours' used language that was not as common or straightforward but which had been carefully conceived to promote a certain way of thinking about these young people separate from deficit knowledge.

Rejecting Deficit

This incident between the psychologist and the DoCS/FACS worker was also an example of something more. Not only did the psychologist's language challenge the use of deficit language and open up possibilities of other identities for these young people, but within her talk there was also a deliberate *rejection of deficit* – which was one of the more common tactics drawn on by staff to silence deficit discourses. Staff would often stop and either question or reword the way I and other people spoke of the young people if we 'slipped' in to deficit language. The psychologist's outright refusal to access 'sexual abuser' as a label for these young people is an example of this rejection. It was supported by her open and forceful replacement of 'sexual abuser' with an alternate term, 'sexually problematic behaviours', which can be argued is established outside a deficit language. This rejection did three things to break the silence of deficit. It confronted and defied the access of deficit terminology by the DoCS/FACS worker. It provided a replacement terminology that could then be used by others to extend the challenge presented by this rejection. Finally, the psychologist exemplified how this rejection might take place.

Negating Deficit

When I spoke to one staff member, Grace, concerning the more technical deficit terminology used about the young people (eg. ADHD, conduct disordered, emotionally disturbed), her response was:

> We hardly use those terms. We know. We know they are all troppo and we don't look forward to windy August and the full moon, I'm telling you. But at the same time they are good kids. Really good kids. (Grace)

The pattern of drawing on deficit terms to explain the deficit view of the young person but then countering the deficit language by drawing on an alternate view of each young person was very common and was used with great warmth and care. This became consistently obvious when the staff's use of terms such as 'troppo' and 'really good kids' were used almost synonymously. Another example was the way Helena described how the young people had been doing service learning at a retirement village and had broken into the office and stolen the cash box. At the end of telling me this she said:

> The little bastards, and I say that with all affection.
> (Fieldnotes)

Sometimes the repudiation was not quite so obvious, but was still present as can be seen in the following example.

> Most of our kids have missed a lot of school. Most of them will tell you that from a very early age they spent all their time in the principal's office or in the corridor or being expelled from one school going to another, so their idea of a teacher isn't a good one to start with. Their idea of a teacher is someone they have seen has bullied them or looked down on them so they bring those feelings here and you can't blame them because that's how they feel. (John)

For John, the idea of a truanting child ("Most of our kids have missed a lot of school") who doesn't like teachers ("their idea of a teacher isn't a good one") is countered by

"you can't blame them because that's how they feel". However, there appeared to be more than just a negation of a derogatory term in the staff's use of this strategy.

While the use of 'little bastards' or 'they are all troppo' or speaking of 'poor behaviour' might seem derogatory. I would argue that these phrases appear to be what Butler (1997) terms an affectionate "re-appropriation" of what would be considered derogatory language in other contexts. The staff's usage seemed to be almost deliberate so as to gain an opportunity to explain and often exempt the actions of the young people and their perceived deficit. Hannah, for example, rejected my statement that there was much that explained but perhaps did not excuse what the young people sometimes did, saying "No. It excuses them as well" (Fieldnotes). This 'excusing' by the staff should not be misinterpreted as their letting the young people act as they pleased without consequence. The consequences could be quite severe but rarely left the young people without support. The staff's negating of deficit language was constantly present throughout their talk of the young people. This re-appropriation attacked silence by twisting common understandings of derogatory language to diminish its effects. It worked to detach the blame and negativity of such terminology by attaching it to affection and care.

Using Deficit

Challenging, rejecting and negating deficit were also accompanied by a deliberate use of deficit knowledges to subvert deficit language and practice, although in limited contexts. There seemed to be certain circumstances, contexts and places where deficit language would be drawn on by staff. In this organisation it was predominantly internal, private conversations that accessed deficit language and then, only in certain circumstances, for example: with affection (as above); to debrief after a critical event; or when they had no other options as there was not a widely accepted, alternate and accessible language to draw on.

There were also circumstances where practices associated with deficit discourses were deliberately used for the benefit of the young people, as can be seen in the following excerpt. Deb was explaining where much of the schools' funding came from.

> Because we don't have any fees or anything, we depend a lot on funding. And unfortunately the AIS [Australian Independent Schools Association] people will

> only fund young people that have got a diagnosis. So if we can ... not that we stop them if they don't have the paperwork, but if we can get something like that for them. We rely heavily on the school that they come from […] we try and get all that, cause that just makes it so much easier. And it's quite a good amount of funding for a child. I know it sounds terrible, but it's reality. (Deb)

Deb's explanation exemplifies how the YOTS schools were compelled, to draw on deficit discourses due to its dominating influence. Government funding processes required the organisation to enter and operate within a deficit discourse. Without doing so, the funding required from external bodies would not be available for the organisation's schools and numerous other programmes to operate. The external bodies were entrenched in deficit knowledge as can be seen by the requirement for 'a diagnosis' – a tactic of deficit discourse (Harwood 2006) – in exchange for financial support. The schools were forced to draw on the language and consequently the procedures and systems surrounding them which reify deficit. Deb's statement that "I know it sounds terrible, but it's reality", indicated they did so with full knowledge but not acceptance of the stance. The staff attempted to avert what they saw as 'damage' via a diagnosis by: accessing previous documentation; enrolling young people without documentation; or, as Deb explained later, they used their own psychologists once a relationship with the young people was established. Once funding was gained they steadfastly rejected the attachment of deficit to these young people. This was a practice the staff deemed tolerable but not necessarily 'right'.

As stated previously, it was in the staff's resistance to dominant truths that options for different knowledges could begin to break the silence that 'deficit understandings' engendered, while continuing to recognise that the dominant knowledge still existed. There was a compulsion for the use of deficit as the dominance of a deficit discourse still operated externally to the organisation. Therefore, there was an obligation to engage on some level with the 'deficit' language until such times as a counter discourse becomes far more established and this silence is 'shattered'. By accessing deficit in contained ways, the staff was able to use it against itself. However, this was done while maintaining a protective barrier around the young people to shield them from the effects of this language.

Producing a Counter Discourse

The tactics above established the resistance to deficit discourses and were produced by the YOTS staff acting to reject deficit understandings of young people. However, if staff were resisting a deficit discourse it could be assumed that in order to work with the young people they were also drawing on alternate ways of understanding them.

The way in which staff understood the young people seemed to reflect two premises: young people's lives had been perverted, distorted and damaged through no fault of their own, and; to leave young people to exist in this 'corrupted' state was inexcusable.

Before I continue I want to make two clarifications. My use of strong words such as 'corrupted', perverted, and distorted to describe the lives of the YOTS young people, is deliberate. Strong words elicit strong emotions as will become apparent in the staff's responses to the young people's lives and it will become obvious that the staff's language supported the strength of these words. I have employed these terms, in particular 'corrupted', to depict the strength of the YOTS stance in relation to the young people as well as my own understanding of their lives. The term 'corrupted' captures the depth of the abuse, compounded by the lack of care shown by those close to them and by society in general, as described by YOTS staff. The depth of the damage and burden embedded in the young people's lives requires this strong position.

I also need to clarify that I am NOT saying that the young people are 'corrupt' or perverted – this would be drawing on more deficit understandings and stand in opposition to what I am trying to argue. I am describing their lives as having been interfered with by others to such an extent that the young people no longer exist in anything resembling a 'normal' life. Though no fault of their own, the young people's lives have been 'corrupted' by those around them. They have not asked for these lives to be theirs, and as Chapter 4 and 5 demonstrate, they have struggled against such forces. But despite this, the lives the young people are now forced to live had become highly detrimental to them.

The two premises above were contingent on and supported by other understandings of the young people (discussed below). They formed the basis of the understandings used by the YOTS staff that replaced 'deficit' discourse. In the following sections I

have taken each of these premises and explored how the YOTS staff used them as the basis of a counter discourse.

Understandings of the Young People's Lives as 'Corrupted'.

The staff's responses to the 'corruption' perpetrated on these young lives was central to a different understanding of these particular young people. The YOTS staff spoke of this 'corruption' as inherently 'wrong' and, as a consequence, were also able to refuse the 'blame' ascribed to the young people through 'deficit' understandings. Instead, they attributed the young people's actions and identities to the relationships and environments from which the young people came.

Identifying 'Corruption' Through Emotional Responses.

Staff often expressed feelings of rage, sadness and powerlessness when talking about the damage done to young people. For example, the staff were angered by the notion that these perpetrations happened over an extended time and were perpetual states of existence for many of the young people. These emotional expressions were an acknowledgement of the young people's experiences as 'corrupted' and wrong. Meg's horror (below) is definitely not subtle. She speaks here of an enrolment interview conducted with a young girl and her mother.

> Mum left and she disclosed to me that she's been dealing Ice for her mother ever since the age of eight because that way her Mum knew that she would do Ice. She wouldn't tell anyone because she was doing the same thing as her mum and it was easier for her mum to get her influenced so then she had the control. So a lot of that happens here. Aaghh!! Sometimes I want to kill the parents. […] Especially if you know that they've been molested. (Meg)

Staff emotional responses were directed towards the people they saw as the perpetrators of the abuse; parents, other teachers, psychologists, youth workers, legal representatives and police who had contributed to the damage the young people experienced.

Meg's, and others staff's, expressed hatred of the abuse and their reaction to parents and others who perpetrated the abuse is expressed very strongly. These emotions

were compounded as staff also understood that the young people had some knowledge of their own lives as 'corrupted'. In the following quote, Russell notes this.

> Even though they are 13 or 14 they see that it isn't right, mum and dad are doing that. That's not right and they don't like it and they try to change and get away from it, (Russell)

It appeared that these emotional responses worked to engage staff in acting against the 'corruption' they saw. In naming and responding emotionally to the 'corruption', the YOTS staff had exposed what they considered to be 'wrong' and rejected the 'corruption'. The staff's explicit understandings of what they saw as wrong then enabled them to act in ways that began to address the 'corruption'. The naming and responding provoked the actions that they took (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Responding to Powerlessness

Amongst this rejection of 'corruption', staff also expressed an element of powerlessness. For example, in Meg's quote above, the only thing that she felt she could do was to enrol the young people in the YOTS schools in an effort to afford them some protection from their circumstances. As with other staff, there is a sense that Meg does not believe that this action is enough. Helena also expresses this sense of powerlessness when she speaks here of a 13 year old girl who the staff have evidence had been 'groomed' by her mother as a street worker saying, "At least when she is with us for 6 hours a day she is safe." This response is startling given the staff's commitment to a wide variety of actions that help the young people as will be seen in later discussion.

The staff's resistance took an emotional toll and required some way of being able to deal with the emotional responses they have said they felt towards those they saw as perpetrators. For example, in dealing with family, staff were careful never to attack family for the damage they created. However, they still needed a mechanism so as not to respond. As Julie states, something happens between their internal response and the external reaction. When Julie says "it's not that I care any less […] I don't ever stop having the emotions but you do learn to take that deep breath and stop the tears from coming and try to handle it." she has explained the mechanism as a barrier that

filters her emotional response between the internal and the external. This idea of a barrier is also reflective of the way the staff responded in the classroom.

Positive Responses to Negative Circumstances.

No matter how angry or how powerless or how much they abhorred what was being done to the young people, the staff never engaged in anything negative concerning the young people's families with the young people. This was noted also in Julie's account of a young person being very excited about his mother coming to a presentation day and Julie's external talk to the young person saying "Wouldn't miss it…" and showing a similar excitement for the presence of his mother. However this is contrasted with a very different internal talk which she expressed to me "and I think, 'Your bloody mum's never […]".

Despite this type of internal talk, the YOTS organisation has responded in very atypical ways to the 'wrongness' they saw. Typical responses based in deficit understandings would be to punish and blame perpetrators. Instead YOTS bringing family alongside, responding in direct opposition to their initial reactions. They do this on a practical level by having a very open and very constant contact with parents and carers, advising families when asked, reminding them of their responsibilities in caring for these young people, conducting parenting workshops, and presenting parenting awards at end of year presentations to encourage what they call 'good parenting'.

Staff responded to and resisted the 'corruption' of the young people's lives by openly identifying and naming perpetrations, exposing the damage caused by the 'corruption's. They expressed their anger, frustration and often a powerlessness to change young people's situations. However, in a seemingly contradictory way, they held hope for young people's futures and contributed to this hope by giving young people strategies to cope with their lives. Tied up with these responses was a feeling of responsibility to act to both defend and protect young people. Despite their feelings of powerlessness, in practice, staff worked very hard to overcome the damage created by the 'corrupted' nature of these lives as I will discuss in the next two chapters.

Defending Against Deficit Understandings.

One result of understanding young people's lives as 'corrupted' was the YOTS staff's engagement in the defence and protection of young people, particularly as it related to the blame embedded in deficit knowledges. Staff regularly drew on the tactic of

negating deficit (described above), which worked to question the blame that deficit understandings aimed at young people for their circumstances. The staff consistently looked to find causes for the negative actions engaged in by the young people and then acted to deflect blame to the single or multiple location(s) of the identified cause. This deflection and redirection was aimed at such elements as the environments, structures and processes, and the people in these environments that contributed to the 'corruption'. As such, this deflection may well have been to parents who abused and neglected, but it was just as readily turned on the staff themselves when they identified themselves as the cause (see discussion in Chapter 7 concerning the staff beliefs about failure). This course of action (finding cause, then deflecting and redirecting blame), worked to reduce the intensity of blame when it was solely aimed at one source – the young people. It no longer contained the prohibitions of a limited gaze (Foucault 1991) where only certain things are seen and used to invoke power. Instead the staff turned their 'gaze' on all aspects of a young people's lives (including themselves and the young people) for critique – something distinctly lacking in 'deficit' understandings. What is important to note is that all avenues were considered rather than a focus on just one or some people to the exclusion others. Rarely was one person or thing seen as singularly culpable. Rather, all things and people were considered.

The diffusion of blame acted as a rejection of deficit. In an educational deficit discourse, when something is deemed wrong, fault is generally located within young people (or their families or communities as an extension of the young person). The result is that blame is deflected from the school. As discussed previously if young people are seen to be educationally 'at fault' then they can also be seen as being educationally 'fixable'. This means for example that a 'fault' in a young person can therefore be diagnosed according to a range of disorders and disabilities or young people can be seen to be inherently 'bad'. Once 'diagnosed', educational and psychological strategies may be applied to young people in order to fix their perceived deficit. However, if the YOTS staff were to operate outside a deficit discourse, then this inherent 'blame game' needed to be replaced. Staff addressed this by deflecting the blame from the young people (in most circumstances). Their first response was to look beyond the young people for other causes and reasons for their negative actions. The following are examples of how the staff used the tactic of finding cause and

deflecting and redirecting blame to protect the young people from being 'unfairly' found at fault. This can be clearly seen in Jeremy's description of the young people.

> Misunderstood, they are just in an environment and a position which has caused them to somehow end up on the wrong side of the rails. (Jeremy)

Here he identifies the young person's environment as a cause and redirects the identity of the young person from deficit to 'misunderstood'. Russell, John, Scott and Sharon also identify causes outside the young people they speak of and I have used Russell's quote below to exemplify the staff diffusion of blame. Russell notes the circumstances and the system as the reason for young people 'opting out' of education. The intention of this deflection is to question why young people would trust a system that has let them down in the past.

> Abuse, violence, homelessness (…) they've been through the system and they don't like it, so they throw their hands up and say I'm out of here. (Russell)

In general there was a significant effort made to move away from any blame as this just further entrenched the use of 'deficit' understandings. This way of speaking turns the focus of blame from young people to the circumstances, processes and environments they exist in. The staff's use of terms such as 'family backgrounds', 'histories of drug abuse', 'homelessness', all describe things rather than the young people as the cause of young people's more negative actions.

Staff also argued that if any young person were to be put in similar environments and circumstances then they would be likely to respond in similar ways. The reverse of this, as both Sharon and Scott stated below, was that if these young people existed in more 'normal' circumstances they would more than likely never have come to notice as problematic.

> A lot of the kids just find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and they get dragged along and they are no more challenging and no different to kids in mainstream. It's just circumstances. (Sharon)

> In my opinion they are just normal kids who have just had a very tough life. If they hadn't been victims of circumstances or bad family, or all sorts of different situations, you wouldn't even have heard of them. They would just be in a mainstream school. Um … they've all got their baggage and they've all done it pretty tough at some point or another, or are still doing it tough. (…) But they're good kids I think. They just need a bit of guidance at times. (Scott)

It is this recognition of the contribution of the surrounding environments to each young person's life that is the key to the diffusion of blame. The staff looked at each young person, gathered an understanding of the circumstances peculiar to each and then deflected accordingly. This act was based on an understanding that most of what these young people experienced was beyond their control and their contexts were produced by more than just the young people themselves.

The process of finding cause and deflecting blame might be misconstrued as the staff excusing such things as 'bad' or 'criminal' behaviour. However, Scott points out that the diffusion of blame was not a limitless, unquestioned response.

> Yeah. I mean, in some cases, the kids have got a reason to be real narchy. We try and get them to tell us at the start of the day if they've got something that's really on their mind, or something bad has happened, so that we're aware of it, and we can give a bit more leniency. But um … if it's just being disruptive, being […] objectionable. (Scott)

Scott did not finish this sentence but the implication was that 'leniency' was not just handed out without exception or consideration. As he said at another point in the interview, everything is taken on a 'case by case basis'. If this consideration seemed to become an excuse or was being taken advantage of by the young people, then it was withdrawn. As I noted above, the staff turned their 'gaze' in all directions and sometimes it did come to rest on the young people. However, as Scott demonstrated, this tended to follow a process where all other options had been exhausted first, rather than the young people being the first and only point of consideration.

> It is quite difficult for some of the students who haven't been in school for a few years …. for a lot of them, or the majority of them. But um .... it's hard for everyone. You can't really use that as an excuse. (Scott)

Positive moves were then made to support the young person. It was not an identification of a 'deficit' that the young people or staff were expected to fix, but a recognition that there was a moment when the young person needed to move forward in coming to terms with, and taking co-responsibility for changing their circumstances (even when not being responsible for them). This was done with the support of the YOTS staff, as Hannah explained,

> I think they get to the point where they get so low, I s'pose no-one will take them in housing, sometimes reality hits them and umm …. they then sometimes rely on us to find the pathway and if they do that, that's when the trust builds up a little bit and they go, oh maybe there is some future for me. I think they think they will be able to turn things around at any point, but they can't unfortunately. They dig themselves a grave. (Hannah)

The young people were not left alone to deal with the 'corruption' in their lives. The process attached to understandings of diffusing blame, gradually moved young people toward taking responsibility for their lives with the support of the YOTS staff.

Moving Young People Beyond 'Corrupted' Lives

An understanding of the 'corruption' of young people's lives meant staff were not willing to leave young people in their existing circumstances. As will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter, the staff worked on the premise that abandoning young people through exclusionary practices does not help and they drew on a range of strategies (see Chapter 7 and 8) to move young people beyond their existing contexts.

Alongside the premise that the young people's lives had been 'corrupted' was the premise that to leave young people to exist in a 'corrupted' state was inexcusable. The staff's understandings of 'corrupted' lives required a response which came through other understandings that were contingent on these premises: the young people and

their circumstances were unique; there was a need for the primacy of the young people's needs over the needs of others; the young people were worthy and deserving; and the young people held potential and possibility.

Individual and Contextual Uniqueness

As suggested above, one of the most powerful components of the way in which the YOTS staff spoke of the YOTS young people was their recognition and intimate knowledge of each young person's individuality and unique circumstances. These particular young people's contexts held significant disparities to those contexts that we might consider 'normal' or 'average' circumstances. But it was an understanding and acknowledgement of the idiosyncrasies by the YOTS staff that served as the basis of their knowledge of the young people.

The four staff I interviewed who had not drawn on 'the pause' to counter deficit knowledge, resisted though their understanding of the contextual uniqueness of the young people. For example, when I asked Steph to describe the young people she immediately gave me a description of every one of the young people in the school, their background, their personalities, their strengths and weaknesses, their 'diagnoses', how they came to be with YOTS. Russell and Ruth, who also spoke of the young people's individuality, supported this notion, speaking of the young people as, "varied" and "unique". The final staff member, Jill, spoke of her depth of shock when she heard the young people's stories and gave examples of these.

All the staff had an intimate knowledge of each of the young people to a depth that the young people often complained about, but which they conversely also seemed to appreciate (see Chapter 7). The practices that therefore followed this understanding involved such acts as getting to know the young people through an intensive interview for enrolment. Such intimate knowledge tended to be a positive rather than invasive element but simultaneously left the young people nowhere to hide. It appeared that almost everything was known about them. For example, any trouble individual young people had been in on the weekend was regularly known to staff by Monday morning. Russell, Scott and John all spoke of their contact with outreach youth workers, psychologists, police, family and carers. They often had contact and/or debriefings with these people. Not only did this contact provide a base knowledge of each young person, but was continually updated.

As the actions from this understanding of uniqueness tended to be positive steps forward, the young people generally came to appreciate what was being done for them rather than their initial objection to the perceived intrusion. As Spence explains in the quote below, although the young people complained about this level of knowledge, they conversely also seem to appreciate it as it allowed staff to become involved in helping them with their lives.

> *What do you think the effects on the kids are [of your help]?*
> Between annoyance …. I mean, kids are always saying you're sticking your nose in. Sometimes that comes down to frustration and anger. Then sometimes (…) trying to make their lives better, trying to help them out. But in the heat of the moment sometimes, they think you are pain in the ass, sticking your nose in where it doesn't belong […]. But you have to treat the whole person, you have to take these guys as a complete package and a whole person, you can't expect to make a difference in someone's life if you're not. (Spence)

The staff explained that the process of coming to know the young people took significant time to develop and continued throughout young people's time with YOTS and for some time after as well.

Other smaller actions contributing to this knowledge included daily reports to Father Riley about every young person, regular contact with home, and the provision of mobiles to young people so they could be contacted. However, these actions also extended to much larger commitments to the young people such as accompanying them to the police and attending court if necessary. There was very little these young people could do that would prevent the staff from supporting them and this appeared to be linked to their depth of understanding of the circumstances the young people endured outside the YOTS setting. As Ruth explained, this understanding of 'uniqueness' meant that the programmes they initiated were also tailored to the young people.

> Everybody is unique in terms ..... a lot of them are from dysfunctional families. They've had issues with the law, issues with drugs and alcohol, for them to work beyond some of those things is a credit to them, with the support of the

> staff of course. A lot of them have issues that ... mental health issues as well that would impact their interaction with people. So they are all very individual. And it's very hard to say what sort of programme we do because each program is different. Even all of our schools have different programmes. Each of the residential sites and each of the programs have their own different ways of dealing with the young people too. […] they're individuals and at different stages, so depending upon also what's happened with them, their home life too, that can have an impact. (Ruth)

The approach of individually addressing the young people promoted the primacy of the young people's needs over the needs of others. In the YOTS *School Philosophy*, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 2 is used to make explicit their understanding of the primacy of the young people.

> The child shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law (policy) and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws (policies) for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration. (YOTS 2012c: 8).

As an example of the way the young people's needs had primacy, Spence compares YOTS practice to those typically seen in mainstream for an incident of swearing:

> As soon as you tell one of your teachers [in a mainstream school] to 'f' off you're gone for a month. That doesn't serve the kid, it serves the teacher. Fair enough too, they've got 32 kids in the one classroom and you can't have that behaviour under those circumstances. I guess we see that more of a symptom of the problem rather than the problem, so we do cop the abuse that wouldn't be acceptable […] because the words that they have been bought up with are wrong. […] You also have to deal with those behaviours. We don't let behaviours slide, […] we act on those. (Spence)

What I want to draw out of Spence's quote is that the YOTS staff were unapologetic in placing the young people's needs before their own and others. Spence explained

that the YOTS staff were able to work this way, not just because of the YOTS structure, but because they saw young people's behaviour as a symptom of their lives. The YOTS staff did not let this behaviour pass but saw that in excluding the young person, as might happen in a mainstream school, they had only benefited the teacher who was sworn at. This approach to power within the mainstream context has a dominating effect, attempting to force respect, an approach which the YOTS staff saw as not benefiting the young person. The YOTS practice of not placing blame (in this case on the young people for not having the 'correct' level of respect), provided young people with the opportunity and the reason to change which benefits them for a lifetime without the necessity for dominance. This is further exemplified in the following quote.

> We are a school, but I often say education and what you see at school is probably only twenty percent of our day. Sure, it doesn't mean that education is not held up here in terms of what we aim for and the expectations of a school, but the bottom line is if we don't get these kids where they can actually feel safe and supported to learn, well then. So most of our job is what we call pastoral care or just being a wholistic program that, you know, if the kids have been disengaged for so long its not fair, you can't just throw them into the learning without some of the other stuff. (Liam)

Liam's comments were not an admission that education was of any less value, but a recognition that the burden presented by these young people's lives needed to be addressed so that education became possible. The staff considered both were necessary to move young people forward.

> Its much more individual, […] even in our small groups there is a vast range of different abilities and many reasons. You couldn't do it that way, it has to be every kid which has a different need and with very different strategies, and every interaction, what works with one is completely disastrous on another, so you have be individually specific to the child […] it's a (…) process, I mean to some point it's (…) if the kids don't show up, we call the family. (…) We follow up and if there is a drama, like we have had in the last few days, we follow up and we work with the mother and we work with the police, work

> with DoCS/FACS and make sure that anything that can be done is being done. (Spence)

In practice, this understanding of the young people's primacy played out in many circumstances from small things like providing stationary for all the young people and providing a place for it to be kept because the staff understood that many of the young people's lives would not allow for the purchase, the safe keeping or the ability to bring school supplies to school each day; to much larger things such as one school reorganising itself for the afternoon to allow one of the teachers to accompany a young person and her mother to the police station concerning a sexual assault on the young woman. It indicated the importance that the staff placed on these young people's needs being a priority along with the recognition that if these experiences were dealt with immediately, then the possibility of education became feasible.

The Young People are Worthy and Deserving

Understandings of the young people as both deserving and worthy emerged from the YOTS staff's talk and were almost inseparable from their understandings of the possibility they saw in the lives of the young people. The staff spoke of the young people as deserving of not just of an education, but deserving of lives free from the burdens they currently experience – the young people should not be missing out just because of their circumstances. This understanding of deservedness seemed to link closely to staff talk about the young people having 'possibility'. In seeing the young people as deserving, staff were also able to see the possibility of a different future for the young people, one which was closed when young people were not seen as deserving.

Staff understandings of deservedness were based on knowledge of young people as having worth. They spoke about the young people as not believing they deserved the things that others had, as having no belief in themselves and as believing they would be judged for their past.

> Yes, they don't believe in themselves. You know, everybody that's ever had any contact with them has told them that they were bad, that they were no good. You know, that they were not worth worrying about, that they were

> stupid […] And they just think "Well, I'm not worth anything and I'm never going to be anything. I've come from nothing. What could I ever be?" (Julie) They are nervous …. maybe caused by "you know about my past and you are going to judge me." (Jeremy)

However, the staff understood each young person as being valuable and needing to know this, regardless of where they had come from or their previous actions. This is reflected in the following staff comments.

> However you got here is no reason to feel less valued than anyone else in mainstream. (Sharon)

> Kids must not only be loved, they must know they are loved, they must know through actions and words, that the time you are investing in them is because you believe in them. (Jeremy)

The staff understood the young people as being quite capable when given the opportunity. Julie is speaking here of some of the maths work the young people were learning that they had never been able to do before.

> And they've done it, you know. […] 'Cause somebody took the time to sit down and take them under their wing and show them really slowly. (Julie)

However, while promoting a sense of deservedness in the young people, the staff recognised that any change still came from the young people themselves.

> … it's not me it's these kids working with me […] I'm only polishing. […] I only polish up what they've got. (Lowan)

This focus on young people as deserving turns understanding away from the negatives of a deficit discourse and therefore continues to challenge the necessity of dominating strategies.

Young People with Possibility and Potential

An understanding of potential is based on a positive outlook of the young people's futures. Staff often referred to 'hope' when speaking about the young people's futures. Sometimes it could be used to indicate a sense of powerlessness, as I described above, however, their use of 'hope' was also an expectation that a different future was possible. Spence draws on this meaning below. He speaks of the expectation he has of young people having a positive future, closely tied to the notion that the young people were deserving of this type of future as much as any other young person.

> I think hope is the main thing. I hope they can leave here with the hope that they can actually go further because a lot of them come in to us hopeless. […] Our message is that you are going to go somewhere with your life otherwise why did I bother getting up in the morning. So my main goal is that they understand and that they believe within themselves that there is a future for them and that there are jobs out there. They are fulfilling jobs and they can get them, and they can get the skills and are worthy of those jobs and that future and they go out and, you know, take life on with both hands and have a normal, successful life which is something they are not exposed to much in their life apart from here. (Spence)

Spence saw his teaching role as adding to young people's understandings of themselves as 'valuable' and 'capable' and 'worthy'. His statement that "otherwise why did I bother getting up this morning" tells these young people that he wouldn't put in the effort to be with them each day if he did not consider them worthy of the effort. The staff also speak very strongly of the 'possibilities' that these young people's lives held and that they could, and should, be allowed to have. In the quote below Jeremy makes connections between their possibilities and the deservedness of young people.

> … with determination, they can treat themselves seriously, know that they have an education, saying I deserve a future, I deserve a job. (Jeremy)

Jeremy's view that the young people have the potential to have a future breaks with deficit views of the 'no hoper' with 'no future' that staff believed were constantly placed on these young people. The creation of possibility for the young people

appeared to be considered a team effort. Young people were not expected to find and develop these futures without support. Jeremy shows this in his constant use of 'we' and 'us' as he speaks of his views of the young people's futures.

> So I really see them as impressionable. A new piece of artwork where *we* can leave the past down there and together, with *them and us*, *we* can paint a new picture. I think that's a very positive look into the future and that's what keeps me going. It doesn't matter what's back here, *we* have a future because *we* can work together to create whatever picture *we* want on it. (Jeremy)

Lowan supports this notion of team effort in his statement, "I only polish up what they've got."

The assumption that the young people had potential was so vital that it was written into the YOTS *Mission Statement* (YOTS, 2012c). "Youth Off The Streets is helping disconnected young people to discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices." Grace explains, that this assumption of 'greatness' and how it came to be achieved was embodied in the actions of Father Riley, who expected much from the young people as he did from the staff.

> He has high expectations. […] He expects the kids …. he tells them "we can do it". He really does build up their confidence. He genuinely believes in them, that they can do it. He demands, and the word is 'demands', from staff and from kids, a lot. That's OK. (Grace)

As Grace and Ruth explain in the quotes below, the 'demands' placed on the young people did not overlook the complexity of their lives.

> And you might look crap, […] you might be taking drugs, you might be off your face every night, but we believe that you have the core. (Grace)

> And I know that there is a lot of strength in these kids and I think we should be building upon that strength in positive ways and promoting it. (Ruth)

The staff readily recognised that the young people could be 'hard work'. However, their belief that, under the 'ugly face', the young people had the potential to access different futures. However, staff also recognised that this was not a change that could be manipulated, and spoke of how difficult a task it could be to break old patterns and establish new ones based in new truths.

> I get the sense that they do things to prove how bad they are, how little they know, and that you can't teach them. And they have 1001 strategies. And each person has a strategy that they do very well to lock themselves out of learning and they do it, I believe, because it's their sense of power. Unfortunately they become very powerful in their ignorance and their power of things. And that's where it takes so much learning to teach them and to teach them a strategy like, "Oh my God! I can do that". (Helena)
> A lot of them come to us hopeless. No education, so disengaged being told over an over again that they are crap and they're not going anywhere and they will end up in gaol. […] Obviously we work very hard here to make sure that's not the message. (Spence)

Helena and Spence speak here of the power that these old patterns and subjectivities held over young people and refer to the compliance of the young people in maintaining these 'truths'. But they also argue that it is possible to challenge young people's previous understandings of themselves in ways that do not require the continued 'fight' these young people have previously engaged in with mainstream schools, replacing them with the freedom to access learning.

Conclusion

The possibility of overcoming the exclusion, burden and damage that has characterised these young people's lives might appear hopeless and their engagement in schools an impossible proposition. However, they were in school and were achieving. The concerted effort of the YOTS staff to address and resist deficit understandings was key to this engagement and was apparent in their disruption of deficit discourses and their use of a counter discourse and begins to address the young people's life experiences. The staff had shown how the disruption of deficit understandings could occur via 'the pause' and through the tactics of challenging, rejecting, negating and using deficit. The

staff's refusal to give power to a 'deficit' way of knowing young people was a common thread throughout the responses given. Their challenge acted to identify the presence of an uncontested understandings and worked as a precursor to a language that challenged and resisted deficit. The staff had used this silence to access alternate language that challenged and replaced deficit understandings. It was through the resistance of this dominant truth that options for different knowledges were exposed and the power relations in this re-speaking of young people were no longer directed at dominating the young people as their experiences of deficit had. Instead they have shattered deficit understandings in the YOTS context and have thereby constituted one of Brown's 'assaults' on deficit as it "finally triumphs such that the silence itself is rendered articulate as an historically injurious force" (Brown 1996: 186). The deliberate and successful use of alternate language and tactics allowed the disruption of dominant and damaging knowledges within both education and wider YOTS context.

Each of the tactics used to disrupt deficit contributed to a knowledge of young people that was very different to how the young people described mainstream understandings of them and had influenced the context of the YOTS schools. In the YOTS context the disruption of deficit and the counter discourse used, lay the foundation for the way in which YOTS approaches all aspects of young people's lives.

The staff combined the disruption of deficit understandings with counter understandings that framed the young people as experiencing 'corrupted' lives that should not draw blame and should act as encouragement to change such contexts. They have a significant impact on the staff in terms of how the staff understood young people in the school context, and in the types of educational practices that were drawn on. Each of the individual aspects of disrupting and countering deficit interrelated to produce a very powerful resistance to deficit ways of addressing young people, and provide a powerful re-speaking of these particular young people.

There is a clear indication of the possibilities of being able to enter into different and less damaging, or even beneficial ways of framing others which I discuss in the next chapters. This begins to gesture toward a power relation that young people have not experienced. These alternate understandings, embedded in how this staff understands these young people in this particular context, therefore holds significance. The staff's

resistance is established in how they spoke of young people's lives and will be clearly seen in the next chapter in the ways they understood young people in the YOTS school context.

Chapter 7 – Relations of Care

Introduction

One of the most humbling experiences I had as both a researcher and a teacher was the realisation of just how wrong my own thinking about the young people at YOTS had been. Simply put, I expected to observe chaos, and while there were moments of chaos this was not typical. To my surprise, what I observed generally was comparable to walking into the 'top' class of a streamed year or grade. Young people sitting quietly in their seats, asking and answering questions, focused on their work, being polite, helping out, having fun, joking with their teachers, working to a high standard and achieving well academically. It shocked me that these young people could show such different ways of 'being' in a classroom, particularly given the descriptions they provided of their behaviour in their previous schools.

> We have kids here now, who at their last school didn't turn up every day or didn't turn up at all and that's why they are here. And yet they come every day here. […] I can't remember the last day Lucas took a day off other than he is sick or has a doctor's appointment or something that we knew about. I don't know if he has ever ditched school. It means he is getting something here, something that he recognises. […] I don't know what he gets. Whatever he gets, he values enough to show up, and that he wasn't getting before. (Spence)

> After the Presentation Afternoon, Helena asked me to come outside and, with Tana (now 15) and her mother, showed us documentation of Tana's reading age – which had gone from around 6 years old to around 12 years old in the space of the two years she had been attending YOTS. Tana explained that one of the teachers at her old school had told her that she would never be able to read and she was very proud of the fact that she had been able to prove that teacher wrong. (Fieldnotes)

These two quotes indicate two things for me, about the YOTS context. Firstly, the young people were turning up to school, which was a vast change from their attendance at their mainstream schools, and secondly they were making significant academic advances. The young people appeared to have found something of value that

made them now want to be at school every day. I argued throughout Chapter 6 that the YOTS teachers' premises, their different ways of understanding and therefore the different ways they spoke about the young people and their life experiences were one key to setting up conditions that allowed reconciliation. In particular, their challenge of deficit knowledges was central to this task. However, this appeared to be only one aspect of the conditions that YOTS used that allowed the young people to reconcile with education.

I argue here that for the young people to not only be attending but to be succeeding academically in the YOTS schools, something different to mainstream practice must have been happening. On one level, the educational strategies of the YOTS staff were not that dissimilar from those of mainstream educators, yet something in what they did allowed for some highly successful outcomes for these young people whom mainstream schools had not been able to educate. Helena's example (above) of Tana's vast improvement in reading is just one example of this success and was not unusual in the YOTS setting. In the past, most of the young people had developed and expressed an understanding of themselves as 'dumb'. Yet many of them did well academically in the YOTS's school setting and this was echoed in everything from reading tests such as the *Neale Analysis of Reading Ability*, to overall School Certificate results across all four YOTS schools. There were also YOTS young people who had completed their HSC and/or had gone to TAFE, others who were now employed, and some who were attending or had completed university studies. These were all young people whose mainstream schools had given up on them, and YOTS had very likely been their final chance for an education.

Over the next two chapters I move to focus on the ways the staff engaged with the young people in the YOTS context that allowed them to learn as a result of the premises, understandings and different ways of speaking I discussed in Chapter 6. I begin to identify and explore the types of conditions that allowed for the types of engagement that YOTS established. I argue that these conditions were produced by the relations and practices deployed by the YOTS staff. The effects of these relations and practices were obvious in both the academic success and the improved lives of the young people in their schools.

From my analysis it seemed that there were some quite specific ways in which the YOTS staff engaged with the young people that was different from mainstream schooling, one of which I have characterised as their 'conditions of care'. I have used 'care' to describe the way YOTS worked with the young people as it went beyond the educational purpose that they also had. Their 'care' encompassed an understanding of education as a very personalised *journey*, one that was shared by the staff and each of the young people of YOTS. I drew on the term *journey* as a metaphor for the ways in which the YOTS staff practiced their care of the young people. The staff had very definite notions of what their understanding of their practices entailed and what it required of them in terms of their relationship and the practical support required with the young people.

I would argue that the YOTS understandings that produced my notion of a shared *journey* was particularly important for the YOTS staff as it seemed to allow the dominating power experienced by the young people in previous educational relationships to be questioned and altered. Following Foucault's notions of power as productive, it becomes possible to see power relations operating in ways that are beneficial rather than just repressive. To explore these differences in relations and practice, I have drawn again on the productive nature of Foucaultian notion of power relations. What is so potent about the idea of power as productive is that its interpretation does not always have to equate with deciphering domination and resistance. When the young people were not unalterably tied to subjectivities that were always vulnerable, dominated and repressed or which required a response of rebellion, then other possibilities opened up. At YOTS, domination and dominating practices were replaced by practices of freedom that allowed the young people to take on new subjectivities and therefore new responses to their lives. Staff were able to invoke practices of freedom in their relationship with the young people, helping to promote *freedom from* past subjectivities and responses and *freedom to* take on new subjectivities and different life trajectories.

In the following two chapters, I have used the YOTS staff's interviews, my observations and YOTS policy. I have taken advantage of the productive nature of power relations to explore the *relations of care* and the *practices of care* engaged in by the YOTS staff. I argue that this form of 'care' underpins the staff's educational approach. To do this I

theorise 'care' as a tactic of the power relations between the YOTS staff and young people. The YOTS form of 'care' produced freedom for the young people – standing in direct contrast to disciplinary forms of caring in mainstream school practices which have produced domination (see Chapter 4). I then explore the relations and practices of care that the YOTS staff deployed which drew on these practices of freedom, both for and with the young people, and which were based in a very specific notion of what it meant to *journey* with these young people.

Producing Freedom Through Power Relations

From a Foucaultian perspective everyone exists in power relations. The potentially disheartening nature of this perspective can however, be challenged. By understanding power in unexpected ways, power relations do not necessarily bring the destruction or revolt or oppression that are commonly equated with power. Foucault emphasised throughout his work that this singular and commonly held notion of power is only one, often extreme, possibility of power relations. Foucault (2000a) even goes so far as to suggest that freedom can be created in the interstices of power relations.

YOTS staff were doing something that was working where mainstream had failed. I argue that the staffs' premises and understandings of the young people (see Chapter 6), allowed them to engage with power in ways which seemed to generate power relations significantly different to those the young people had previously experienced. Power was not being used in the YOTS context to subjugate the young people. Rather, power was used to free them from the constraints of domination in all areas of their lives.

I further argue that the YOTS staff have accessed *relations* and *practices* of care that move away from dominating power relations. Instead, these power relations produce freedom for the YOTS young people, allowing them access to such responses as engaging in alternative life experiences and in relating differently to the other aspects of their lives that had accompanied them into the YOTS setting. In Chapter 2, I argued that a Foucaultian notion of power requires an awareness of four essential understandings: power only exists in relationship; power is productive; power is a cycle of 'action on action'; and where power exists so does resistance. To these understandings I now add the understanding that power produces spaces in which

freedom may be accessed. When arranged around and with each other, these components work to produce practices of freedom that, I argue, are established by *relations of care* and *practices of care*. These relations and practices can be focused on producing freedom rather than domination. To conceptualise this argument, I draw directly from Foucault's work on power, truth, freedom and ethics (2000a), and from others who have interpreted Foucault's work on power and freedom: Ambrosio (2008, 2010) and Armstrong's (2008) work on ethics and freedom; Thompson's (2003) discussion of forms of resistance; Kosmala and McKernon (2011) and Hofmeyr's (2006) work on care of the self and how this relates to caring for others; and Luxon's (2008) work on ethics and subjectivity.

Foucaultian Power Relations and Freedom

As Foucault explains, "power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free" (Foucault 2000a: 292). Power therefore, is contingent on the possibility of freedom, or, as Hofmeyer (2006: 219) argues, "power presupposes *freedom".*

> If we did not have the freedom to act and to react, the interplay between relations of force would congeal into domination. […] Freedom is therefore both the precondition for the exercise of power and also its permanent support, since without the ability or the freedom to *resist* relations of power, the interplay of mobile relations would congeal into a physical determination. (Hofmeyer, 2006: 219–20)

Kosmala and McKernon (2011:391) support this, stating that power relations stand as a "permanent provocation" to freedom. They further argue that Foucault identifies spaces for resistance and refusal and quote him to explain how these spaces can be accessed in the form of practices of freedom. These practices gather in the individual, as a site of resistance.

> It is in the free action of the self on the self […] that Foucault finds humanity's ethical potential; where ethics is defined as "the conscious practices of freedom" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 284, 1997)[6]. (Kosmala and McKernon 2011: 381)

They argue that it is the deliberate action of the individual on themselves that allows freedom to exist. This might imply a response of 'anything goes', however it needs to be noted that Foucault does not draw on freedom in the sense of it being the ability to do 'whatever you like'. Ambrosio describes Foucault's understanding as being,

> embodied in an attitude of incessant and unyielding scepticism about historically constituted forms of experience, a practice of permanent disobedience and insubordination aimed at testing the limits imposed on individuality. […] Freedom here should be understood as the capacity to "question and modify those systems which make only particular kinds of action possible," to "free our relation to the practices and the thinking that have historically limited our experience" (Rajchman, Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy, 110–111). (Ambrosio, 2008: 258–9)

Ambrosio explains that we are free because we can question what makes power possible and this comes about by understanding its relationship to truth and the work that truth does on the individual. It would seem then that understanding and acting on this ability to question is vital for freedom to be accessed. In order for freedom to become available, resistance needs to be tapped into, as "[n]o promise of a better future can do away with the necessity for resistance in the present" (Hofmeyr, 2006: 227).

To understand how freedom therefore might be produced I have turned to Thompson (2003) and his work on resistance and freedom. He identifies two types of resistance from the work of Foucault. One is 'tactical reversal', the other, an 'aesthetics of existence', and both need to be separated from what Foucault (2000a) describes as power 'stratagem'.

In drawing on this argument I am not replacing one type of resistance with another, and despite arguments that an 'aesthetics of existence' was supplanted by Foucault's later work on power (which conceptualises resistance as coming in the form of 'care of the self') I would argue that all three types of resistance are valuable analytical tools in an analysing power relations. However, it is an 'aesthetic of existence' that works to produce freedom.

Freedom can only be accessed in those spaces that exist between the responses enacted in the 'action on action' cycle. This means that both 'stratagem' and 'tactical reversal' (which are acts of the cycle) continue to produce dominating power as can be seen operating in the mainstream school contexts. 'Stratagem' are those acts of resistance operating within the 'action on action' cycle but which "never succeeded in reversing the situation" (Foucault 2000a: 292). For example, Jalan's act of not turning up to detention or Reagan diligently turning up to school when he was suspended can be seen as acts of resistance, but only in the form of 'stratagem'. There is no sustained reversal of power and mainstream school staff still held the dominant position in the student/staff power relation.

Hofmeyr (2006) and Thompson (2003) explain that the concept of 'tactical reversal' acknowledges that subjects have succeeded in reversing dominant positions within the power relation. It is drawn from an understanding of power from Foucault's early work. An example of 'tactical reversal' can be seen when I suggested in Chapter 4 that by the time many of the YOTS young people were about to be expelled from their mainstream schools, they had actually managed to turn the tables on this 'game of power' via their relentless use of 'power stratagem'. It was the combination of the sustained application of the above types of 'stratagem' (such as Jalan and Reagan's resistance) and tactics such as the young people's 'ugly face' and their enacted contempt of schooling that achieved a 'tactical reversal' of power in their mainstream schooling experiences.

However, as Thompson (2003) argues, a 'tactical reversal' continues to perpetuate the cycle of power relations and freedom is not produced, as evidenced in the unbeneficial life outcomes experienced by these young people despite their position of dominance in the student/staff relationship at their mainstream schools. It is at this point that Foucault is sometimes accused of getting trapped in power. Hofmeyr argues that this is not necessarily problematic.

> Foucault did get trapped in power, but he refused to become an instrument of power[73] by offering normative criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of power.[74] He got trapped because he, like all of us, has always been trapped. The point is this is not a bad thing. The pervasiveness of

> power might dispel the myth of autonomous self-creation but it does facilitate heteronymous practices of freedom – a difficult freedom which is not freedom *from* power, but freedom *through* power, despite power and because of power. (Hofmeyr, 2006: 227)

What I believe Hofmeyr is arguing is that when Foucault began moving towards an argument for a 'care of the self' it no longer mattered whether we were 'caught' in a power cycle, as he had now identified ways of being able to make power work for the self and for others, rather than just purely against it. His work on an 'aesthetics of existence' allowed him to show that although we exist in a constant state of power relations, we do not have to be dominated by these relations. An 'aesthetics of existence' operates in the spaces of this cycle allowing freedom and drawing on power *over* the self (Hofmeyr 2006).

There is an inescapable tie between power relations and the knowledge accessed to establish, maintain or build power. Kosmala and McKernon (2011) argue that the practice of freedom is bound to: an understanding of the knowledge that is producing power; the questioning of the truths that these create; and a willingness to act both inside and outside these understandings. Likewise, Ambrosio (2008) argues that to act in the spaces created in the cycle of 'action on action', and take advantage of the practices of freedom produced in these spaces, there must be an acknowledgment that power/knowledge produces truths that *are* able to be questioned. Questioning allows other truths to come into existence and in turn accesses freedom from the subjugation some truths impose. It is these spaces that YOTS had taken full advantage of, leading to their different premises and understandings of young people and the practices that resulted from these understandings.

The YOTS context demonstrates the invocation of practices of freedom. The staff questioned, identified and disrupted the deficit truths that circulated about the young people (see Chapter 5). They had replaced these with understandings that re-spoke young people as not at fault for their circumstances – speaking of them, instead, in terms of being educationally displaced (see Chapter 3). The staff deployed these understandings in practices which worked to free the YOTS young people from the previous, damaging truths about themselves and replaced them with alternative truths.

Power was still present but worked – and was worked with – in different ways. When these practices were enacted, they not only questioned established dominant truths and dominant patterns of power relations, but also worked to develop in young people an ability to continue questioning the effects of the truths applied to them, whether beneficial or detrimental.

Challenging and Creating an 'Aesthetics of Existence'

I return here to the last form of resistance identified by Thompson's (2003) – an 'aesthetics of existence' – to explore further, how freedom exists within power relations. He describes an 'aesthetics of existence' as a "critical practice" (Thompson 2003: 123), in self formation that "enable[s] us to cultivate new forms of being and doing, new kinds of value and obligation" (Thompson 2003: 123). He argues that an 'aesthetics of existence' requires us to critically and autonomously produce "new forms of existence […] by refusing imposed types of individuality" (Thompson 2003: 124–125).

An 'aesthetics of existence' provides an understanding of how YOTS staff could create freedom. My research suggests that they had constructed new forms of existence and made them available for the YOTS young people to draw on. This 'critical practice' required three acts: resistance via questioning established deficit discourses; resistance by reframing the young people outside deficit; and the constant maintenance of this resistance through a range of relational and practical conditions (which I discuss over the next two chapters). All of these actions seemed to challenge those unquestionable truths that, Ambrosio argues, hide behind an accompanying set of enforcing practices and which he insists "must be problematised as a historical construct" (2008: 252). Hofmeyr (2006) does caution that we need to be critical in this questioning as some things may not need to be resisted. She explains that although Foucault would suggest that everything is dangerous and should be resisted,

> At other times, he seems to distinguish the empowering forms of power from those forms that disempower us. He even believes that we can tell them apart, despite our immersion in power. (Hofmeyr 2006: 225)

With this warning in mind, I draw on Ambrosio's (2008) reasoning that we should problematise 'truth' in order to reject that which is placed on us. By rejecting some 'truths' and being selective in the truths we choose to claim for ourselves we can begin to free ourselves from the subjugation of some identities with an aim to "disassemble and reconstitute ourselves out of the 'collected discourse of others.'" (Ambrosio 2008: 251). He acknowledges that to create a new 'aesthetic of existence' takes great courage on the behalf of the individual and a willingness to live with uncertainty as there is a constant risk of destabilizing who we are. However, what this achieves is what Ambrosio calls transgression.

> Transgression […] is the process of locating the 'space of freedom we can still enjoy" in constituting ourselves as subjects […] Since each recognition of our limits raises new questions and brings into view new and unforeseen cultural limits, we are always in "the position of beginning again.' [10] (Ambrosio 2008: 254)

We therefore are required to exist "in a permanent state of test[ing] the limits of experience" (Ambrosio 2008: 254) to find alternatives to what currently exists. The YOTS staff's continual challenge of deficit understandings and their replacement of these understandings with others allowed young people to understand themselves as, for example, courageous or by allowing them to see themselves as 'student' where these had previously been disallowed by their mainstream schools.

What I argue is happening in the YOTS context is a 'game of truth' – where alternate understandings have been accessed to construct different 'truths' around young people.

> In modifying games of truth, the aim is not to "free truth from power", which is impossible because truth is always already implicated in power, but to deploy fictions of social reality within the present field of power in order to create new truths. (Ambrosio 2008: 256)

Understanding young people outside of deficit knowledges accesses practices of freedom. Within the power relation between the YOTS young people and staff, these

alternate understandings had been established by the staff, who then made them available to the young people to use.

Kosmala and McKernon (2011) suggest that to open up new ways to overcome domination we need to access a range of tools. YOTS staff, it could be argued, are showing young people not just the possibilities but providing them with the tools to open up options for freedom. As Luxon (2008: 386) explains, in instigating resistance to overcome the restrictions of the power relations in their lives, the staff had developed in young people a "curiosity that initially prompts an individual to seek out a parrhesiastes" (Luxon 2008:386), a role that "gradually becomes claimed by himself" (Luxon 2008: 386). Staff become the 'parrhesiastes' or the 'truth tellers' in the YOTS context before passing this role to the young people as part of the resistance to the 'games of truth' in operation. To this point the young people have only been able to work with the subjugating knowledges presented about themselves in multiple areas of their lives, having no ability to be their own 'truth teller'. Within the YOTS context, staff initially take on the role of the young people's 'truth teller'. They expose young people to the notion of 'games of truth' as fictional (through their use of *relations and practices of care*), showing them that "[b]ecause games of truth are neither true nor false, it is possible to "more or less modify this or that rule, and sometimes even the entire game of truth (EC, 295-297)" (Ambrosio 2008: 255). In playing with 'truth', modifications become possible by engaging with knowledge to establish something that has not previously existed. In relating this to education, Ambrosio (2008: 256) states that, in order not to be dominated,

> we must acquire an ethos characterized by a permanent self-critiquing and an understanding of the relation between systems of truth and modalities of power. […] the best we can do is minimize the effects of power by equipping ourselves with certain truths that help us avoid the kind of domination effects where a kid is subjected to the arbitrary and unnecessary authority of a teacher.

At YOTS, the staff moved from initially, playing these 'games of truth' and 'games of power' on behalf of the young people, to playing these games *with* the young people. Prior to the young people entering YOTS, 'deficit' knowledges were the predominant,

perhaps only ways by which the young people were constituted and could thereby constitute their own subjectivities. They were labelled, and labelled themselves, as 'dumb', 'bad', 'worthless', 'criminal', 'failure', 'violent'. This 'truth' had created a very specific and very powerful 'aesthetic of existence' for these young people. In this context, the staff role of 'truth teller' became one of accessing a 'staff' position of power. It is not that power was absent (this is not possible) but that staff drew on the power of their position and their relationships with the young people to create a new way of knowing the young people and ultimately, to practice education in different ways. They crafted a very different set of terms, with drew on such truths as 'corrupted', 'abused', 'courageous', 'stunning', 'resilient'. These new truths created a very different 'aesthetic of existence' for the young people to live within and allowed staff to draw on different practices embedded in freedom. They then put in place practices that developed in young people an ability to continue questioning those truths, good or bad, and provided the means by which to become their own 'truth teller'. Foucault argues that this is an ethical practice that,

> implies complex relationships with others insofar as this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others […] In fact, it is a way of limiting and controlling power. (Foucault 2000a: 287–288)

I argue that the YOTS staff drew on practices of freedom through an 'aesthetics of existence' on behalf of their young people by 'limiting and controlling' the ways in which power could be accessed and used.

The major points to recognise from this argument are that power is productive – it can create domination but can also produce freedom. To produce freedom within the spaces of an 'action on action' cycle, care as a practice of power can be drawn on. These practices of care can break down young people's understandings of themselves as deficit or problematic or undeserving. They allow young people to see an alternate 'aesthetic of existence' of and for themselves, creating freedom.

In the next two chapters, I turn to explore the relational and practical conditions of practices of freedom that create the conditions that allow young people to reconcile with education. I argue that through the staff's notions of what I have identified as

journeying they access certain 'relations of care' (this chapter) and 'practices of care' (Chapter 8) that enabled YOTS staff to establish the freedom for their young people to learn.

YOTS educational practices were very different to the practices the young people in this study had experienced in their mainstream schools. As I have established, the practice of caring for the young people in mainstream school environments were generally via tactics of domination. This resulted in a constant, and readily admitted, rebellion, and ultimately developed a form of 'tactical reversal' with the young people taking a dominant position and schools/young people ultimately severing ties, often despite the best intentions of their teachers. There was little acceptance by young people of the type of 'care' offered within mainstream practice.

I have also argued that at YOTS, there was a disruption in the 'action on action' of the staff/young people power relation that occurred at the point of the staff's questioning of deficit truths. When staff disrupted 'old' deficit knowledges (as an action), the young people were freed to take on altered or new 'truths' (a responding action), the resulting freedom came from what I have named 'relations of care' and 'practices of care'. The vast difference in these practices to ones the young people experienced in mainstream schools, I suggest, is what allowed the young people to respond so differently in their YOTS school experience. Rather than 'doing education to' young people, staff saw themselves as being *alongside* the young people. This *journey* was based in 'care', as a practice of freedom.

At YOTS 'care' was not just an emotional response to the disturbing facts of these young people's lives, but moved into action that helped address each young person's unique context. Central to the *journey* were processes that worked to produce freedom rather than domination. These processes included *relations of care* and *practices of care* and allowed staff to use their position of power to access the spaces of a power relation that produced freedom. They could then resist dominating power relations on behalf of young people (from within and to a lesser extent, outside the YOTS context) with the intent of producing a liberated young person who was able to resist autonomously and create their own access to freedom. The staff's understanding of care allowed relations and practices to develop that did not draw as

readily on dominant/subordinate relational positions. This is not to say that dominating power did not still exist. It still typically rested more with staff than with the young people. However, as the apparent intent of the staff was not to dominate, the times when staff did draw on dominating tactics were less likely to elicit the types of resistance seen in mainstream schools.

In the YOTS context, *relations of care* and *practices of care* were understood in terms of a very specific relationship of *journeying*. When I speak about care I am looking at the actions of the YOTS staff to ensure the wellbeing of the young people of YOTS. Care, in this instance, seemed to include a number of things: love for these young people, commitment, dedication, valuing, taking responsibility, attachment. None of these terms encompassed all that the YOTS staff appeared to be doing. However, the combination gives a slightly more accurate picture of how the staff related to the young people, what staff did with the young people, and is what I am calling 'care'. What needs to be explored then is how the YOTS staff practiced 'care' in a way that created the space for freedom.

The commitment to act towards the young people in new ways seemed to arise from the YOTS philosophy. This philosophy was based on Salesian theology which YOTS describes as a preventative system. From Salesian understandings, the "cornerstone" of the YOTS approach, was "an ACTIVE method of ENGAGING" young people (YOTS 2012c: 22, capitals in the original).

> In the tradition of the Salesian way of working with the young, this agency [YOTS] should be described as:
> A place of welcome and hospitality
> The worker is approachable and available. The young person finds in the worker:
>
> > A HEART that welcomes
> > A FACE that smiles
> > A HAND that helps
> > EYES that see good
> > EARS that listen to what is really being said

> For the youth who enter the agency they should have daily contact with people who are 'different' from others they have met. In this encounter it should become a new experience that generates wonder and causes what is good in them to come to the surface.
> They should find genuine friendship, family spirit, constant patience and respect for the personal dignity of each person. (YOTS, 2012c: 22)

This philosophy focuses on what staff should be 'like', suggesting that relations and practices of care need to be initiated by staff in the first instance. The description above is based very firmly in drawing on relational ways of 'being' that the YOTS young people never or rarely encountered in other parts of their lives. This approach to young people was embedded in many areas of YOTS policy, for example:

> *Code of Behaviour for Staff Working with Young People*
> At all times, we are positive role models for the young people in our service. Staff must conduct themselves in an appropriate, aware, responsible and respectful manner at all times.
> It is essential that staff learn to clearly establish and maintain appropriate and consistent boundaries with young people.
> The teachers have a responsibility to:
>
> > Respect and support students in all aspects of their learning
> > Model appropriate behaviour (YOTS 2012c: 104)

These types of understandings about how staff should interact with the young people at YOTS appeared to be a central theme in the YOTS staff's conditions of care. It seemed that both staff and young people had deployed a constructive, helpful, encouraging, supportive power in their understandings of what I have termed *journeying* (described below) that were drawn on as part of caring for the young people. Although power was still present, it allowed access to practices of freedom in the lives of these young people. They now had opportunities that allowed them to operate in ways that were far more beneficial and which had allowed the young people to reconcile with their academic (and other) learning.

Journeying

Having explored theoretically how power relations can be employed to produce freedom via conditions of care, my aim for the remainder of this chapter is to explore the relational forms that the YOTS staff's 'care' took to produce the beneficial academic and life outcomes many of the YOTS young people were now able to experience. In Chapter 4, I suggested that the actions of the YOTS young people equated to what Hunter S. Thompson called 'edgework', an idea taken up by Lyng (1990; 2012) in risk taking settings and by Hope (2007) in an educational context. The extremes of action engaged in by these young people often sat in that space between life and death and could throw up some significant complications in being able to work with them. Mainstream schools had failed in their attempts to care for the young people. However, something that YOTS was doing allowed for the YOTS staff to meet and stand with young people as they 'crowded the edge'. What I argue was happening here was a *relation and practice of care* based on *journeying*. The YOTS staff rarely characterised their practice as 'educating', 'schooling' or 'teaching'. Rather, they described it in terms that reflected a *journey* with the young people. From this basis I chose to use *journey/journeying* but have taken the term to conceptualise the relational and practical elements of YOTS care of the young people.

I argue here that the conditions that the YOTS staff deployed to care for the young people primarily came about due to the staff's understandings that all young people were deserving and worthy; that all young people should be protected from harm; and that all young people should have the possibility of the type of future that many people take for granted. I contend that these grew out of the premises that the young people's lives had been 'corrupted' and that they should not be left in this 'corrupt' state. In holding these premises and understandings, the staff drew on a very particular understanding that I have used to constitute the conditions of *journeying* that included: *relations of care* such as walking alongside, forward movement, and long term commitment among others; and *practices of care* such as realisations of protection, prevention and augmentation. Each of these conditions of care are captured in more detail over the next two chapters.

The staff used *journey/journeying* as both a term and as a metaphor for their practice. For example Helena and Jeremy use the term *journey* when describing what they might say to the young people when they first come to YOTS.

> We want you to come on that journey with us and that's one of the most important things. (Helena)

> We are doing this for them but also for them to see that we are here to help them on this journey. (Jeremy)

Grace, like other staff, also drew on a *journeying* metaphor when she described her role at YOTS as being "someone who will walk with you to get where you need to go", the implication of *journeying* being inherent in this phrasing.

However, there are problems with the term. *Journeying* is often used in relation to youth to describe some form of movement through life particularly in relation to physical, psychological and spiritual growth, and tends to concern self-actualization and contains a sense of progression through individual change (see for example the use of 'life journey' and 'spiritual journey' in Mullholland 2006; Moss and Dobson, 2006; Helminiak 2008). My use of the notion of *journeying* deliberately moves away from these more commonly held notions as they tend to gloss over the depth and intent of what it is that the YOTS staff were doing. While some of the staff at YOTS had drawn on the term *journey* from these more common understandings, overall, I have used *journeying* here to signify a far more nuanced and complex notion that could be identified in the way the staff at YOTS spoke and acted out the *conditions of care* in this edgeworking environment. Staff practices were sited amongst extreme events and often required radical responses. Drawing on more common notions of *journeying* would significantly underestimate what it was that the YOTS staff did.

In talking about his work, Spence very clearly identified that the *journey* the staff embarked on with these young people was unknowable, unpredictable and fraught. In order for Spence to practice care it often required of him things that he could not be prepared for.

> How do you train someone to file a missing persons report? It's just something that happens and you work it out as you go along. […] Who knows what circumstances are going to pop up. (Spence)

These circumstances required staff to draw on practices responsive to 'edgework' in order to be able to care for the young people. Filling out missing person's reports was only one example. Meg, for example, spoke of: attending the birth of one of the young people's children; of having organised a wedding; of attending police interviews after one young person was involved in a stabbing; and having acted as a liaison between another young person, her mother, and DoCS/FACS, when the young person's mother, who had been on 'Ice' for four days, had beaten her daughter with a baseball bat and DoCS/FACS had wanted to send the young girl home. Hannah speaks of trying to find refuge accommodation on a regular basis for the young people at her school and of dealing with a young girl who had been involved in a fight while living/sleeping on the streets and who arrived at school with a bruise covering one cheek and her eye. These incidents were not unusual or irregular for either the staff or the young people. They typified the severity of the edgework practices taking place that staff and young people worked through together on this particular type of *journey*, and had to be fitted in and around providing education.

The YOTS staff's understandings of *journeying* required particular conditions that were produced by particular relations and practices. These conditions allowed the staff to care for the young people. The remainder of this chapter will address the *relations of care* that YOTS established, while in Chapter 8 the focus is on the *practices of care* that *journeying* required for educational reconciliation. Several of these relations and practices might seem like those that many teachers might use to describe the work they do. However, there is an important difference; it is the significant measures drawn on by the YOTS staff to address these young people's 'edge working' worlds that delineates YOTS practice from other claims to *journeying*.

Elements of 'Journeying'

The following section is an exploration of the element of *journeying* that allowed the YOTS philosophy to permeate what the YOTS staff did with the young people. My analysis of the staff's interviews showed the staff drew on common language and

notions in considering their role at YOTS. I have analysed these to explore the ways in which the staff have been able to use their position of power to create freedom for the young people.

Walking Alongside

One of the key themes of *journeying* that I identified from the YOTS staff interviews described the staff as 'walking alongside' the young people. The staff drew on a range of terms that indicated this positioning, such as being 'next to' or 'with' or 'alongside' the young people. The quotes below from Grace and Lowan demonstrate when they describe their relationship with the young people.

> As someone who can walk *with* you to get where you need to go. (Grace)

> We're there to walk *alongside* every step […] they're making. (Lowan)

This spatial concept places staff in a position that opens up the possibility of accessing the space Ambrosio (2008) says can create freedom. 'Walking alongside' conjures up alternate pictures of other positions staff could take either in front (e.g. in front of a class) or behind another person (for example, supervising an assembly from the back of the hall). What the staff appear to be saying is that their position is not one of being in front – directing or dragging or hoping for someone to follow; nor one of being behind – pushing or being hidden. It is about being next to. It is about 'being with' a person. It is not a solo *journey* but implies a *journey* of almost equals who work together. Although being 'alongside' has it own implications for power, these implications are far less dominating than a position taken in front or behind where the power of push and pull can be far more violent in nature or indeed insidious, as is implied in the hidden nature of directing from behind. It is more a position of open influence and in the case of YOTS it tends to be an influence that is visible, knowable and shared by the young people. For example, as Julie suggests below, being 'alongside' allowed a more freeing relationship as it attempted to address the implicit hierarchy of a teacher/student relationship.

> I think it has to be that way for it to work. You know, if you're going to be the teacher and the headmaster [or] the cook, and they're the students, you know, it's not going to work. We're in it together. (Julie)

Although the hierarchy still existed, its domination was far less onerous for young people. Practices, such as everyone using first names, of staff acknowledgement to young people when they (the staff) considered they had 'failed', all worked to develop the notion of 'equality' in the sense that no one was seen as being better or worse than others. Such a stance just implied people had differing roles. This approach frees young people from the 'fight' for domination they have previously engaged in with their mainstream schools.

Liam spoke of the *journey* he takes with the young people as one where he was an ally in "war" (Liam). Rather than being at war with young people (as is arguably the case in many instances for the young people in mainstream schooling), Liam's notion of *journeying* places him 'alongside' the young people as an ally who is prepared to go in to 'battle' with young people to help overcome whatever they might be confronted with. Usually the 'war' came in the form of external influences, and as previously discussed, included family, the law, and mainstream schools as well as other agencies that the young people came in contact with. For example, where the staff and young people had dealings with bureaucracies such as DoCS/FACS or the law staff allied themselves with the young people. In acting as an ally in this 'war', the staff spoke of completing paperwork and setting up interviews for the young people with Centrelink staff and accompanied them to these interviews. They helped with TAFE enrolments and re-enrolments in mainstream schools. They negotiated with employers for work and provided training for parents in parenting. They liaised with institutions such as DoCS/FACS, the police, Juvenile Justice and provided young people with support throughout the young people's interactions. YOTS had psychologists, drug rehabilitation programmes, refuge accommodation, food vans that provided support in other areas of their lives.

To act as an ally the staff needed to 'know' the young people. As I discussed above, the implication of *journeying* 'alongside' is that the *journey* was not done alone and therefore a certain depth of knowledge was established between those who participated in the *journey*. In Chapter 6, I argued that the staff had an understanding of the contextual uniqueness of the YOTS young people. More mundane actions stemming from this level of involvement that I have mentioned previously included: reports on every young person from every school to Father Riley each day;

maintaining constant contact with the young people's family and the young people themselves. Other actions included mobile use that was embedded in the staff's day-to-day activities, and might also include accompanying the young people to the police or to court when needed.

As Hannah explained, the information required for 'knowing' the young people was hard won as the young people "drip feed you information" (Hannah) and the YOTS teachers did a variety of things to get to know the young people at such a depth. One implication of this practice was its on going nature and the constant contact with people outside the YOTS context that I discussed in Chapter 6.

Moving Forward

The staff interviews also indicated that the *journey* was characterised by its requirement for young people's forward movement. Liam explained that while there was a requirement to address the immediate needs of the young people, this could not be a place for them to dwell. It was a place from which to move on from. In taking on the *journey*, young people's needs were dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible and then staff moved forward, taking the young people with them.

> We kind of try to up the bar pretty quickly. It's never - oh, poor little Lucy, or whoever, comes in and "Let's keep on talking about all the bad stuff." Pretty quickly, its like, "Yep. OK. Yes that's what's happening. What are we gonna do now?" Our job is to kind of just kick start back into some positives. (Liam)

Many of the other staff also drew on this understanding of 'not leaving the young people where they are'. The *journey* was equated with positive, desirable movement, and contrasted with staying put or going back as a negative step. For example, when I asked Alex about the qualities a teacher needed to have in order to teach in the YOTS schools, he mentioned the capacity to 'engage and encourage' as a key requirement of forward movement.

> I suppose the obvious ones would be patience, and understanding and empathy and all those ones. But at the same time, um, empathy would only go so far for these kids. They don't need for you to feel sorry for their lives. You need to be able to engage them and encourage them and move them on, and be that

> next stage in their life rather than (…) back to their previous life, which they probably don't want to go back to anyway. (Alex)

Hannah also spoke of an incident where a number of the young people were invited to a camp that involved young people who had experienced a range of abuse. During the camp, the young people were encouraged to share these life experiences. She explained that what she sensed occurring was a competition where the young people "tried to outdo each other with their sad stories" (Fieldnotes). Although she saw benefits to the camp, her unease at the young people remaining locked in these stories was particularly clear when contrasted with other statements such as this one about her school's purpose.

> I guess, its putting kids back on track, ummm... anything that keeps them on that path, moving forward. (Hannah)

This commitment to moving the young people forward is clearly stated. Arguably, it seems that mainstream school tactics of not recognising, or acting in these young people's lives allowed them to leave young people where they were, condemning them to their current lives. The power to deny this forward movement becomes dominating in itself as it both permits and perpetuates the violence embedded in this domination. The YOTS willingness to know, understand and acknowledge each of these young people's lives, and then provide ways for each young person to move forward from this point frees them from remaining trapped in their dominating life experiences. Acknowledgement of life experiences is freeing, but only when the ability to act on this acknowledgement helps to free young people from debilitating lives. In contrast, a lack of acknowledgment or a stagnant acknowledgment is dominating as it denies the ability to act and thereby maintains domination.

Creating Futures

In moving young people 'forward' there was an assumption in the staff's interviews that different futures could be established. As discussed previously, current trajectories of the young people's lives were not positive and held the promise of a lack of education, unemployment and an increased likelihood of poor health and incarceration. The alternative futures envisaged by staff for young people closely paralleled those the young people spoke of wanting for themselves (see Chapter 5). This common goal

also meant domination was not required. When both 'allies' were working for a common purpose, force was not needed.

> We set them up for life and they know that what they are working towards isn't just, oh good, we got our report, [or] we've done the assignment that you wanted. No, they don't think that way. They know everything here is leading towards skills for life. (Jeremy)

Common goals were established right from the first enrolment interview. The young people were asked what it was they wanted to achieve by coming to the YOTS schools and these goals were then constantly referred to. Although they could be used in dealing with behaviour that was not contributing towards the achievement of a goal, they were predominantly used to show the vast improvements the young people made towards achieving improved lives. One of the most visible goals for the young people was to get their School Certificate (the exams sat at the end of Year 10, that indicated the end of compulsory schooling in NSW prior to 2010, now replaced by the Record of School Achievement – RoSA). When speaking of what he saw as success for the young people, Liam gave examples of the variety of goals required to help these young people reach this level of achievement.

> Yeah. Depends on each kid. Success for Elle might be turning up five days in a row. Doesn't matter. […] you have to push to the next level, which is producing quality work, but the fact is, before she came here she wasn't engaging at all. Success for her is simply getting out of bed in the morning and not having a fight with Mum before she gets to school. […] For someone else like Blaise, who's relatively new, he had three goals when he started the program. One to turn up to school, two to stay the whole day and three to not make silly noises […] Now we can up the bar some more. (Liam)

Attendance and behaviour at their mainstream schools had generally been a significant barrier to young people having better futures. One goal that was common across all the schools was to have the young people in class. Most of the young people were awarded at end of year presentation ceremonies for close to 100% attendance. However, the achievement of this improvement was made up of many actions by both

staff and the young people. Each morning, if the young people were not at school by 9:00am staff rang and asked if there was a problem, whether they needed to be picked up, what else the staff could do to get them to school. It might mean picking up young people, providing them with breakfast, liaising with a parent. All these types of actions contributed to vastly increased attendance and academic achievement.

Long Term Commitment

The staff saw their *journey* with the young people as a long term commitment. They saw that working to change the young people's edgeworking lives was going to take time.

> You can't be thinking you can come in and solve all the problems like that instantly. (Liam)

However, the *journey* entered into by YOTS staff was both bound and liberated by time. As Liam indicates below, the actual time they had with the young people varied but was rather limited considering what YOTS aimed to achieve. At Liam's school,

> The longest is kind of up to two years. But yeah, on average, you are probably looking at a year. Some more, some less. We've got a few here who are just over a year. (Liam)

Time pressures, amongst other factors, required staff to intensify what would normally be required from the 'average' teacher and seemed to lead to their being almost unconditionally available to young people and of being committed and dedicated to the young people at an exaggerated level. This intensity seemed to be at odds with the notion that was also held by staff that they were on this *journey* for the long term. As Scott explained, it took time for the young people to really take hold of life as being different and what YOTS was doing was setting the young people up to succeed for life – not just in education, or just for the time they are with YOTS.

> I think it's a really gradual thing. Sometimes you think you see the light and then it gets shut back out again. […] But definitely, I think just a gradual building up and a lot of little discoveries along the way that lead to the final. And as Hannah said, it takes a lot of years. She reckons about ten years for

> these kids to be fully on their feet. Even the girl that I was talking about, even though the transformation from the start to the finish was amazing and to talk to her it was like talking to a different girl, she still has a lot of stuff going on. It's not a quick fix. You can't come here for a year, and that's it, you're cured and go on and lead a normal life. It's a lot more involved than that I think. (Scott)

All the staff held the expectation that some change for the young people would occur while they were at YOTS, but, as Helena states, the change in young people's lives may not be visible in this time frame.

> It might not be in my lifetime and it might not be in this year or the next year. (Helena)

In committing to the long term support of the young people, YOTS puts in place a range of strategies such as the Integration programme set up to support the transition of the young people out of YOTS services.

> *So how long does that 'Integration' go for?*
> It depends on the kids and the staff who have worked with them before. And how much support they need. There's different levels for the integration and what we are working towards is the kids decreasing that dependence and increasing their independence and inter-dependence. (Grace)

Meg described what this process did as a "weaning process". The Integration programme was more formalised. The Integration Coordinator did a range of things such as: interviewing each young person to see what they wanted to do when they left YOTS; arranging interviews at schools or workplaces or TAFE and attending these interviews with the young people; and organising a yearly reunion for all the young people who had been through a YOTS programme, maintaining on going contact. Not all the schools had this co-ordination done for them but would still help/guide/organise such things as: part time TAFE and school combined with regular phoning and visits; organisation and liaison with other schools for further education after the School

Certificate/RoSA. In a crisis, the YOTS staff made themselves available for support until the young people were considered to be back on their feet.

> So if there was a crisis ... for example, there was a young girl that I was dealing with […] Completed her year 10, was brought up with domestic violence, in foster care all her life, um, had been molested quite severely by her father, which is why she went into foster care. None of the foster parents ever kept her because she was too much of a pain in the arse. So her thing was 'as long as I can be hard-core then no one loves me' […]. She'd end up in relationships where she was either getting beaten or she would beat them. (Meg)

The young girl had contacted Meg regularly over six months ending when she rang Meg because she thought she had "killed her boyfriend cause she'd put the rope of the blind around his throat and he passed out" (Meg). A typical response outside of YOTS to this situation would more than likely have been to call the police and let the law deal with this young girl, leaving her to cope alone. Instead, an understanding of where this young girl had come from and the reasons for her extreme behaviour and a willingness to persist through a difficult time allowed this young woman to eventually enter what Spence identified above as "a normal life".

> We get through it. We do what we need to do and support them through it and um now she's in a relationship, been working for three years and got a beautiful little girl and she lives with her father's mother and her father's mother absolutely adores her. Thinks that she's the ant's pants. She's finally got that love and she's just a different kid. I'm lucky to get to see that side. (Meg)

There seemed then, to be a point in the *journey* where young people continued alone but with the knowledge that there was always support available if needed. This meant that the young people were able to take risks, make mistakes, even at the extremes of their edgeworking, and could still be confident that they had the support around them to recover from problems and continue on their *journey* towards some sort of 'normality'.

By taking a long-term approach to their relationship with these young people, YOTS released the young people from the highly restrictive existence of living on a day-to-day basis, and freedom became possible. Opportunities opened up and other futures could be considered and planned for, allowing options to become available. This occurred when staff made long term commitments and put in place procedures to support this commitment. From the observations conducted, it became evident that the staff were readily available for the young people, taking an attitude of support and doing what was necessary. For instance they were willing to help regardless of what the young people might have done. Although this was not to say they necessarily condoned what had happened.

Relations of Care

Having established what *journeying* is in the YOTS context, I move here into an exploration of the relational elements of the *journey*. I have drawn from the staff interviews the common ways the staff spoke about their relationship with the young people, arguing that these relational elements established the relationships required for staff to 'care' for the young people.

In describing these *relations of care*, I could have used numerous examples of the individual characteristics the staff spoke of requiring in their relationship with the young people. Staff identified such characteristics as strength, approachability, patience, understanding, encouragement, humility, giving, compassion, firmness, stability, safety, trust, empathy, and resilience. However, in conceptualising an overall practice of freedom, it seemed more important to note the broad *relations of care* that contributed to the production of freedom. The *relations of care* I have identified below linked closely to staff's external understandings of young people such as: contextually unique, living in 'corrupted' life worlds, being deserving, and of having possibility (see Chapter 6). These understandings informed the particular *relations of care* within the construct of *journeying*. Through the YOTS staff interviews and my observations, I have chosen to explore what appeared to be the most vital of these *relations of care* from the staffs talk: relational attributes, staff availability, meaning and commitment, and being 'like' family – although it needs to be recognised that it is hard to discuss any of these elements separately as they tended to be highly interdependent.

Relational Attributes

Humour was seen to be of such value that it was written into the YOTS Critical Incident Response Policy (YOTS 2012e: 2), as an effective strategy for many low level incidents that staff might encounter with the young people.

> Well, you've gotta have a sense of humour for a start, I reckon. (Scott)

Scott's listing of humour at the top of his list of attributes required by YOTS staff was indicative of how important a sense of humour was for the YOTS staff. A good example of its use was my observations of Liam and Spence organising a birthday cake for one of the young people only to find out that they not only had the wrong date but the wrong month. The young people thought this was a great opportunity for 'having a go' at their teachers for 'messing up' and began making derogatory comments. However, Spence's quick response of "Just as well we cancelled the elephants and the jumping castle" prompted laughter and diffused any escalation of derogatory comments, thereby eliminating any tension. Many of the teachers seemed to have the same clever and quick sense of humour which allowed them to diffuse many circumstances which could otherwise quickly escalate.

The use of humour was common across the schools and was often related to the staff acknowledgement of their own imperfections. However, the staff's realistic admission of their own lack of perfection was also taken very seriously. They readily confessed that they did not always speak or act perfectly.

> As humans we fail sometimes and we might use judgement and manipulation. I think most of the time I don't … most of the time. I am human and I do make mistakes. (…) sometimes I go 'I can't do this'. I've got to leave the room and I have to do that as a human too. (Helena)

It was important to the staff that they acknowledge their imperfections in order to reinstate good relationships with the young people. The following descriptions from Russell and Spence are two examples of how the staff dealt with what they considered their more serious mistakes.

> Well you just (…) you never let them walk away, that's the first. I learnt that fairly early. If you have a melt down or something goes really wrong, or you get stuck into a kid, you come back the next day and try and be positive. (Russell)

> Sometimes you put your foot in it. I have […]. You do the best you can and […] admit that to the kids too, saying "Sorry mate. That was my fault." (Spence)

Staff did not seem to try and hide these mistakes. Instead they used them to show the young people that nobody is perfect and also provided an example of how imperfections could be dealt with.

There were also a number of relational attributes that the staff saw as necessary in their relationships with the young people. There was an expectation that respect, honesty and trust were both given and received by staff and young people alike, requiring a two way component to the *journeying* relationship. For these elements of the YOTS *relations of care* to function there could not be a dominating aspect to them. As Grace and Meg implied in the quotes below, it was vital that when, for example, respect was given, it was also returned. Both were demanding of respect and observations of their relationships with the young people suggested that they did receive respect from the young people.

> It is a privilege working with these kids. But we also try and have the kids realise that it's a privilege to be here […] and respect it as so. (Grace)

> I'm quite hard with the kids. I expect respect because I give it. Um, I won't cop bullshit, as you know. (Meg)

From the young people's perspective, respect appeared to be returned without any suggestion of fear. This was recognised by Spence as he spoke of the young people having respect 'underneath', that staff did not always see.

> I think there is a genuine respect. It's not always shown but I believe it's always there. When all the drama has gone, I believe that you can sit down with our kids and they understand why you did what you did. […] they're not always able to action that respect. We have a lot of fun, we do a lot of great stuff and the kids know. And they know that we try really hard and I think that counts for something. (Spence)

Ruth gave examples demonstrating, the types of activities the YOTS staff engaged in to help the young people develop both self respect and respect for others.

> By being involved in lots of different activities, they begin to respect themselves and to some degree respect others. […] we do deliveries of Easter eggs, pancake day. Sometimes we might be involved in some of the services or giving flowers, […] to build respect. (Ruth)

The staff identified different times when different levels of respect were accepted. John, for example, acknowledged and accepted that the respect the young people gave them in the classroom was different to that when they were playing their daily soccer game together.

> We interact with them, workers/students, teachers/students. We do keep those boundaries but if you are on the soccer field sweating and with the ball. […] With our students the last thing, the worst thing you can do is try and say "I'm the teacher, you must respect me" because it doesn't work. You don't get any respect here because of your position, the only respect you get here is the respect you earn. But that depends on the student as well. (John)

John also comments here on the difference between 'getting' and 'earning' respect. He has recognised that the role of staff does not automatically come with an inbuilt requirement for respect. This expectation in mainstream settings had been attached to dominating tactics used to control the young people's behaviour (see Chapter 5). The young people had demonstrated that they were not responsive to such demands. Although YOTS staff recognised their role as one that automatically drew a certain

amount of respect, it was not a respect that created a significant imbalance in the power relation of the young people/staff relationship. As Jeremy describes,

> One person isn't more important than anyone else. No kids are more important than other kids. No staff are more important than others. (Jeremy)

Staff sought ways to redress the imbalance of power that stemmed from such relationships as that of student/teacher or youth/youth worker. YOTS emphasised that they strove to be as close to an equal footing as was possible with the young people, in as many contexts as possible. There was a sense that although there seemed to be an innate part of this power relation that could not be reversed that placed YOTS staff in a position of power over young people, it was the staff efforts not to use this power to dominate that allowed the 'unequal' positioning to be accepted by the young people. Staff accessed a range of everyday activities that began to buffer their position of domination so that the power relation was less threatening and therefore did not draw out an 'ugly face' of the young people.

> Well part of it is that we are all first names, we dress casual, we eat sort of the same food together, we go out, we have smaller numbers, we quite often take the role of uncle, or father and we talk a lot more honestly about things than you could hope to. (John)

Respect was not just a goal that staff aimed for, but, as Jeremy described below, was also something that the young people came to established in their relationships with each other. This then helped to reduce the effects of dominating power relations between the young people.

> There are confident kids who just come in and say I was popular at my old school, and I'm going to take over here. (…) We build up our students one at a time, they have an on going strategy that they use and that is tactical ignoring. But its just done nice enough that the new kid gets the message everyone's equal, you'll have to earn the respect and to stop trying to impress us. And I'm quite impressed at how effective that is. (Jeremy)

In order for respect to be formed the YOTS staff identified that they also had to be brutally honest with the young people. In the following quote, Hannah was explaining that although honesty might not always happen on a basic level (for example, the young people would blatantly lie if they thought it would keep them out of trouble), underneath they were brutally honesty.

> I think very honest, maybe they're not on the surface, but I think generally they are quite honest kids. (Hannah)

The young people were also very practiced at picking up when adults were not being honest with them. As Spence explains, the staff had to return the young people's brutal honesty.

> You've got to be yourself, you can't fake it. So whatever you are you have to make that work as the kids will see through you if you bullshit them and they won't respect you. And if they don't respect you, you have trouble. You just have to be real and make sure it works. (Spence)

A lack of honesty from staff would give the young people the type of power they had drawn on in their mainstream schools by eliciting their contempt. Staff therefore had to be honest with the young people, including when they were upset, angry and hurt and not just when things were going well. Although, these more negative emotions had to be expressed carefully and the staff, therefore, engaged in a balancing act, as if the young people detected they were 'disliked', it drew out their 'ugly face'.

The use of 'brutal honesty' was not just reserved for the young people. In some circumstances the staff could also be brutally honest in dealing with the young people's edgework. During one lesson, John described the young people bragging about wanting to be sent to prison. He and one of the youth workers who had worked in prisons, took the opportunity to dispel the 'coolness' of being sent to the 'big house'.

> We had a talk about what being raped in prison is like […], sexual assault in prison is, like it de-sensitises. This is what happens in prison, you know a young blokes bent over on a toilet with a porno on his back and he's raped

> […] its totally different when they turn 18 and go to what they call the 'big house'. (John)

The level of honesty that was developed between the young people and the YOTS staff required a level of trust. It was not until the young people realised that their trust would not be abused, as it has been in their other dominating relationships, that they began to return that trust and act in trustworthy ways. For staff, placing trust in the young people could be a difficult step as Deb indicates in what she says about taking the young people into public.

> You worry that oh gosh, please children don't swear, always be polite and that sort of thing. (Deb)

However, in general, when the staff gave the young people opportunities to display their trustworthiness by organising for them to interact in the community, they responded in kind. Scott's quote below concerns activities such as a fund raising bike ride to raise funds for YOTS, and young people from his school volunteering to provide activities for the young people and children in the tent cities, erected for the bushfires in Victoria, Australia.

> We can take our kids to do these sorts of things, and they will do it well, and they won't play up. Basically they're reliable and we can trust them to go and do it. […] Yep, its a big call, […] its a big gamble I guess, but it's proved to be right, yeah. [They were] absolutely brilliant, couldn't have asked for anything more from them really. But we've had a couple of occasions like that - a bike ride from Sydney to Surfers Paradise last year. The kids certainly were perfect once again. (Scott)

The young people rarely let the staff down. Grace explained that, if they did, it was generally because they had a 'greater need', and related a story of one young person breaking trust by stealing.

> in those situations, its because they've had a greater need. […] There's only one site that something might get stolen from. And that is generally not

> because they want to get back, or really steal from someone. It's because they need. They need. You know. […] And it's a genuine reason. (Grace)

Being Available

For any type of relationship to be maintained with the young people, the staff had to demonstrate their reliability. Previous relationships had taught the young people that those who were supposed to care for them could not be relied on to do so. Staff therefore needed to be seen as reliable for the relationship to work. This required staff to be constantly available for young people. For example, part of meeting young people on a more equal footing meant that staffrooms where more public space in most of the schools. Although staff rooms were locked when not in use, in two of the schools the young people seemed to feel comfortable enough to walk through, talk with their teachers and just sit with staff. As Grace said "That's a teacher attribute that they [the teachers] can't have, is want of privacy." Hiding in the staffroom for 'time out' was definitely not an option.

Most of the schools' staff were available far beyond the bounds of school hours. I have mentioned before that one school gave their young people mobile phones. This not only allowed the school to have contact with their young people but it also allowed the young people to be in contact with the staff at any time. The young people were told that if they ever needed to, they could contact staff 24 hours a day. This was not regularly taken up by the young people but was accessed generally when a crisis arose. In these crisis situations, the YOTS staff seemed to be accessed as much by parents as by young people. Parents rang schools managers at times when they were 'out of their depth' in coping with events such as their children disappearing, when issues arose with the police, and even when they needed help with their own issues.

> You know, they're not resourceful people for the most part. If mum is having a problem with drugs she will say that to us, 'cause she has no one else to say it to. But we can point them in the right direction to work on that. […] If the family have identified problems that we can help with, whether it's through contacting someone and getting an appointment, if we don't do it, it won't happen. So it gets done and we are better off because of it. It works for the kids. (Spence)

As Spence explains, these benefits ultimately extended beyond supporting parents by also working to help the young people in their other environments and relationships.

Most critical incidents that affected the young people happened outside school hours meaning staff availability for the young people and their families was constant. This availability was something that could be depended on by the young people and was given by staff with a certain amount of trust that was generally not abused.

> There is no use saying "That's your business. It happened after 3pm", […] if they get in trouble that's something we have to deal with as there is no one else to deal with it (Spence)

Meaning and Commitment

The staff spoke of gaining a sense of meaning from their work with the young people which generated commitment and dedication to the work that they did. The meaning the staff created appeared to be derived from both the affection and, in some cases, the affinity they felt for and with the young people. A number of elements of a relation of care can be drawn from this. The first was the affection the YOTS staff felt for the young people. In their interviews and through my own observations, the staff regularly expressed their affection for the young people at YOTS and appeared to enjoy working with them.

> I just love them. I, you know, I just can't see me not being here. (Julie)

> You've gotta have a love for the kids. If you don't have that passion, you ... I don't think you'd fit into a place like this. A lot of people say, umm in an industry like this you only last for about five years. I've been at this game for about ten years and (....) I still like doing it. (Lowan)

For some of the staff, their affection was an extension of the affinity they felt for the young people, having had parallel experiences in their own education. Lowan and Alex, for example, felt they had shared similar life experiences to those of the young people.

> I sat there (....) with the kid, and he goes 'You don't understand.' I turned around and said, 'Mate I understand, cause that's where I'm from.' (Lowan)

> So my background is like that. So you can see why I can fit in here because I recognise signs. And I also had some fantastic teachers who were great role models and who put me on to the teaching line in lots of ways. (Alex)

Most of the staff also spoke of the meaning they gained from their work with the young people. They liked working at YOTS and spoke of a preference over mainstream settings. The teachers often expressed a sense of dissatisfaction or a lack of fulfilment with the work they had been doing in mainstream schools. Hannah, Alex, Ruth and Spence all felt strongly about this, stating that they would not like to teach in, or go back to, a mainstream school as they did not like how education happened in those settings. In contrast, they did enjoy the way the YOTS schools worked.

> After two years there [Tiwi Islands] I returned to mainland Australia again. But then I decided I still needed to do something meaningful like. I couldn't go back to mainstream teaching because it had no meaning. (Ruth)

> YOTS is a hell of a fun place to work. […] Every day is a new adventure. There is certainly a great deal of sadness too. You find out things that you don't really want to find out about people. But that makes it interesting too, and more worthwhile. I'm not sure I'll ever teach in a mainstream school as, I don't know, there is too much mass production, not enough …. I suppose it's the difference between a Corolla and a Lamborghini. (Spence)

Hannah, Russell, Alex and John had all left YOTS but had since returned because they found their work more satisfying at YOTS. The desire to make a difference and change the circumstances of the lives of these young people was made possible through their work with the YOTS young people. Even Scott, who enjoyed his mainstream teaching experience, held a preference for the YOTS setting and its young people, for the meaning he felt was produced from the experience, that he did not find present in the mainstream schools he had taught in.

> [I]t's not that I dislike the mainstream. I can get in there and teach there and enjoy it. I just think that I get a lot more out of this and I can give a lot more in this. (Scott)

Because of the meaning the staff gained from their YOTS work, most of the staff identified a willingness to be constantly available for the young people. Their willingness came from their commitment and love of young people and for the work they did and their desire to make a difference for young people.

> Um. Look, there's probably not one staff member here … who wouldn't go out of their way for each other […] and would always go out of their way for a kid. […] none of us staff members are here for the money. (Meg)

Father Riley led by example which the staff attempted to emulate. Meg gave one example of his dedication to the young people.

> A young kid came and sat in my chair and told me he had been part of a grievous bodily harm, a stabbing … and he was devastated. He didn't do the stabbing but he was a part of it. He didn't know what to do. He wanted to tell somebody so he told me which, of course, implicated me and then, of course, it went to, "I think you should tell Father. Father's the man that can help you with this." (Meg)

Meg had then rung Father Riley, but he was out of contact. However, he had rung back within 10 minutes and arrived at the school after an hour's drive to talk to the young man, before going with Meg and the boy to the police station where he sat with the young man and Meg throughout the interrogations. Meg explained that once the incident had gone to court the sentencing had been delayed a number of times but that Father Riley had attended each time. The final sentencing had coincided with an emergency visit of Father Riley's, to East Timor.

> He knew that there was an emergency over in East Timor. He knew he had to be here for the sentencing of this young boy. He flew over from East Timor. Came straight from the airport, hadn't slept. Had two hours sleep,

> came straight to court, presented this young boy and spoke on behalf of this young boy […] I can't even tell you how amazing he was. And then got back into the taxi, back into the airport and back to East Timor. All for one kid. (Meg)

This level of commitment to the young people, both personally and in terms of the time and financial commitment required, was repeatedly in evidence not just by Father Riley, but by all the staff. Spence and Lowan speak of this level of availability and commitment as producing an environment that remained constant and stable for the young people; where the young people could dare to trust; and where they could feel safe.

> I hope that they find this place as a safe, stable place. I think having a stable staff is really important as kids are very affected by people coming and going. They obviously have abandonment issues throughout their lives. Many have been abandoned by most of the most important people in their life; parents, family […] I've been told by students that (…) "you'll leave because everyone else has", and you have to prove to them that you're not going to. And sometimes that proof is just showing up every single day and making damn sure that they know that you are there and you will be there tomorrow, and will be there on Monday after the weekend. And that's important because a lot of adults in their lives in general, they can't trust. (Spence)

> A lot of people come and go in these kids lives. […] So we're committed to them saying, "OK. We're going to educate these kids no matter what. We're not going to give up on them […]. (Lowan)

The staff's descriptions of their job points to the breadth of what the YOTS staff were prepared to do, indicating their commitment to the young people beyond the school environment. They organised doctors, dentists, and other specialist appointments and then drove the young people to these. All the staff spoke of organising classes at home. On one excursion I accompanied, one of the girls did not wear the correct footwear, another the wrong clothing to be allowed into the excursion venue, so the teachers, without fuss, drove past the young people's homes and picked these up on

the way. At other times they spoke about getting back late from events and young people having no way to get home so they would drive them and often provide a meal on the way. This of course has significant 'child protection' implications and YOTS had worked very hard at putting in place policy and procedures so that this level of commitment was not undermined while still adhering to the child protection requirements that protected both the young people and the staff.

The language staff used also indicated the depth to which the staff seemed willing to commit to these young people. When they said things like "we are with them *every* step" and "we're going to educate these kids *no matter what*" (Lowan) and '*anything* that keeps them on that path' (Hannah), it points to the totality of their involvement. Similarly, when Scott explained all the things that he is involved in for YOTS outside of school hours he spoke of these things as what "we try and do" for their young people, as opposed to the things "we have to do", in what he could well consider his own time. Staff demonstrated a willingness to do what they could for the young people. So it was not only the totality of their commitment but the lack of burden that they saw in doing whatever it took to help these young people that helped to define their dedication and commitment.

Being 'Family Like'

The relationship of staff and young people could be likened to that of family. Particularly as the young people were often without family at all, or for significant amounts of time. Scott described many of the things he did as being what family would typically be responsible for. In the quote below, he explains how this role changed according to the needs of the young people. Being 'like' family allowed different roles to be drawn on rather than being locked into one role.

> We have got a close relationship you would have to say. I guess the best way to describe it is, you have to be a bit like a parent, but then at other times you have to be like a big brother. It's just a matter of working out the appropriate time for each. […] so …. the relationship? How would I describe it? Good question! (Scott)

Although staff take on roles resembling family, Grace explained that the YOTS staff needed to be very careful not to step into that role. Despite YOTS being available to the young people for the long term – the aim of YOTS was not to develop dependent young people and the staff had a role to play in not letting this happen, despite what they may feel towards the young people. They walked a fine line between *being* family and being *like* family.

> The staff are not here to replace the kid's parents. […] the kids have to realise that their parents are there forever. They're only with us for a short time. All we can do is to help them set up better relationships with their parents. And then if they [the staff] have the same relationship as parent with child well then we are risking the kids. While I have my token Mother, […] then I don't have to work on my issues with Mum. I've got a new Mum. […] And that's not the case. All the staff have mother like or father like qualities - yeah fine. But the young person has to know that I am not your Mother. (Grace)

Conclusion

What I have explored in this chapter is how the staff's understanding of their relationship with young people established *relations of care*. These *relations of care* produce some of the conditions of reconciliation through what I have termed *journeying*. R*elations of care* included relating in specific ways to young people, in order to create freedom. In the next chapter I explore the *practices of care* as they functioned in schools and classrooms. This is an investigating of the more practical aspects of the YOTS practice which I have addressed under three broad practices. In order to practice care I argue that the YOTS staff acted to protect the young people, prevent further damage and augment the existing life experiences of the young people.

Chapter 8 – Practices of Care

The following extract is taken from the YOTS *School Philosophy*.

> In setting up any programme, we always look to structures and rules, and while these are enforced firmly and fairly at the schools, we are aware too that something within our structure has to be radically different from regular schools. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

The focus of this chapter moves from the *relations of care* that supported the establishment of the conditions for educational reconciliation, to the *practices of care* that could be seen in operation in the YOTS classrooms. It focuses on the 'radical differences', written here into the philosophy of the YOTS schools, that are required to create an environment that not just enables but promotes reconciliation. When the young people's lives and their 'edgework' responses are taken into consideration, 'radical' may seem an understatement. However, embedded in the understandings held by YOTS staff and the schools' policy, are the supports of these 'radical' practices. I begin this chapter with vignette from my fieldnotes that demonstrates this 'radical' practice.

A friend of one of the young people from outside the school walked, uninvited, into the classroom yelling, "I've got a stash. Are you ready?", while holding up a little bag of what I assumed was marijuana. The invitation to share drugs with his friend Ryan (one of the young people at the school) was met initially with silence. Ryan's response was "No. I told you not to come here. I'm at school now." Ryan's friend became insistent at which point Liam (one of the staff) intervened. This intervention could well have taken the form of demands for the young man to leave the premises, threats to call the police, interrogations as to the implied drug issues. However, Liam, who wasn't teaching at the time, quietly walked over to the young man and asked if he was interested in attending the school and started to talk through the enrolment process, while simultaneously ushering the young man to the exit. The young man allowed himself to be moved out of the school quietly and the young people in the classroom went back to work. Ryan insisted a few times that he had told his friend "not to come

here". The other staff assured him that they understood that it wasn't his fault – but otherwise everyone settled back into work.

It could be assumed from their stories (Chapters 4 & 5) that the YOTS young people had a proclivity to latch on to this type of 'drama' and, if this incident had happened in a mainstream setting, would have used it very effectively to disrupt classrooms. However, this was not the case at YOTS. In my fieldnotes of this incident I noted how little response the incident seemed to receive. The teacher, Liam, very quietly alleviated any disruption that could have occurred and he did this in a way that could not develop into an argument over power issues. With nothing to respond to, the young man was able to leave feeling unthreatened and Liam and the other staff's example of 'quiet' seemed to be followed by the young people as they went back to their school work.

For me, Liam's outworking of power by exuding calm, by swaying or bending with the events as they unfolded, and by absorbing the impact of the intensity of such events rather than exacerbating them by reflecting them back at this young man, was particularly impressive. Although power was evident in that the young man was removed from the school, this power was also used in support of the young people at the school and of the young man who had entered the classroom in Liam's genuine offer to consider enrolment.

Liam's simple act typified the multitude of the *practices of care* that I discuss in this chapter. He acted to *protect* as he stepped relationally between the young people in his care and the young man as he ushered him away from the school. It was also interesting to note that even in this interaction Liam had physically positioned himself alongside the young man as he walked him to the door of the school whilst also offering to extend his protection to the young man through an offer of enrolment. He acted to *prevent* further damage by firstly, his removal of the young man from the classroom and secondly, by eliminating the effect of Ryan's drug use in that moment, allowing learning to continue. Liam also *augmented* this experience for the young people by providing an example of how to relate to others in difficult circumstances, particularly in the overtly serene manner he used with the young man. Liam offered to share the schools' support with the young man, exemplifying staff beliefs that everyone

deserves a chance. Liam's relationship with Ryan was also reflected in Ryan's willingness to leave the issue once it had been dealt with and continue his work as if there had been no interruption.

'Radical' differences did not have to be spectacular or exciting. What 'radical' appeared to be, from Liam's example, was 'unexpected' and came in the form of a number of responses: protective responses, preventative responses, and augmentative responses. These responses worked together to move away from a power relation embedded in domination towards an 'unexpected' use of power relations that, while still accessing power, were embedded in freedom. This freedom gave the young people the opportunity to learn both academically and in terms of the skills and attributes they would require to move beyond the brutality of their current lives.

The three *practices of care* that I identified from this vignette are the basis of the following discussion. These practices arose out of the premises and understandings that the staff had of the young people (see Chapter 6). Through an understanding of the premise that *the young people's lives had been 'corrupted'* the staff acted to protect young people from this 'corruption' and prevent greater damage. The staff's premise *that leaving young people in a 'corrupted' state is inexcusable* required the staff to act towards moving young people out of this state. Because of these premises the staff were able to work with young people in particular types of ways, deploying the practices of protection, prevention and augmentation. Their responses to these premises was to expand young people's experiences outside of the 'corruption' that limited their experience.

Practices of care were those responses which demonstrated how caring was done by the YOTS staff *with* these particular young people. They were implemented within the structures of the YOTS organisation whilst being accountable to the broader education structures of the Education Act, NSW State Legislation and the Board of Studies as a registered NSW school. The YOTS staff drew on these practices as they actively engaged their understandings of the young people. In general, as the above incident indicates, these understandings and practices were drawn on simultaneously and worked together to produce freedom. Combined with *relations of care* from

Chapter 7, they established a dynamic set of conditions that allowed the young people the opportunity to move beyond the 'corruption' endemic in their lives.

I have described separately each of the three practices of care (protection, prevention and augmentation) for the purposes of this chapter, although in practice, they were often inseparable (i.e., any practice might be both preventative and augmentative or augmentative and protective or all three) and worked simultaneously. My analysis has drawn on the staff's interviews and observation of their practice in the YOTS educational spaces. These were supported by an analysis of two sets of policy documents: the general company policy documents of the YOTS organisation, and the YOTS schools' policy documents. Policy provided a formal description of the services provided at YOTS, and also provided the background for an understanding of the personal experiences and relationships that I drew from the staff interviews and observations. The staff interviews and observations provided descriptions and examples of the ways in which policy was implemented. These sources of data clearly exposed the links between policy and staff understandings, how these informed each other, and how they were realised in the YOTS classrooms.

Realisations of Protective Responses

The initial establishment of YOTS in 1991 (YOTS 2012c) stemmed from a determination to protect young people from the 'corrupted' nature of their lives.

> Our facilities target the 'hard core' street kids or young people who may have been in custody or who are so entrenched in their pattern of destruction that they are not easily brought back to the mainstream of society. These are the ones living on the edge. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

In recognising the damage that occurred in many young people's lives, one of the primary purposes of the organisation became the protection of young people from specific 'corruptions' such as abuse, drug addiction and homelessness. Protection appeared to be entrenched in everything that YOTS did and was reflected in the very nature of policy documents such as the YOTS *School Philosophy* and *Aims and Goals*, in terms of care and safety.

> Our very existence is based upon the philosophy of providing homeless and/or crisis-affected students, a safe place to learn.
>
> […]
>
> Aims and Goals:
>
> 1. To maintain a commitment to the 'chronically' homeless youth of Australia, giving these students preference of admission and priority of care, education and counseling.
> 2. To provide a school of safety. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

The effort to establish and maintain 'safety' for the young people underpins most of the YOTS policy documents that recognised the types of lives these young people had been subject to and often now lead. The policies were realistic about the circumstances that staff could expect to meet when taking on the young people's lives – not just in terms of what had been done to young people but also in the responses of young people to these circumstances, especially their 'ugly faces' as can be seen in the following quotes from (respectively) the *Critical Incident* policy and the *School Philosophy*.

> A critical incident response plan is vital in services that deal with young people who have behavioural and mental health issues. Their behaviour can often escalate quickly to violent and aggressive outbursts (YOTS 2012e: 1)

> School Philosophy
>
> Sometimes, it is difficult to cope with the behaviours these young people exhibit, especially when the behaviours threaten the safety and well-being of others around them. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

However, policy was not just about providing a safety net to 'catch them when they fell' but was also about blocking the actions of others that enacted unsafe practices in the young people's lives.

Protection was realised in three areas. Staff acted to: protect young people from both external influences and other young people in the YOTS schools; protect young people from the young people's own actions which could harm themselves and others

(usually through their 'edgeworking'); and protect young people through the provision of an environment that was safe for the young people to be in. I have addressed these three protective practices in the following section by looking at firstly, how YOTS protected each of the young people for others and secondly, in the ways that the staff acted to protect the young people from themselves.

Protection from Others

Protection from others was approached from two directions. As with all organisations working with children and young people, YOTS had Child Protection Policy and Mandatory Reporting procedures in place, which were incorporated into their "Reporting of Risk of Significant Harm" Policy (YOTS 2012c: 70). These processes were probably more regularly accessed in the YOTS environment than in other contexts due to the concentration of young people coming from abusive environments. This policy and the action that stemmed from it provided the young people with protection for the 'corrupt' forces they experienced in their lives. These actions were as much as the YOTS staff could do as then other agencies took over the process of protection in the young people's external settings.

Alongside this policy sat other policies that aimed at protecting the young people from the actions of others both while they were at school, and which often carried into the environments outside the school. One of the most important aspects of protection was protection from bullying, intimidation and violence. There was no negotiation around this. The Bullying Policy (which included bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence) drew on a very definitive use of language, with words like 'must' 'have the right to expect', 'responsibility', 'unacceptable', 'consequences', 'not acceptable in any form', 'group oppression' and 'power' being accessed. The policy determined that engagement in this behaviour meant removal from school.

> Any inappropriate behaviour that gets in the way of teaching and learning at the school and interferes with the well-being of students cannot be accepted. […] Bullying must be taken seriously and is not accepted in any form. (YOTS 2012c: 103-104)

This language was also reflected in how the staff spoke. For example Deb states,

> And when they come in they realise we have no tolerance for bullying or picking on the other kids. […] The ideal thing is that they come in, everyone respects everyone else, they give everyone a chance. There's no bullying, there's no fighting. (Deb)

However, removal from the YOTS schools with no return was also extremely rare and targeted only those young people who were deliberately acting to create fear in the people around them and who made no attempt to change this. The type of manipulation and intimidation described by Julie was one example.

> One kid […] had been institutionalised just about all of this life and he had a gaol mentality. He made sure that he was the "top dog" here with the kids. […] He had all the kids frightened of him and he used to […] be a complete gentleman and, you know with all the please and thank you and compliments […]. And then he'd send one of the other kids over to come over and say the most horrendous, disgusting things to me and you'd see the kids say "No, I don't want to say that to her", and he would threaten them. […] And then he would sit back and he would go "Aw, don't talk like that", and laugh at me. […] It was threatening. I felt scared when he did it. […] he was the sort of kid that if he had of turned around and said "I'll find out where you live", I wouldn't have been surprised. […] he was moved on because he just wouldn't comply. (Julie)

Julie implies here that there was a certain expectation of compliance when it came to relating to others in the YOTS environment, based on respect and the value of others. If someone was threatening other people's safety and wellbeing they were removed. This might be permanently but in general a process was put in place that was individually tailored, providing young people with the chance to change this type of approach towards others. Policy supported this for both one off events such as an assault or on going events such as the type of intimidation described above.

> Decisions involving the suspension of a young person from the program (because of assaultive behavior, drug use, or chronic refusal to comply) will involve the Principal, and his/her delegate. Clear protocols are available for

> staff members to guide their responses to "major behavioural events" (YOTS 2012c: 26)

Because the safety of the young people while at YOTS was paramount, YOTS policy required the establishment and maintenance of a safe environment for the young people while they were attending the YOTS schools.

> YOTS aims to create an educational environment for our young people that reflects care, respect, inclusion, diversity, cooperation and non-violent resolution of conflict. By working together, we aim to make sure our school community is a place where everyone is safe, supported and respected. (YOTS 2012c: 104)

For protective environments to exist, thorough checks of staff were conducted before any employment/volunteer work with YOTS commenced. These checks included: a working with children check, a criminal record check, a check for Apprehended Violence Orders, any relevant disciplinary proceedings, and a probity check (a national criminal records search) which helped YOTS "engage people who are suitable to care for young people." (YOTS 2012c: 66)

Other policies in place for the protection of young people in the YOTS environment included: a policy on how to transport young people; a *Drug, Smoking and Drinking* policy which excluded any use of drugs at YOTS by anyone; lockdown and lockout processes; and a policy on personal and duress alarm use. Other policies focused on protection in areas that were not solely concerned with physical safety, and included for example grievance procedures for the young people and community; and the protection of privacy and confidentiality.

In general, the YOTS schools took almost any young person who asked to enrol. However, there was a stringent enrolment process that allowed young people to know exactly what they were enrolling into and, for staff, exactly who it was that they were inviting on the *journey*. The enrolment process for young people was almost as exhaustive as the staff checks. It helped to set up a protective environment through the making of very well informed decisions when enrolling young people. Enrolment

was assessed on an individual basis (YOTS 2012c: 122). Every young person went through an extensive interview process prior to acceptance for enrolment. Information was gathered from family or refuge workers (who attended the interviews), welfare information from previous schools, Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO), DoCS/FACS, psychiatrists/psychologists and other Mental Health teams. Recognised educational psychology assessments were given, along with recognised literacy and numeracy tests. Violent acts were identified and young people completed a personal profile. Reports were also provided by any referring institutions which could include Juvenile Justice, DET/DEC, parents and DoCS/FACS.

> All these assessments take into consideration the likelihood of risk to students and staff. Some of the students may have incident reports of violence against them. We liaise with school counselor, Deputy, HSLO to have their sanction as to our programs suitability. They can also put these incidents into perspective for us. (YOTS 2012c: 122)

Behaviour plans were established with a focus on the goals the young people wanted to achieve by enrolling at YOTS. The school's decision not to enroll a young person was primarily in consideration for the welfare of the young people already in attendance. Young people whose lives were still deeply entrenched in drug use and dealing and contributing to high levels of violence were asked to reapply when they had been able to deal with these issues (accompanied with offers for help through other YOTS services). Although Deb says that not enrolling young people, even for these reasons, was rare.

> We don't want to upset the kids that we've already got. They have worked. It's hard to change themselves. Sometimes when you bring in a tough kid, they'll follow. That would be the only time. […] And we'd love to take them […] but then you've got to think of the other kids as well. […] We've had one young fellow whose father is in jail and he was selling and stuff at school and we were quite worried about that. We brought him in and umm, we'd take him back when he changes. Other times we might not take them if their drug use is that bad and they are not willing to change […]. But if they are not willing to change their drug use, we can't take them, because again, we've got kids that

> are trying to change. But if they're happy to do the [drug rehabilitation programme], put 'em through it. If they finish that program, then they can enroll. (Deb)

The enrolment process allowed for acceptance with trial periods to see if the placement would work. However, the careful screening process helped to identify those that might have trouble, and while not always preventing enrolment, it allowed support and processes to be put in place that helped to address possible 'problems' before they arose.

> If there is any hesitation by staff regarding a new enrolment, they are initially enrolled in a more restrictive environment where few demands are made. Whilst relationships develop, staff can monitor whether the program is appropriate for the child. Initially the child is on a part time enrolment which is gradually extended or ceases dependent upon staff observation of child's progress reported at weekly staff meetings. (YOTS 2012c: 122)

Staff acknowledged that YOTS was not capable of being effective with all young people. Sometimes these practices were not enough to keep the young people at YOTS. If the reason for enrolment had come from parents or other agencies, such as court set conditions, then conditions of enrolment could become irrelevant as the young people did not respond.

> [Enrolment] hasn't been successful for them because they don't want to be here. […] I don't think we could be doing it any better than we do […]. It works both ways. You can put in what you do but the kids have to be willing to put in their bit. (Julie)

> We've had a couple of kids that have come from really supportive families but they are just in a place at the moment, like a place in their life, a stage or something that they just want to rebel and its not like them wanting to be here. They have been pushed here, so they are going to have no more results than the school that they have been kicked out of. (Sharon)

Staff identified the difficulty in making the decision to ask young people to leave the YOTS schools. Embedded in this process was that the young people were never asked to just leave. "All staff will go to great lengths to contact and reintegrate a child back into YOTS" (YOTS 2012c: 133). Alternately, the staff worked to try and set them up for success outside the school regardless of the circumstances of leaving the YOTS schools. As Scott explains, this was done on an individual basis according to each young person's needs.

> It has to be on a case by case. I don't think there is any hard and fast rule on that. It's always something that we have to think long and hard about, the impact on the young person for a start. But um … if the person just doesn't seem to be, you know, they might seem to be saying that they want to be here, but they are not showing any behaviour to back that statement up, […] then I guess we would have to be really hard about looking for alternatives, or saying that it's just not for you to be here. […] then it's a bit of a waste of our resources we could be using on someone who does want to be here. You have to weigh it up I guess.
> […] some will come and go of their own accord […], we will give it as much time and as much effort as we can. But there comes a time when I guess you have to say it's not worth if for either party and you look at alternatives, basically. (Scott)

There was an 'open door' policy at all the schools. Having identified that there were some actions that were not acceptable, this open door policy was applied to these as well. The staff always made sure that the young people knew that they were welcome to come back to YOTS for support and assistance at any time, regardless of the reason for their leaving YOTS. Even on the rare occasion when young people had been asked to leave the school, it was almost never with the intent, or the meaning conveyed, that they could not come back. Asking young people to leave came with the understanding that if circumstances changed, then young people were always welcome to try again.

> Some kids it doesn't work for, which is a shame, you know. But sometimes they come back when they realise. Umm, and I think that's why it works. (Deb)

Even the young man who had created such fear in both staff and the other young people had been enrolled in a YOTS school on two other occasions.

Protection from Themselves

Even when others were prevented from acting negatively in the young people's lives, this did not necessarily remove the responses young people had established. At YOTS the staff recognised that the young people needed to be shown other ways of responding. In taking on a protective *practice of care*, they were not attempting to control and dominate, but were working with the young people to help them learn to relate to others in different ways. A different approach to relating to others was beneficial for the young people in relating successfully with the world and in being responsible for their actions. Behaviour was not therefore 'managed', nor were the young people forced into doing what was 'right' or 'best' in the way mainstream schools might approach discipline. Instead, the YOTS staff usually encouraged responses from the young people that eliminated the need for dominance through 'discipline'. Discipline was not considered a single disciplinary event or a matter of 'behaviour modification'. Instead, the young people were encouraged to change over time "to equip students for successful re-entry into society" (YOTS 2012c: 9). As Spence explains, for the staff, addressing behaviour meant they had to "work through it rather than it's a wall. It's not a wall. Its something to deal with." It required staff to question what was behind the young people's actions and respond to causes as well as the isolated acts of behaviour or events. Change was encouraged that was beneficial for the young people in the long term and protected them from their own actions. This response was about what YOTS called "disciplinary intervention", done "to foster insight and facilitate change, not to punish." (YOTS 2012c: 23)

Many of the policy statements established the goal of developing in young people alternative ways of 'being'. The following extracts are taken from throughout the YOTS school's policy documents and describe YOTS intent to help the young people change in ways that were beneficial to them. This is perceptible in that following five quotes.

> Our mission is to help young people rebuild their lives and to learn to believe in themselves again, by providing opportunities to become the best they can be. (YOTS 2012c: 22)

> [W]e seek to guide these youngsters through these difficulties, insecurities, fears and failings, with reassurance, respect and repetitions of what correct responses are and so attempt to provide them with a positive view of themselves; challenge them by acceptance and commitment, and bring them to better models of behaviour. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

> For many problems, the solution is education. For our students, this is more especially the case than with other students. We attempt to fit them with the skills they will need so they become the director of their own futures and not simply reactionaries to circumstances around them. Education is an answer to emancipating them from their circumstances. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

> However over time, as they begin to trust our judgment we see a great willingness to move toward sorting out their own problems. (YOTS 2012c: 102)

> Young people are encouraged to 'embrace the opportunity to change' immediately upon entering the program. (YOTS 2012c: 120)

The *Welfare and Discipline* policy in particular describes the range of training to be undertaken by staff and the types of 'strategies' they could draw on in order to protect the young people from themselves. In order to ensure the safety of all the young people (and often the staff as well) the policy provides guidance in dealing with such events as weapons use and allows for police contact where situations become dangerous. But staff also had at hand a range of strategies taken from their TCI[1] (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention) training such as,

[1] TCI – is a process that provides staff with a set of skills that can be drawn on to help recognise and resolve crisis situations with the young people before they escalate out of control. All YOTS staff were trained in TCI, usually before commencing work.

> Hurdle help, redirecting, caring gestures, and active listening.
>
> Remember I ASSIST
>
> - Isolate
> - Actively listen
> - Speak calmly and respectfully
> - Statements of understanding before direction
> - Invite the young person to consider positive outcomes
> - Time for compliance
>
> Remember I ESCAPE
>
> - Isolate
> - Explore the young person's point of view
> - Summarise the feelings and content
> - Connect behaviours to feelings
> - Alternative behaviours discussed
> - Plan developed/practice new behaviour
> - Enter the young person back into the routine.
>
> […] Use de-escalation techniques such as activity re-structuring to divert attention or to boost interest. (YOTS 2012c: 130-131)

As one example of how one of these techniques might be applied Grace explained that 'exploring the young people's point of view' was always vital.

> When we say, "Well what's happening for that kid? This isn't normal. What's happening? What's their story?" And it's when that evolves, you say, "Well, no wonder." It doesn't excuse it, but it helps us understand it and process it with them. What they're doing or what they've done, and how they've done it. (Grace)

Incident reports (YOTS 2012c: 93-94) were required for these types of 'crisis' incidents, however, rather than acting as just a documentation of behaviour, these reports recognised the severity of circumstances young people lived in and the severity of the responses that might arise. For example, incident reports acknowledged a record of "Injuries" which not only included such things as fighting, use of a weapon, or property damage as might be expected; but also self harm, major behavioural crises, suicidal ideations, and inappropriate sexual behaviours towards staff or other young

people. In this way incident reports were not just documentation of an occurrence but were examined to inform further action that was relevant and helpful for the young person involved.

As a consequence of their experiences before coming to YOTS many of the young people were convinced that they were 'bad'. As many of the staff explained, the young people "don't believe in themselves".

> Everybody that's ever had any contact with them has told them that they were bad, that they were no good, you know, that they were not worth worrying about, that they were stupid. (Julie)

Rather than leave young people entrenched in this notion, YOTS acted to protect the young people by developing their resilience, challenging them to make changes in their lives and to take charge of their own futures. At YOTS these practices were about helping young people meet the high expectations of achieving 'greatness', as stated in the YOTS *Mission Statement*. The staff both modelled the relationships that young people needed and challenged the young people to meet these high standards. For example, Ruth arranged for the YOTS young people to be the support people for a camp for disabled children. Each of the YOTS young people was responsible for the care of a child with a disability for three days. Ruth was adamant that the camp was not to be used just to reward good behaviour.

> I don't want kids coming on camp because they have been really good at school. They need to know and be challenged. (Ruth)

This challenge applied to all the young people including those who had come to YOTS with behaviour diagnoses such as ADHD and medication.

> I think a big thing we are trying to get through is ownership of their behaviour. So we're saying there is no use blaming ADHD for their behaviour, because we have students that are like that but its selective and they know what's right from wrong. Other students that we've got don't know right from wrong and

> need quite strong boundaries, so that they know where they stand because they don't have that in a lot of cases in their family environment. (Sharon)

Staff did not allow a 'diagnosis' to stand in the way of change that they saw would benefit the young people. Staff recognised that although young people were often at YOTS through no fault of their own, no one else was going to lift them out of the circumstances they were in. They therefore challenged the young people to do this for themselves with the support of the YOTS staff, and, as Lowan said, 'prove everyone else wrong'.

A realistic understanding of young people's 'corrupted' lives in order to protect them is also reflected in the *Risk Management* policy and the *Welfare and Discipline* policy which were established at both corporate and school levels of the YOTS organisation. The *Risk Management* policy recognises that 'severe risk' is a definite likelihood and sometimes a necessity in the YOTS environment. The policy did not shy away from addressing severe risk activities and incidents. Instead it recognises the need for staff to be present and responsive in risk situations in order to protect the young people and prevent further risk and/or damage: "YOTS aims to recognize and respond to risk in a proactive and consistent way" (YOTS 2012c: 37).

> Options for risk treatment will be assessed on the basis of opportunities created. Selection of the most appropriate risk treatment option(s) will involve balancing the cost of implementing the option against the benefit derived from it.
>
> Options include:
>
> > Avoiding the risk […]
> >
> > Taking or increasing the risk in order to pursue an opportunity […]
> >
> > Retaining the risk by informed decision. (YOTS 2012c: 42)

In practice, one example of retaining or increasing risk by informed decision and taking advantage of an opportunity came from Hannah. Hannah's school had two volunteers teaching music. The volunteers were described by the young people as being 'big' in the DJ/nightclubbing scene in the inner city. Their volunteering extended to taking one young person out "for a night without drugs". Their aim was to show the young

person that she could have just as much fun without drugs as with them. For this activity to occur a range of issues had already been addressed (e.g. the volunteers had already been subject to a range of criminal and protective checks; the young person was over 18 years of age; safety measures for checking with her had been established with her refuge). Hannah explained that the impact of such 'risk taking' for this young person was for her to begin to address her issues with addiction. Previously this had not been something she had considered necessary. The night out was an informed risk opportunity with what might be considered a severe level of risk (although compared to some of the young people's edgework practices was a reasonably sedate activity), but it provided an opportunity to address a drug issue and 'the benefit derived from it' was deemed appropriate.

As far as possible, staff did not allow young people to act in ways that would not ultimately be of benefit. As Julie stated, "You don't let them get away with stuff that you know isn't going to be helpful to them." The social acceptability of certain behaviours that were not just 'unpleasant' in the classroom but, if left, would be a disadvantage to the young people in the long term, was one such example. Ruth and Spence spoke of 'swearing' to illustrate this.

> They learn how to communicate more effectively in a social capacity. They realise that some of their language isn't appropriate, and that they can actually limit themselves. In some environments, because it's just accepted, they just swear and carry on. And it's like, well that's just not socially acceptable and in the real world if you carry on like that in the workforce, well you are not going to have a job for very long. So it's also just showing them the reality of what life is really like outside […] a protected environment. (Ruth)

> If you can't do it in the classroom, there are chances you can't do it on a worksite and if you can't do it on a worksite, you won't be allowed on a worksite which means you will be unemployed. (Spence)

The staff's response to the young people's swearing illustrated their practice. They were not so much concerned with the act of swearing, as they were about the impact

that swearing had on the young people's ability to function successfully in a social environment. Violence was another factor.

> At every interview the Principal/School Manager clearly states that at any form of violence towards staff or students or property, the police will be called and the student(s) will be charged. It will not be tolerated. It is our intention to teach our students alternatives to being heard other than using violence. (YOTS 2012c: 122)

Realisation of Preventative Responses

In many ways preventative responses were very similar to protective responses. However, in acting to prevent things from happening, the staff seemed to be working to stop the requirement for protective responses to be necessary. Preventative responses were designed to work for both the prevention of problems in the day-to-day events in the lives of the young people and also over the long term. The YOTS staff employed an intensive form of 'care' aimed at helping to prevent the need for the young people's 'edgework'.

Daily Prevention

Accessing preventative responses in everyday life was about acting to anticipate danger. Staff preventative responses were therefore designed to prevent any immediate danger or damage experienced by the young people and others. These responses acted to prevent harm from the more immediate circumstances of the young people's lives, such as a violent act, or a young person going home to an abusive environment, or known drug use or drug dealing.

One of the most obvious practices is identified in the *Responding to Behavioural Emergencies* policy in which the first response for staff is identified as "anticipate" (YOTS 2012c: 130). Staff constantly worked to anticipate what might go wrong and devise ways in which to respond proactively. This was also implicit in the Risk Management Strategy. While YOTS did not shy away from risk and in fact as I discussed above, seemed in some circumstances to embrace it in recognition of the young people's lives, there was also constant reference to the need to learn from risk circumstances and to improve responses to risk as demonstrate in the following quote.

> High quality risk management processes are integrated into our programs and services to prevent or limit risk in an ever changing environment. If unintended events occur, we use systematic processes to learn the lessons from our successes, failures and near misses. (YOTS 2012c: 37)

The staff saw anticipation and prevention as a vital part of their practice. They used preventative tactics to stop situations arising that could cause problems for the young people and themselves, as a way of minimizing coercive disciplining practices.

> We […] have to think ahead a lot more. Be more conscious of the situation. With the kids you have to expect the unexpected at anytime. Anything could happen. You have to be in the right spot, you have to be here or over there. Before you do anything you have to think of what could happen. (Russell)

To prevent problems in this proactive way, John gave examples of preventative responses that he and the staff at his school used. One strategy was for the staff and young people to play a game of soccer during fourth period every day. This game served a number of purposes for the staff, one of which was to provide a physical outlet for any aggression at a time in the day when problems often occurred. This preventative measure meant fewer problems during the day and was sometimes used a number of times if needed. Another example John gave was about how problems were anticipated in picking up the groceries each week.

> The groceries are pre-packed so we just pick them up. You don't want the kids roaming around [the shop] because it gives them an opportunity for trouble. (John)

Preventative practices were also reflected in the ways in which YOTS looked to future possibilities that might arise in these young people's 'edgeworking' lives. For example, staff were required to make regular progress notes for each of the young people. However, given the young people's relationships with other agencies such as the law, care needed to be taken with the writing of these progress notes so as to protect the young people from further damage.

> Please be mindful when writing note on progress of students, that they are objective, giving clear examples and not assumptions […] These notes may be made available to the young person in accordance with FOI. They may also be subpoenaed to court as a legal document on which you could be cross-examined. They will also be used in case conferences and copied to FACS and other human services departments. (YOTS 2012c: 93)

Taking care in note writing was not about hiding the truth but about being explicit in the intent of the notes. The extensive enrolment process described above also acted to prevent damage. This process allowed both the YOTS staff and the young people to come to the YOTS schools holding significant knowledge of young people's pasts and, for young people, the expectations of the schools. For example at enrolment interviews the young people were given clear boundaries as to what were and were not acceptable forms of behaviour, and the consequences for certain types of behaviour.

> When students make decisions that are inappropriate for them, decisions that take them back to a lifestyle that may flaunt the law, and may include drug-use, theft, assault, etc., then we are required not only to advise against this, but to inform the appropriate authorities if the law is broken, or bail conditions etc. are broken. The students are made aware of this possibility at their intake interview. (YOTS 2012c: 126)

YOTS had very clear structures and processes that contributed to the preventative practices they used with the young people. Simple structures such as a shortened day of 6 hours from 9-3 with 30 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes for recess reduced the space in which trouble could develop. In the *Guidelines for Student Behaviour at School* (YOTS 2012c: 128), there was a requirement for valuables such as mobiles, ipods, money to be locked up at the beginning of lessons. At one of the schools they collected these items at the beginning of the day and returned them at the end of the day. The soccer game and shopping regimes John described above were also examples of these tactics. Preventative processes also extended to more serious events for which YOTS policy was used to scaffold staff responses to anticipated events. One such example was for the use of staff 'personal duress alarms' (YOTS 2012c: 117),

which were for use by staff when something or someone threatened anyone at the schools. Another was from the *Mental Health Procedures* (YOTS: 112), explaining how staff were to respond to suicidal and high risk behaviours:

> Responding to suicidal ideation, gestures, self harm, and high risk activities.
> Support the young person by:
>
> Not leaving them alone
> Observing them at all times
> Using I ASSIST and I ESCAPE
> Seek support and notify
> Stay fully focused on young person

If staff suspected the use of drugs/alcohol or the young people displayed violent or aggressive behaviour, the following guidelines were given to the young people.

> If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that you are under the influence of drugs/alcohol or you display violent/aggressive behaviour, your parent/guardian will be contacted and you will be sent home. Staff will ensure that you have transport home and you will need to negotiate your return to the school. (YOTS 2012c: 129)

The young people were also given the opportunity to access preventative behaviours such as asking for time out if they needed it.

One example of the staff's preventative responses were in the tactics they used to create safe spaces in the young people's lives. This included such things as the staff arranging accommodation at a refuge or encouraging the young people to do the arranging for themselves. The reasoning was that, for the young people, without the worry of where they might sleep that night, the space previously occupied with this concern was now available for learning. Another examples involved a teacher accompanying a young woman and her mother to police interviews; and being in court with another young person and being willing to testify on this young person's behalf. The fear produced by these types of frightening events, which young people often endured alone, were reduced when staff could support them both personally and with

legal help – not just in the legal setting but also during school times – opening up space where learning might be possible.

Staff were also able to interact with the young people's parents, their abuse of their children and parental drug habits, through the constant contacts they made with the young people's carers and by giving parents access to parenting classes, or providing contact details and organising contact for drug and alcohol counselling for parents and for the young people. The staff were involved in liaising with the many external agencies the young people required contact with such as DoCS/FACS, counsellors, psychologists, other schools, employers. On a more 'ordinary' level, in classrooms prevention involved providing equipment such as pens and books and a place to store these so that these relatively simple tasks became one less requirement for young people to cope with and also made sure that they had everything they needed for learning at hand. In taking on this range of issues and tasks and in supporting the young people in doing them, the staff freed young people from the burden such events and issues created. For the young people, there was rarely only one burden; their lives were a complex combination (see Chapter 4). I argue therefore that the relieving of some of the fear and uncertainty of these burdens helped to create a space for learning.

Long Term Prevention

The examples described above focused on the types of preventative responses that the YOTS staff used on a daily basis. However, they also drew on preventative responses that acted in an on going capacity. These preventative practices were also protective practices that became long term preventative responses as they helped to provide young people with those attributes that enabled the possibility of young people to move beyond their current lives. However, long term preventative responses were enacted through a range of short term or immediate responses that worked together to produce the long term benefits an education could bring.

I argue here that the prevention of detrimental lives in the long term came through education. Opening up the possibility of education was therefore an important preventative response.

As I argued above, rather than having a predominantly academic focus, the focus at YOTS was firstly, on organising both the school and the unpredictable events of young people's lives to make a space where education became possible. Once the young people's lives and the educational space were organised and cleared of burden to whatever extent was possible, then both the staff and young people could approach the academic aspect of education by taking advantage of the space they had cleared to introduce education. Staff practices of prevention therefore were those tactics which cleared and maintained this free space and which worked to overcome and move young people beyond their negative circumstances.

Staff saw the need for both an academic and a broader education. Education was an extremely valuable tool for addressing many of the issues the young people experienced and staff felt it was their responsibility to pass on this tool to the young people in order to address the difficult circumstances the young people experienced regularly. Spence made this point clear in the following quote,

> as a teacher I would like to think that a lot of what we do is educational, because without an education in this day and age you are pretty well sunk as well as your future stands, so to me education is important. (Spence)

Spence's understanding of the value of education for the young people is clear. However, in their mainstream contexts, young people had not been able to access an academic education. YOTS in contrast, had placed significant importance on the young people being able to access an academic education.

To get young people to a point where an academic education became possible, Liam explained that "You are definitely not just a teacher". The staff recognised that they needed to be and do more in order to reach their goals for the young people. They regularly became involved in the helping young people deal with the difficult circumstances that arose. Working to assist young people with these issues therefore became a priority and an integral part of the staff's daily activity in addition to what most teaching staff would consider, regular teaching duties. The staff recognised that the young people came to them burdened and unsupported, and that ultimately education could not occur while these burdens remained prominently in the young

people's lives. In caring for the young people these circumstances had to be addressed and a component of staff practice involved the staff helping the young people to deal with whatever these circumstances presented. It was an on going and constant requirement but one that was unique to every young person. Staff ideas of what was entailed in being an educator therefore became far more extensive than expectations of practice usually described for teachers in mainstream schools. The staff seemed to understand that dealing with the young people's issues required much more of them. They needed to became involved in young people's lives and therefore the staff's role had to take on different proportions.

> we are not just here to …educate them…. (Lowan)

> Like education, I think, is the last thing. Even though we are a registered school, I do think that is the last thing. (Hannah)

The staff acknowledged that the more pressing needs of young people took precedence over their academic needs. At the same time this practice sat comfortably beside the understanding that an academic education was vital for these young people. As I discussed in Chapter 6, the role of the school therefore was sited with the needs of young people as a first necessary step. This was not to make education less of a priority but became a step in the total education of these young people that enabled the possibility of an academic education.

Staff identified what these actions could and could not be. For example, Spence stated that, "We are family support, legal support, psychological support, health support, so it's a much wider job than just school." This was supported by Liam who explained that,

> You can't be somebody who wants to walk in here and just teach and walk out of the classroom and that's enough. You have also got to be somebody whose willing to challenge what you see, […] You don't just have a face in front of you that you just teach English or Maths. (Liam)

Liam and Spence identify that the staff are involved in all areas of the young people's lives. I would argue that this involvement is a preventative response as it allows the more academic goal of education to become possible which, in turn, reduces the likelihood of detrimental lives continuing.

The Realisation of Augmentative Responses

I argue in this section that augmentation, as a practice of care, was primarily aimed at moving the young people forward. The realisation of augmentative responses was about acting on the premise that young people had to be moved outside of the 'corruption' they had experienced. Responses then involved anything that would 'augment' or expand young people's experiences beyond those limited and damaging life experiences had thus far they had been trapped in. These practices allowed the staff to enhance the young people's pre-existing skills, such as resilience and courage, and to expand their limited repertoires by providing experiences that opened the options and responses to move beyond the detrimental lives they currently existed in. This intent was exemplified in the YOTS mission statement,

> Youth Off The Streets is helping disconnected young people discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices. (YOTS 2012a)

Other policies expressed a similar intent. For example, from the *Suggested Guidelines for Student Behaviour* policy,

> Staff must have the courage to demand greatness from our youth. (YOTS 2012c: 127)

Some of the identified augmentative responses impacted indirectly on the young people. For example, Youth Advocacy (YOTS 2012a) was one augmentative response from the YOTS organisation that operated outside of the young people's experiences. Advocacy was conducted on behalf of young people on a national scale. YOTS had called for Federal and State funding (particularly for the provision of services and environments for prevention and intervention), changes to policy and law, parental and community awareness, and the societal recognition to 'speak out' on any and all of

these issues in targeted areas of advocacy such as: Youth Homelessness, Child Protection, Juvenile Justice, Cyberbullying, Education, Poverty, and Youth Alcohol and Drug Use (YOTS 2012a)

However, the majority of augmentative responses impacted directly on the young people themselves. These practices aimed at establishing different lives for the young people by directly addressing their behaviour and limited experiences and adding to an ever expanding range of beneficial responses that the young people had access to. Supporting this were the experiences that the staff provided, or took advantage of, in order to expose young people to life experiences beyond the 'corrupted' experiences that had previously taken a dominant place in their lives. These acted to give the young people a range of options and choices, and in the process, a chance to succeed.

Exposure to Legitimating Experiences

The subjugation that the young people experienced from deficit knowledges constantly reinforced for young people that they were considered undeserving of 'privilege', and were 'less' than other young people. These understandings were countered by the staff providing experiences that legitimated young people (to others and to themselves) as valued, valuable and as deserving and worthy of the experiences that the staff provided.

> We try to offer a rich experience. We don't want them to think they have left here having missed out. (Spence)

As Spence suggests, the YOTS schools provided a vast range of experiences outside the normal pattern of schooling. The YOTS *Excursion* policy (YOTS 2012c) explains that such activities were constantly reviewed according to the needs of the young people and were based around building worth, special interests, mentoring and general life experience.

Facilities were also important in augmentative responses as they indicated the worth the YOTS organisation held of them. At the time of this research one of the school sites was being improved and another site was in the process of building a new and expanded complex, both of which have since been completed. Recently, another site

has been purchased and a fifth school has opened. All the facilities and equipment were maintained in significant part through donation in the first instance, then through government funding.

> At all times we try to ensure that our students have access to the most up to date technology and educational materials. (YOTS 2012c: 53)

Such equipment and facilities include: Interactive White Boards, and other computing equipment with internet connections. A range of specialised rooms such as commercial kitchens, 'technics' rooms, sporting facilities, creative arts rooms and recording studios. Each school was provided with a mini bus so that further augmentative experiences were accessible at any time.

Based on my analysis, the kinds of experiences the young people were exposed to fell into three spheres of action. The first could be seen when staff provide *ordinary experiences* that most young people would take for granted. They saw the young people as being deprived in many ways because of their environments and often tried to fill the gaps with 'ordinary experiences', making sure these young people did not miss out. Staff found it disheartening that the young people often did not realise that they were 'missing out'. Julie describes the implications of something as simple as chocolate crackles and birthday cakes.

> All the grown ups came in the kitchen […] saw the chocolate crackles and went "Oooh, yum! Chocolate Crackles". […] the kids looked at them and went "What's that shit?" […] Never had a birthday party, never seen a Chocolate Crackle? […] It's just that we like them because we associate them with the birthday parties and fun and being loved and yep. That really sent a message home to me that it's not the Chocolate Crackle that's special it's the family, it's the friends, […] And nobody ever made them a birthday cake. I mean not all of them, but some of them had never had a birthday cake made for them. (Julie)

The cultural practices used to demonstrate love and care within families, so often taken for granted, were drawn on to express love and care to the young people.

Through these acts the staff assisted the young people to think about themselves as valued and worthy enough to warrant such love and care.

Special experiences were those experiences devised by staff to meet the particular needs of young people at particular times. Again doing things that, as Russell said, the young people would not get to do otherwise. The staff saw these actions as worthwhile, and as part of the education they provided. Russell, for example, took advantage of circumstances that arose at his school one day to provide a young man with support.

> At the start of the year we had one kid turn up […] [he] lived out of home and didn't have a lot of contact with Dad and on his own almost. He had just had a bad trot. (Russell)

Russell's response to this young man was to go fishing.

> I had somewhere in mind, so Lowan and I packed up the bus and […] I was just going to get a couple of canoes and paddle […]. I wanted to get him into a place that was as far away from the city as possible and it really worked well. And before we knew it we had bush on either side, […] we fished and stood there. And at the time he appreciated it. It was the kind of thing a bloke wouldn't get to do otherwise. […] He loved it. Had a great day. Very long road for a little kid. At that particular time it was worthwhile. (Russell)

Russell saw this experience as one that was deserved by this young man because he had 'just had a bad trot'. The timing with other detrimental events in the young man's life was tailored to suit his needs (an activity out of the city, time with older 'male' role models, an experience that would not occur otherwise). Care is again shown for this young man and his circumstances that demonstrated he was worthy of their time and of the special experience the staff provided by being responsive to circumstances. One of the other schools also did activities such as going 'yabbying' in a nearby dam, or, on really hot afternoons, taking the young people to the pool or the movies. These were not every day occurrences, nor did it seem like the young people treated them as such. They were experiences that were out of the ordinary because of their

unexpectedness and responsiveness, with the dual purpose of demonstrating again, the care and concern the staff had for the young people's welfare.

Extra-ordinary experiences were those experiences that would normally be considered exclusive to a select few. For example, on one Service Learning activity the young people were taken for a cruise on the Clyde River. The captain of the boat welcomed the young people as special guests and then invited them all up to the 'bridge' to steer the boat. On another occasion the young people were invited by the Navy to go on board the HMAS Success where they were provided with lunch and a tour of the ship. One school was visited each year by the Souths NRL Football team. Some young people were able to attend a Pink concert and were introduced to Pink following the concert. Other young people were able to meet with Prince William on his last visit to Australia and some were flown to East Timor and Banda Aceh, to help set up orphanages after the disasters of war and tsunamis in each country. For young people who experienced no privilege in their lives these atypical experiences showed how truly deserving the staff thought they were.

Along with activities I have previously mentioned such as the Harley Hogs rides and the trip to Victoria to assist other young people after the Victorian Bushfires, these 'extra-ordinary experiences' were valuable in breaking down dominating understandings and replacing them with understandings that showed the value, trust and esteem in which these young people were held by staff. The exposure to some of these experiences was purely privilege, others came with a 'giving back' component, but all were experiences that for these young people, would not have occurred if they had not been with YOTS.

However, there were some cautions that arose out of this practice of 'exposure to experience'. The first was that at one point of time, the staff of one school had reached a stage where they said "no" to some of these experiences as they were concerned that the travel and time away often disrupted the flow of learning that was particularly hard to maintain with the young people even when they were at school.

> Sometimes it happens too much and the staff, we go hang on we've just got to settle down. It's a bit crazy, going every which way […] And because we are

> with YOTS, we get so many different opportunities and because they are so good, or you think that it's going to be a good opportunity, so you kinda take on lots. Sometimes we've got to sit back and say hang on, we don't need to go to every single outing. (Liam)

The staff were also concerned that there were so many experiences that the young people would lose the value of the experience. They in no way thought that the young people did not deserve the experiences but thought a balance in how many experiences were undertaken was required. This also needed to be weighed against the acceptance of the generosity of those people who provided the experiences. Liam also explained that the staff therefore worked to make deliberate links between these activities and classroom work to help provide this balance.

Opening Up and Expanding Options

> [We] determine to give our students options – always options. A student with no options runs or hurts himself and others. And when something is withdrawn, there is always something else placed in its stead. [Options are] a very powerful tool. (YOTS 2012c: 8)

From my analysis of observations of the YOTS staff practice and the YOTS policy documents another central augmentative practices was that of opening up and expanding the options available to the young people. The above statement from the *School Philosophy* exemplifies this notion. When the staff provided experiences that opened up options for the young people, they did so with different understandings and in very different ways to the options that we would expect to see being given to young people in mainstream schooling. For example, limited options, (i.e., behaviour management practices such as enforcing a choice between doing X or Y) demonstrates another type of coercion as the expert adult takes on a "we know what's best for you" response. This approach was one that the young people did not respond well to (see Chapter 5), regardless of the good intentions behind the practice. The domination and diminishing of young people's 'choice' maintained a dominating power relationship. YOTS staff approached the expanding of options in ways that young people did not feel manipulated or coerced. They did not give limiting, restrictive, 'pretend' options that came from 'experts' who could believed they could make better choices on the

behalf of young people. Instead they demonstrated that other notions of options were possible. School structures and processes became actions that opened opportunities that were productively used to create opportunity.

In educational contexts I recognise that 'choice' is a term that is critiqued, especially in relation to neoliberal notions of the individual, such as 'responsiblisation' (Kelly 2001b; Wright 2012). Responsibilisation "act[s] to shift responsibility for social problems from the state to the individual" (Wright 2012: 279), thereby establishing deficit understandings and the associated blame on the individual. For example, neoliberal use of 'choice' has been critiqued for implying that people 'choose' to be poor, or not to work, or live on the streets. However, in this section I use 'choice' and 'choosing' in the way I have interpreted YOTS does. 'Choice' for the YOTS staff appeared to be related to giving the young people understandings of, and access to, a range of options. The use of this term provided YOTS the capacity to engage with the young people in a way that communicated to them that they had the ability to make informed decisions without the moral judgement and blame of others. In these young people's lives, 'choices' were often extremely limited by the 'corruption' they were forced to exist in and 'choice' often become almost inaccessible. For example, stealing became a valid 'choice' to deal with hunger, living on the streets was a viable 'choice' for those experiencing abusive home environments. However, YOTS would not lay the blame for these so called 'choices' solely with the young people. Their understanding of 'choice' seemed to be about respecting the rights of the young people to make their own decisions while recognising the limitations embedded in the young people's contexts that the young people must work within.

As Ruth explains below, expanding options and opening choices was closely related to YOTS notions of giving educational and life opportunities to create alternate and better futures for their young people.

> And if we can encourage them to make better choices or to transfer their knowledge and skills into areas of their interest then they are going to have more chance to be successful in the future. (Ruth)

By providing "other things to chose from" (Grace), the YOTS staff seemed to act from a belief that the young people were capable of making appropriate and relevant choices. The staff saw themselves as being able to demonstrate to young people that they did have options, while simultaneously NOT making decisions on behalf of the young people.

> We need to expose them to so many different avenues because as I said they have had a very tumultuous upbringing and if we don't show them what else is out there, what they can work towards […] We need to give them the choice. (Ruth)

> It's about talking to them so they can make the best decisions for them. And at the end of the day and they decide to do 'that', that is their decision and that was meant for them. It's not that I want that. (Helena)

In the YOTS context, opening up options and choices was closely related to notions of 'exposure to experience'. The *Welfare and Discipline* policy demonstrates this connection.

> While students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own choices and decisions, we try to ensure that these decisions (i.e. choosing appropriate study options, career choices, personal development decisions) are made with a complete overview of the pros and cons for each possibility. When decisions made that uphold the law and provide safer, better life-choice for the students, we support that by following through with assistance in paperwork, leasing with outside agencies and so on. […]
> We firmly believe that as far as possible a student should be presented with options and choices, to empower them in decision-making over their own lives and circumstances. At all opportunities we support and encourage them. (YOTS 2012c: 126)

The idea was that by exposing young people to a wide range of experiences, their ability to make informed choices would become increasingly possible. As Grace explained,

> We give the kids another choice. We just give them the chance to achieve. They now have a different set of choices up their sleeve. You know, we have lots of other chances, chance to change, life choices that sort of thing. But really, it's just our role to give them some other things that they can choose from. (Grace)

However, the staff continually emphasised that accessing any option was the young people's choice to make,

> Knowledge about a particular event or a way to do things or the way you conduct yourself isn't a way you can force. I can do the teaching part but the learning part is up to them. You can't force them. (Russell)

Staff however, also made the young people aware that their choices came with responsibility and consequences – both good and bad.

> they're responsible for [the choices that they make and] how they behave and the impact that it has on other people. (Ruth)

The most prominent example of options and choices at YOTS concerned the choice to learn.

> On some level they want to be here. They simply wouldn't turn up if they didn't want to be here. It's as black and white as that. They make the choice every morning to come here or not and if they didn't really want to come in, they don't. And you have to give them props for that as they have taken charge and been responsible for themselves and empowering themselves. […] It's the kids themselves making that effort for themselves. If they're not going to make the effort well then there is nothing we can do. (Spence)

Although, on initial enrolment the choice to come to school could be a struggle for both staff and the young people, YOTS had put in place the lengthy and detailed enrolment process that I described above that also helped address choice. The initial enrolment process involved the young people establishing their goals for being at

YOTS. These goals were used regularly to remind young people that some behaviour did not contribute to their achieving those goals. When I asked Liam about the process he explained that,

> At the start we were having issues with a young person gets referred here. They'd think we're alternative education […]. It's more flexible, it's easier, so it's going to be a bit of bludge. So now […] its clear from the start for them that they are applying here, they're not being sent here. Even though we do take referrals from JJ's and DoCS and schools who are basically telling them they have to come here. Whenever we speak now, "You're making a choice. You are not being sent here. There are other places you can go. And the application is through an interview process […]. And the language used in there is to try to give the kids some power - "You're making this decision". (Liam)

The staff worked consistently to show young people how to choose what might be best for them, again, without making the choice for them. Helena, for example, spoke of the financial programme they had implemented in their school. During one of her classes she was teaching about investing and saving money and getting interest and linking this to work. One young person responded that it would be easier to get a lot of money by going down to 'The Wall' for one night than having to work for a week (Helena explained that 'The Wall' is a location frequented by paedophiles, where some of the young people went to be paid for sex). In this example, the young person's 'choice' to go to the wall is far more complex than a young person making money. However, this scenario provides an example of how the staff developed preventative responses by opening options rather than disallowing choice.

In a mainstream setting this statement by the young person could well have been assumed to be simply provocative, disruptive, or as an indication of the need to involve social services and police. Instead, Helena's response was to chat through the pro's and con's of working and saving money versus going to 'The Wall'. She was able to raise issues such as the threat of STDs, physical and sexual assault, the feelings that 'sex work' might give the young man, the quick pay off that 'The Wall' might provide, as opposed to the relative safety of investing and growing money over the longer term

with the security and advancement that a job might provide. By asking questions such as: Which choice is safer? How does each choice make you feel? Which choice says "you are valuable"? What might be the worst outcome of each choice? What might be the legal implications of your choice?; Helena was able to expand the range of options available to the young person to make an informed choice. She described the process of opening up options to the young people as important as it did not condemn or judge the choice the young person would ultimately make but still allowed her to present an alternative.

Acknowledging this level of choice for the young people meant that in some circumstances, the staff would refrain (often with great difficulty) from making typical responses and allow these young people to make what staff would consider to be poor choices because they believed it was still the young person's right to choose, even if they disagreed with the choice being made. They recognised that these choices were not made in a normative context.

> Our main job, I think is to offer them a chance to make some new decisions. It's a choice. So, that's the bottom line. That's our job. And we can't solve the problems enough. You sort of get to the point some days where you are tearing your hair out, going, you know, we can't fix everything. They go back to the family that's got fifteen years worth of stuff - what hope have we got? But then, you've just got to come back, well that's their choice. And if you can do everything in your power to give that young person a choice, then in …. yeah, you can't push them into it. It's their choice. (Liam)

There was a very fine balance between opening options and giving choice to the young people and the very real need to protect the young people from others and often themselves. In some cases where choices were made (dealing drugs, violence, attempts at suicide) staff did intervene (and were required by the YOTS organisation as to do so). Definitive ultimatums seemed to be reserved for those non-negotiable behaviours set by YOTS, such as bullying intimidation, violence, and issues around drugs and extremely high-risk activities that were know of ahead of time. However, in dealing with these issues, the only time I ever heard one of the staff raise their voice to one of the young people was when the young person had brought a knife on an

excursion and was using it to intimidate the young people from one of the other YOTS schools. However, these are not the types of choices being discussed in this section. When staff could not prevent a damaging choice they did not allow the young people to suffer severely detrimental consequences of their choices on their own. Although staff often had limited or no time to provide options for young people, what they did do was step in and support young people through the consequences of their choices. For example, from the YOTS webpage (2012a)

> We provide as much extra curricula support as possible to minimize any personal barriers to learning. We act as mentors, arrange crisis and permanent accommodation, provide students with support in court, assist them to make it to medical, casework and legal appointments, and build a special rapport with each individual. We also provide a range of educational programs designed to give our most vulnerable young people the chance to remain connected to the broader community and life.

The staff's willingness to go to police stations and court with the young people, to attend the birth of children, right through to ringing the young people in the morning if they had not arrived at school and offering to pick them up were all other examples of how support was provided around young people's choices.

In summary, the practice of expanding options and experiences whilst locating choice with the young people gave them freedom as it steered away from the types of manipulation the young people had previously dealt with. Many of the ordinary, special and extra-ordinary experiences also worked to demonstrate the alternatives available to young people. These experiences gave the young people the opportunity to make a more informed 'choice'. The staff's understanding of this augmentative response acknowledged young people as individual, as worthy, as trustworthy and as capable of making independent decisions. However, staff insisted that these choices came from an informed understanding of the options available. These decisions may not always have been those that staff would have chosen for the young people, and young people may not have had the benefit of 'uncorrupted' lives in which to make their choices, but the recognition of the autonomy of each young person to make their own decisions was considered more important.

Success

To create an environment of care the young people needed to know they were cared for. In the YOTS schools context the staff spoke of doing this by ensuring that young people did not feel worthless as learners and people. Their notions of success were central to this task. The staff augmented the young people's experiences by rejecting neoliberal notions of success and by providing experiences in which the young people could experience the 'novelty' of success in an educational setting. This meant that they also had to reconsider the 'indicators' and 'measures' they used to judge success which neoliberal understandings would never consider. When compared to the neoliberal understanding of success taken up in mainstream schools, the YOTS young people could be judged to have had failed. The YOTS staff spoke convincingly about young people's lack of success as stemming from the effects of neoliberal notions being entrenched in mainstream education.

> I like to think everyone that we work with leaves us better off in some way and in many cases, many, many ways; than if they had not come to us (Spence)

For Spence, understandings of success concerned improving the lives of the young people. Neoliberal ideologies which enforce economic and business notions as individualization, competition, economic efficiency, and accountability all work to create an obligatory form of academic and financial success which has significant impacts on education when taken up within educational systems (Smyth 2010; Kelly 2001a; Saltmarsh and Youdell 2004; McInerney 2003). Spence's notion of the young people being 'better off' for having been at YOTS then seems difficult, if not impossible.

The following quote from the *Safe and Supportive Environment – Student Welfare* policy demonstrates how success was viewed in the YOTS setting.

> With our students, achievements are not easy to evaluate or see. To some, it may mean that when they go home they do not physically attack members of their family, or rob a store, or it might mean that when they need something they no longer 'stand over' others to get their own way. They may start the gradual process of using words and manners to organise their needs. It may

> also mean that for the first time in their lives, they feel safe […] Something as simple as a board game and learning to take a turn without becoming violent is a great achievement. (YOTS 2012c: 97)

The YOTS staff had rejected much of neoliberal ideology, particularly those parts established in deficit understandings such as blame(see Chapter 3 and 5). Rejection was predominantly based on their understandings of the young people's backgrounds and environments of deprivation; the disparities they saw in the possible futures of these young people compared to others; and their understanding that the young people deserved to be and feel successful. The staff recognised that these young people came from the types of circumstances where mainstream neoliberal notions of success could not apply. It seemed nonsensical to staff to judge young people by these criteria. In their interviews, the staff drew on similar notions to those of the YOTS policy that stated that success was not necessarily obvious and had to be different for the young people at YOTS because of their circumstances. For example, in the quote below, Meg implies that the young people's entire contexts deserved consideration when success was being judged, not just their school lives; suggesting that any notion of success needed to consider very different 'measures'.

> There's the sad ones ... you know, the ones that really have a horrible life ... um and really just want an education and you think "Oh my God, you've got so many other things you need to deal with." […] They're always measured in this massive goal instead of these tiny goals instead of just walking through a door or just turning up daily or just having clean clothes or being fed … you know, having breakfast for the first time in their life. (Meg)

For YOTS, success was about overcoming severe life experiences; and being 'better off'. They therefore saw mainstream understandings as a narrow view of success that limited possibilities, particularly for these young people. The staff explained their understandings of success in contrast to mainstream, identifying the lack of flexibility and the compliance issues found in mainstream settings as being a major problem.

> Well, this [YOTS] definitely is not regimental in any shape or form and this is really flexible […]. If it's just not working out in the classroom the plan will

> change and you'll adapt and do something to resolve the situation and make it flow on. […] In mainstream it would be "If you're not coping you're out". "If you're misbehaving, you're suspended". You know, it's got to be more flexible, you've just got to be um more understanding. I think […] they just expect kids to comply […]. If you're in a classroom you're supposed to sit there and be quiet, and write when you're supposed to write, and listen when you're supposed to listen, and I don't care if you bashed the crap out of your mother last night, that's got nothing to do with school. Where to us, we do care if that happened and we understand why you're not coping today. (Julie)

> I guess that's the hardest thing for mainstream is they can't ... everything's got to be goal-focused, so everything's got to be achieved, um, step by step by step by step. I guess, if mainstream looked back and sort of, could have the way of thinking that it's achievement for some of these kids to get here, just on a daily basis. (Meg)

> You don't have the stringent, I suppose, structure like some other school systems, even though you are working towards your school certificate. (Sharon)

In the quotes above, Julie, Meg and Sharon all expressed their concern that the narrow, inflexible approach of mainstream had detrimental consequences for the young people. Their statements implied that the young people who find their way to the YOTS schools, could have achieved success if mainstream schools were willing to work with a broader understanding of success and to have a greater flexibility in its application.

In taking up alternative notions of success, YOTS began by addressing the neoliberal 'irrationalities' presented by mainstream forms of success by denying them, to a large extent, within the YOTS organisation, and taking up alternative understandings. For example, Jeremy and Hannah both describe the beginning stages of the young people experiences of success as "it's like a light going on" (Jeremy) or "that little light bulb went on" (Hannah). They appear to be referring to the moment when the young people suddenly understood and accepted that it was possible for their lives to be

different and that they were in a position to be able to make those changes with the support of YOTS.

Once 'the light' went on then 'success' became possible. Staff supported this by acknowledging what might be considered the young people's 'minor' or 'small' successes. However, the language the staff used around these 'minor' achievements is actually indicative of how these were major feats within these young people's lives.

> It could be just a smile on the face when they walk through the door ... that's an achievement for a kid that comes from domestic violence or drug abuse family or […] living […] somewhere out on the street. […] it doesn't matter if we don't get that much work out of her during day. So what. She came. We've made that tiny, little step. (Meg)

> Well, you just watch […] their little successes […] little things for me like at the canteen window, […] you dish everything up, everything's gone […] and then some kid'll come along and say "I haven't had anything yet". "Well, where have you been?" […] And then another kid will say "You can have half of mine". And, you know, that's not a big thing for you and I, but for them […] they're big steps. (Julie)

> And Ella, to hear that kid, […] she will form complex sentences and correct her writing and that blows you away as she is still a marijuana addict. (Helena)

Hannah uses a story of one young man to expose a number of elements that point to what else was involved in the YOTS' understanding of success. While these elements gave the young people the chance to experience success, they also demonstrated the success of the YOTS staff with the young people. These included: keeping young people alive and safe, the creation of feelings of worth in young people, creating positive futures for young people, and providing an education for young people all contribute to an alternative view of success. The first of these, 'keeping young people alive and safe' was probably the most important indicator of success for the YOTS staff.

> We kept him off the streets for a day […] I think if you keep kids out of danger for a day it's amazing. (Hannah)

A number of young people had died just before and during the time I spent with YOTS: one from an overdose, others from car accidents. This loss of life seemed to be due to the precarious nature of the young people's edgework practices which constantly placed them in the type of danger that was life threatening. What the staff saw as the ultimate form of success was to keep young people from 'crowding the edge' – to keep them alive. As Hannah's quote indicates, they considered that the very minimum of their role was to make sure that the young people were safe and alive at least for the time they were in YOTS care.

The second element of success evident in the quote below was that of creating feelings of worth in young people.

> He had a great day […] He left feeling a million dollars […] He suddenly thought better about himself. (Hannah)

As I described in Chapter 4, the young people arrived at YOTS feeling they were unworthy and undeserving. Many of the staff spoke of the young people's feelings of worthlessness as coming from the people who should be caring for them. Julie and Scott are examples of this. Changing this lack of a sense of worthlessness was something the YOTS staff counted as a vital part of success, as Deb articulated.

> It's good when you can see […] that they know that they are worth something. It is good. (Deb)

However, Ruth explained that telling young people they are valuable was not enough. She suggested that only the experience of success seemed to help them change.

> No matter how much you try and tell them how good they are, until they actually experience it for itself, they then will believe in themselves. (Ruth)

Julie suggests in the quote below that these experiences of success allowed the young people to see themselves with different futures, suggesting the importance of education in the lives of these young people.

> I think part of the problem is that they've missed so much schooling, most of them, that it's really hard to try and catch them up. You know, you might only have them for six months or the maximum of twelve months and you're trying to get four years of education into them in that short space of time and it's the same with their life skills. (Julie)

I have argued that the young people felt they had failed not just academically but also at being a 'student' in their mainstream schools (see Chapter 4). With the young people's lives continually throwing up barriers to their education they had generally been left behind other young people academically. Despite the seemingly impossible ground to be made up academically, for the staff, success occurred when the young people could change their life trajectories and circumstances as a result of education, rather than success just being tied to academic achievement and/or economic advantage and accountability. As I have discussed previously, this was not to say that academic success was not a goal but that it was a goal alongside other goals which were all considered to be part of a much broader notion of education. Deb links the two ideas of education creating better futures and success in this quote.

> Here, the core is education. If we can get the kids to the Year 10 Certificate and help them get further into the Year 12, the idea is that they turn their lives around and they can have a better life to what they have been brought up in. They can get good jobs; they can have a better life. I think that's the main aim. To help them turn their lives around, get out of the vicious circle and to do something with themselves rather than just fall into that .... young parents that have their kids sent away or drug and alcohol or domestic violence - a lot of our girls go into domestic violence which is sad. And the idea is to help them get out of that. (Deb)

Breaking past patterns by gaining an education was therefore important for moving young people into better futures.

Success was also understood on an individual basis. What constituted success for one young person may well be very different to what might be considered success for another.

> Success for some of the kids would be come to school every day of the week, so that's an achievement in itself. Success for a couple of our other students would be to produce a written piece of work. (Sharon)

> Depends on each kid. Success for Tana might be turning up five days in a row. Doesn't matter. […] the fact is before she came here she wasn't engaging at all. Success for her is simply getting out of bed in the morning and not having a fight with Mum before she gets to school. That's a success. (Liam)

In order to achieve success the staff expressed the need to provide support for young people. As Lowan indicates, the staff never asked anything of the young people that they themselves were not prepared to do.

> If I haven't the guts to get up there and sit in front of a crowd of, you know fifty, sixty people I don't expect them to. Yeah, so I'll […] make sure I am part of it, and the teachers here are exactly the same. They are not going to get these kids to do things that's going to make them look like a fool. (Lowan)

However, they also provided a range of activities that allowed young people to develop confidence in doing things that they would not normally do. These activities were designed to provide opportunities for practice, where 'failure' in a safe place was acceptable. Sharon explained that activities were also designed to highlight the skills the young people were already good at.

> And to do that we have to set up programmes where they can showcase their talents, like an easy thing would be sport […]. The vocal group is really good […]. They perform for a number of different audiences, so they are proud of that. (Sharon)

Spence identifies 'scaffolding' as important for practicing success. By doing this the young people come to trust what the staff plan for them as they know they would not let them be humiliated in front of others.

> They will have a go because we have supported them through that process, so you have to make sure that they are scaffolded in that so they're not set up to fail. They need to know that it's all right and they have practice. (Spence)

Success was regularly celebrated in the YOTS settings.

> At the end of the year there is a presentation night during which each child is awarded a trophy for something, even if it is good manners or continual effort. Academic excellence is also greatly esteemed; as for most of our students doing well in School has been anathema. (YOTS 2012c: 97)

> They receive awards for courage, changing behaviours, staying drug free, Service Learning, academic achievements and more. (YOTS 2012c: 101)

As indicated by these statements from the *Student Welfare* policy, end of year events were a place where every young person's successes were celebrated with all the people connected with YOTS. These celebrations were 'big' with well over 500 people invited to an upmarket venue. Every young person at YOTS was presented with some award and celebrated individually. Celebrities presented awards and the young people were made to feel very special. 'Celebration' was also done on a day to day basis through such things, as Scott describes below, as 'over the top' reinforcement.

> So, I guess when they get here and they see they can do things, I mean a lot of that is just positive reinforcement and over the top positive reinforcement, a lot of the time, but it is a necessary thing. It seems a bit childish at times, but um... its something that they need and they appreciate. I think that really does give them confidence. […] At the start of the year, we make them do a reflection to say how their year's been. Have a look at where you were and where you are now. (Scott)

Although being 'over the top' worked, Julie suggested that there was still a real need for 'celebration' to be meaningful.

> If a kid gets an award for something and it's genuine, […] and they know that they've worked for that and they've earned it then they feel like it's worth being here. […] they realise that it's something fair dinkum and it's worth it. (Julie)

The YOTS staff's approach to success enabled neoliberal issues to be addressed, reducing the dominating power that neoliberal notions of success draw on. In refusing to enter into notions of success as a binary with failure, YOTS staff overcame the effects of domination in a number of ways: they had created an environment that allowed young people to 'turn on the light' and see themselves as successful; they saw success in terms of individual progress that could happen in a range of ways and at different rates of progress; they ensured that young people were safe and alive; they supported young people to achieve success and then celebrated it with them; and they ensured that the young people were able to feel good about their success as well as being able to cope with their failures. In drawing on these tactics the YOTS staff had removed the dominating effects of a neoliberal experience of education. This redefinition of success redefined the young people's relationship with both the staff of the YOTS school and their education. It did not mean that success was any less 'successful' than the neoliberal forms. Many of the young people still achieved the academic success that mainstream schools would consider successful. However, what this notion of success allowed, was the production of a relationship that did not exclude them. They were able to remain in a school where mainstream schools had removed them because of their perceived failure.

Practices of Care Producing Freedom

I have argued throughout this chapter that practices of care construct power relations that work to produce freedom. I argued that protective, preventative and augmentative responses provide young people with *freedom from* some aspects of their lives and the *freedom to* access alternatives. In discussing how *practices of care* produced freedom I have combined two of the *practices of care*, protective and preventative responses, as these two practices appear to provide young people

predominantly with *freedom from* many of the debilitating aspects of their lives. They create a significant amount of *freedom from* the 'corrupting' environments and experiences that others create around them, although in most circumstances it is not a total freedom. They also help to create *freedom from* those 'corrupting' experiences and environments that they have come to create for themselves through their edgeworking practices. Augmentative responses seemed to work predominantly to construct, for young people, the *freedom to* act outside their current responses. The YOTS young people were supported to respond in different ways and to be different.

Practices of care that acted to 'protect' and 'prevent' worked in a number of ways. They produced barriers between the young people and 'corrupting' forces such as those people (including themselves) and environments that cause damage. These can be seen in the legal barriers in place in schools such as Mandatory Reporting processes, or in relational barriers such as teaching the young people their 'worth' to establish barriers against the subjugating and dominating effects of abusive environments. As Jeremy describes in the quote below, the YOTS staff showed their care through the barriers that were placed around the young people.

> They respond well with the expectations and boundaries, at the beginning they don't know what that means. After a few months, they realise that lack of boundaries means lack of care. (Jeremy,)

There was, however, a constant requirement for staff to maintain these barriers, as they were somewhat permeable and reversible and often needed to be replaced and repaired. The staff therefore constantly acted to clear space in the young people's lives, not only to relieve the burdens experienced by the young people but also to provided space for education by addressing the dominating power in their lives. Once the threat of abuse, for example, was removed, dominating power relations held less influence. In relieving or intervening in the processes of domination, *freedom from* these things became possible. Staff continued to act as an ally 'alongside' young people as they helped them to deal with the significant issues in their lives. Staff went into 'battle', on behalf of and with, the young people. By responding in this way, staff sent the young people the message that they were both cared for and that they deserved to be cared for. In doing so, I would argue, they created freedom for young people. In

accessing their own position of power on behalf of the young people they created freedom by helping the young people to see themselves in different ways, and freedom to be able to learn providing the power that is invested in young people who have an education.

Practices of care also provided safe places to exist in and safe people to interact with. These safe places and people produce freedom for the young people by providing a space free of fear. Protective and preventative responses created spaces that took away a significant portion of the burden, created by the fear and intimidation experienced in other areas of the young people's lives. Young people's responses to their experiences of fear and intimidation had been their edgework practices such as their 'ugly faces' – either fighting back or returning an escalating level of intimidation and resistance. Young people were able to be different as they were less likely to be operating under the extreme and constant pressure produced by fear and anger that had previously dominated their experiences. Without the constant struggle for domination that their 'ugly face' and edgework activities draw from others, it removed the necessity for participating in relations dependent on domination. Without the need for these responses the young people's 'edgeworking' and 'ugly faces' were also no longer necessary and allowed them to respond to others in far more productive ways. Behaviours that benefited the young people for long term success became possible. Staff were able to encourage and support these responses by avoiding the dominating and forceful use of power, and by helping young people develop self-discipline.

Practices that augmented life experiences acted to produce freedom by continually adding to an expanding repertoire of possibilities rather than the limited options contained in the young people's previous lives. Augmentation opened up options that allowed for more informed choices that the young people were then trusted to make for themselves, even with the limitations of 'corrupted' lives. These choices were then either supported or the young people were supported in dealing with the consequences that detrimental choices provoked. There seemed to be a cross over point where staff made decisions between practices that took away choices and options (for example, not allowing the young people to take drugs at school or allowing suicidal behaviour) and allowing the young people to make choices that staff

might consider bad or wrong. It would seem that in denying the young people choices in this way staff were accessing dominating power and we could expect to see a corresponding response. However, the relations of care that were established by staff through their *journey* with the young people established a power relation that, because its overall intent was not to dominate, could be seen by the young people as care rather than domination and therefore was generally accepted (although often begrudgingly) by the young people. In contrast such actions coming from dominating power relations such as those with their families, the law and their mainstream schools, even with good intentions were likely to be rejected. However, the YOTS staff had established a power relation with the young people that, in most circumstances, allowed even more 'discipline' than young people would have accepted in other environments.

Augmentation also allowed a space in which staff could expose the existence of different environments the young people could exist in and different ways the young people could act. A space was opened that helped and supported young people as they learnt to be comfortable with these different possibilities. Within these safe spaces staff could model different possibilities and the young people could practice these without the fear that failure would bring either physical or emotional retribution. These spaces and relationships developed freedom in the access they opened to different futures. The young people gained skills that allowed them to operate in other parts of their lives.

Augmentative, protective and preventative responses built the confidence and ability in the young people to question and reframe past experience and subjectivities. These practices introduced the young people to new ways of understanding themselves. Their relationship with the YOTS staff demonstrated daily that the young people were worth protecting, even from themselves; that they were worth protecting for the long term; and that the YOTS door was never totally shut to them. As a consequence the young people could no longer just see themselves as solely 'bad' or 'worthless'. They could begin to see themselves as worthy of protection and deserving of 'normal' life experiences that allowed them to be treated with care and respect. Potentially, as the young people developed new understandings of themselves as worthy in the YOTS environment it allowed them to either remove themselves from unsafe circumstances

or transfer their resilience into external environments, allowing them to operate more successfully in these less 'safe' environments. Through the provision of these types of experiences a new 'aesthetic of existence' could be created for the young people, developing in them the skills to live a different 'aesthetic'. The staff demonstrated the role of 'truth teller' for the young people until they came to see themselves in these new ways. Once the young people could see themselves as worthy and deserving, as modelled by the YOTS staff, they could then take on the role of 'truth-teller' for themselves. Care therefore was a productive practice of power.

Conclusion

This discussion of the types of conditions of learning at the YOTS schools, in a practical sense, is not comprehensive. This is because what the YOTS staff did was often so subtle and nuanced that here I have only been able to skim the surface of their practice. What I have attempted to do in the last two chapters is not just discuss some of the *relations and practices of care* accessed by the YOTS staff; but also to make links between these practices and the premises and understandings held by staff (explored in Chapter 6); and to explore how all of these aspects of YOTS practice were embedded in power relations that worked to produce freedom for the young people, allowing them to reconcile with their education.

Section 4 – Conclusion

This final section draws together the arguments of the thesis and provides direct links to the analysis and the research questions I proposed at the beginning of the thesis. I focus on the ways in which deficit discourses have established a group of 'displaced' young people and discuss the conditions that YOTS has drawn on to simultaneously disrupt deficit discourse and establish a counter discourse. From this different way of speaking about young people I discuss: the impact of my conceptualisation of *journeying*; the *relations of care* and *practices of care* that arise from this understanding; and finally how these *relations and practices of care* work to produce freedom for the young people.

I have also identified the implications of the study in a ranged of areas such as mainstream education, teacher education programmes, agencies working with displaced young people, and the implications for YOTS. In this discussion I raise challenges and areas for consideration that arise as a result of the research.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated, "The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children". Such a statement promotes questions as to whether, if we had the choice, we would be giving our children and young people an education such as that contained in mainstream schools or whether education needs to be reconsidered. Throughout this thesis I have argued that mainstream schools need to be reconsidered given its impact of the young people of this study and other young people like them. Making do with the education system that we have has been shown to only be of value to some young people, while education as it is presented in the YOTS context could well be a way of addressing the needs of a far greater range of young people.

I argue that YOTS presents many challenges for mainstream schooling as mainstream schooling is clearly not serving all young people. Many young people are 'educationally displaced' from participation in mainstream schools which leads to other, equally as damaging forms of social exclusion. Mainstream schooling can therefore be seen as problematic. YOTS, as an alternative example of what is possible, has created an educational space that helps to address 'educational displacement' and does appear to be succeeding with those young people that mainstream schools have 'displaced'.

Addressing the Research Questions

The aim for this study was to explore the *work required of educators to create educational contexts and conditions that reconcile educationally displaced young people with their education*. This over riding question makes two broad assumptions: that young people are subjected to displacement, and that there is a possibility to reverse this situation. By embedding these assumptions in the sub questions for this study, I have been able to explore how YOTS has worked to produce the types of conditions that have allowed educational reconciliation. To answer this broader question I posed three sub questions.

i) What discourses are drawn on in mainstream education to describe 'disengaged' young people and how do these discourses impact on the education of 'disengaged' young people?

ii) What educational discourses and practices are deployed in an atypical educational setting?

iii) How do these discourses and practices work to build reconciliation between young people and their learning?

YOTS would readily agree that they have yet to established a perfect form of education. However, what they have been very successful in doing is constantly working to critique and improve their practice to move towards the best standard possible by ensuring that the young people they educate remain engaged. The difference between mainstream schooling and YOTS is that the 'inertia' (Hattam 2012), that often stalls change in mainstream schooling, has prevented critical concerns from being effectively addressed. I would argue that mainstream schooling improvement continues down the path of accepting research that supports deficit and neoliberal discourse which act to further displace many young people from education. YOTS however, has been active in trying to address the particular needs of this population of young people by drawing on a counter discourse.

The following discussion provides an overview of the results of the study organised around the research questions and the YOTS schools as the sites of this research. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, YOTS had an established reputation for successfully working with some of the most excluded and disengaged young people in Australia. The YOTS organisation therefore presented the opportunity for an interrogation of the 'conditions' that enabled the YOTS young people to re-establish a relationship with their education. As the young people had all come from mainstream schools, this setting also provided for an interrogation of the young people's disengagement. My investigation of the YOTS schools indicated that they had created a space in which young people were able to reconnect both with their education and with life in general and could therefore provide a rich site for my intended study. I recognise that what YOTS does is only one way of addressing 'educational displacement', but the success of the underlying conditions they have adopted points to relations and practices that are effective, and to the possibility of these options being appropriate for other contexts. This section addresses each of the sub questions before presenting a summary of my broad overall research question.

What discourses are drawn on in mainstream education to describe 'disengaged' young people?

In order to address the first part of my first sub question, I surveyed textual material in the form of documents from the 1870s to the present and analysed these for the ways in which deficit understandings had been created, using a Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis. Across these documents I focused on the establishment of a range of historical discourses that framed young people in negative ways and had been taken up at specific moments in Australia's educational history. My analysis identified four 'moments' when the discourse had 'ruptured'. At these moments, alternative understandings of young people had been absorbed into perpetuating a deficit intent: the 1870s use of the law and criminal deviance; the 1960s uptake of psychology; the 1990s introduction of neoliberalism; and finally the 2000s when deficit understandings were continuing to expand through the use of multiple discourses such as 'at risk' and 'risky' young people, commodification and waste discourses. I challenged these deficit understandings current dominance by conceptualising an alternative way of viewing how such discourses act on young people. On the basis of this analysis I argued that deficit understandings work to displace young people from education and consequently extend to a social exclusion that impacts life chances. This happens as schools provide relational spaces that can work to set up a 'geography of belonging' or a 'geography of rejection' (Massey 2004a). I argued that mainstream schools have come to establish a 'geography of rejection' for many young people when they do not fit the rules that the school space has established. When excluded from the position of student, these young people no longer have a place in the school.

Deficit understandings are key in the 'displacement' of certain young people as they establish young people as being problematic, identifying them as the cause of their own 'displacement'. However, as I have argued, mainstream schooling can also be seen as problematic for the young people in this study. It operates with deficit knowledges that focus on the need to 'fix' young people. My focus was on the young people's displacement from education, a place, I argued, was where the young people needed to be if they were to overcome the significant exclusion and displacement from both education and society that they currently faced.

The document analysis exposed how the application of deficit discourses acted to

exclude the young people from education through power relations. My conceptualisation of 'educational displacement' however, also provided for an alternate way of viewing young people outside the certainty of deficit understandings. This alternative approach enabled a view of education from the perspective of the young people and allowed a critique of the impact schools had on them. This alternate view enforced a different use of language. Access to this type of language simultaneously turned 'the gaze' to a view that went beyond deficit and 'blame' to a focus on the entire context of a relationship. Approaching the discourse in this way not only opened the young people's place in the discourse to critique, but exposed to scrutiny the deficit understandings of individuals such as teachers and family; as well as to the broader understandings of institutions such as education and the law, that perpetuated deficit notions.

This analysis also began to point to issues of power that are entrenched in the practices that accompany deficit discourses. Theoretical understandings of the ways in which power relations were manipulated in school spaces demonstrated that while dominating power was constantly at work in mainstream schools, and worked to create exclusion, there was the possibility that power could be accessed differently to create other, more positive outcomes.

The critical analysis of the dominating discourses and the alternative understandings used by YOTS, shifted perspectives to focus on young people as being educationally 'displaced' by the exclusionary tactics drawn on through deficit understandings. This approach turned to focus on the impact of mainstream schooling and provided an analytical framework for the rest of this thesis. The conditions that were established in both mainstream schools (where deficit discourses are prominent) and the YOTS schools (that disrupted deficit understandings and drew on a counter discourse) provided the framework.

How do these discourses impact on the education of 'disengaged' young people?

Deficit knowledges of young people are embedded in the way we understand young people and it was from this understanding that the second part of the first sub question was addressed. In general, what the literature states is that deficit discourses work to exclude the YOTS young people. This simplistic statement contains

considerable implications. Deficit understandings do far more than just exclude. They create effects such as the burden of damaging identities that young people must carry; and they create lives that perpetuate and entrench this damage across generations. Those who create and use deficit understandings are creating the very thing they are trying to eliminate.

By drawing on 'displacement', I was able to focus on the young people's lives in a different way exposing different aspects of these young people's 'displacement' from school. Through an analysis of the young people's interviews and my fieldnotes concerning them, I concluded that displaced young people's educational needs were not being met. I also suggested that this was contributed to primarily by three damaging relationships – family, the law and mainstream schools. These relationships had created such a complex set of life circumstances for the young people that it had become impossible for them to leave their lives at the school gate. Mainstream schools, while contributing to displacement, were also not set up to deal with these circumstances and had therefore effectively eliminated any 'holding power' (Vinson, 2002) that they might have over these young people and simultaneously acted to deny them an education.

The young people spoke of the brutality of their family, legal and mainstream school relationships in their lives. They were not the only relationships that contributed to the damage the young people experienced – their relationships with drugs and sexuality were others that could have been explored – however, I chose these as family, the law and schools are all societal 'institutions' that we assume should be caring for young people. The damage caused (particularly by the law and mainstream schools that are highly regulated) is therefore less likely to be considered, as it is seemingly inconceivable that 'caring' for others can be damaging. The data also suggested that other social institutions, such as DoCS/FACS, can do similar damage, however, I focused on the three most prominent institutions identified in the young people's interviews.

What was also obvious from an analysis of the young people's interviews were the issues of power embedded in the three relationships the young people endured. In looking at each of these relationships, it was the dominating power relation that was

exercised that promoted damage and exclusion. In families, it was the abuse, neglect and the significant instability of the family environment that produced dominating power relations. These were usually enacted by a family member who drew on abuse as their tactic of domination. When brought into contact with the law, the young people were again addressed with a dominating 'sovereign' power that focused on punishment.

The response of the young people to these two relationships varied but the common threads to their responses were based either in fear, which maintained a state of domination, or in resistance which rejected it. What I have argued is that, in general, the young people engaged in responses of 'edgework', which they tended to use to either mask their domination through an apparent complicity, or rebel against it. Practices such as their drug and alcohol use, risky sexual practices and violence were all part of their 'edgework'. Their 'edgework' also drew further responses of domination in the attempts of the law and family to control the young people and those around them. Sometimes this was an attempt to 'save' or help the young people, sometimes to purely dominate them.

I separated the young people's relationships with family and the law from their relationships with their mainstream schooling as education was the focus of this study. However, the experiences of 'corruption' of these young people's lives could not be separated from their educational experiences in mainstream schools; rather, these combined to create further exclusion. An exploration of the ways in which the young people spoke of their relationships with mainstream schools exposed their anger at their treatment by mainstream schools. They perceived schools as having rejected them and there were two significant points of time when they began, in turn, to reject school – typically around Year 5 and Year 8. What mainstream schools failed to recognise was that at this point of time the young people had already begun to sever their schools relationship. The young people saw schools as having not taught them, leaving them without the necessary knowledge to function in a classroom. Schools, additionally, blamed them for it. What ran alongside this educational rejection was the young people's understanding that schools did not care or want to be involved in helping them with the damaging nature of their lives beyond the school environment – creating a further sense of dismissal and rejection.

The young people's interviews showed that they valued education but had come to reject mainstream forms of schooling because it had rejected them. Like their responses to their family and the law, they drew on a range of edgework tactics to express their alienation and rejection. Their edgework responses were demonstrated through an 'ugly face' expressed in the language, the actions and the contempt they drew on. Their 'ugly face' deployed a range of, often, deliberate provocations to schools. The attempts of mainstream schools to control these escalating responses through a range of 'sovereign' tactics, had failed with these young people, creating a relationship with mainstream schools that had ended with the young people exerting power through their edgeworking practices, rejecting the dominating power over their mainstream schools. Their schools had nothing else with which to respond except to severe what the young people already saw as a severed relationship. The consequence of the 'ugly face' ultimately was the young people's disintegrating school relationship, which culminated in a severed relationship with their mainstream schools.

When YOTS were able to draw on practices of freedom, their 'ugly face' diminished as the young people had little to respond to. The YOTS use of radical and unexpected practices left little room in the staff/young people's power relation for the 'ugly face' to make an appearance. The diffusion of this response allowed the young people a space in which to learn rather than having to constantly engage in the 'action on action' cycle of power that was present in their mainstream relationships.

The understanding that these young people's lives were damaged and entrenched in dominating power relations that produce blame and rejection was established through the document analysis and the young people's interviews. This understanding provided an avenue for a different explanation of the alienation and rejection that the young people expressed in their edgework. Such understandings presented the opportunity to question prevalent deficit discourses and the ways in which 'deficit' understandings enact power relations; and to question how these discourses acted as supporting structures, in educational displacement. It was then possible to explore alternatives for overcoming the deficit and domination that burden these young lives.

What educational discourses and practices are deployed in an atypical educational setting?

YOTS provided a context where different discourses and understandings and a very different use of power were used. I explored these discourses and understandings in two ways. The first focused on the way the YOTS staff 'respoke' the young people, while the second explored the practices that arose from this very different understanding. I used a combination of the YOTS staff interviews and YOTS documentation such as policy documents and annual reports to explore the ways in which they spoke about the YOTS young people and the practices they used in the YOTS classrooms.

What was apparent from the analysis of the staff interviews was that the discourse they deployed worked as a rejection of deficit understandings. By additionally deploying a counter discourse they began to reject the power that deficit understandings held over the young people. They consistently resisted the application of deficit discourses to the young people they worked with. In Chapter 6, I proposed that the YOTS staff drew on a range of strategies to reject deficit discourses as a way of describing the young people. I conceptualised 'silence' as acting as both an acknowledgement of and a rejection of deficit understandings. Staff established this silence in the space created by what I have termed 'the pause'. I also conceptualised 'the pause' as a space that allowed staff to access alternative understandings; accessing the tactics of challenging, rejecting and negating deficit language; and a carefully considered use of deficit language to work for the purpose of rejection. In addition to this disruption, the YOTS staff also drew on a counter discourse by establishing a different set of understandings of the young people to those encompassed in deficit. These different understandings were based on two significant premises: *the young people's lives had been 'corrupted'*, and *the young people should never be left in this 'corrupted' state*. From these two premises, other understandings emerged that supported a very different approach to the education of this group of young people. The YOTS staff understood the young people as individually and contextually unique; as worthy and deserving; and as having possibility and potential. These alternate understandings of the young people produced a radically different approach to the practice of education to that of the blame, fault and rejection that followed from their positioning as deficient.

In drawing on this counter discourse, the YOTS staff showed that it was possible to know the young people differently. Their use of alternate understandings served to establish the foundations for a set of conditions that questioned and replaced those used in applying deficit discourses. One condition was the questioning and respeaking of young people that made it impossible to relate to the young people as purely deficit.

The YOTS setting also established different practices that were drawn from these understandings. YOTS had set up practices around the premises of the 'corrupted' lives of these young people and acting to move them beyond this 'corruption'. The YOTS staff accessed an innovative way of putting 'care' of the young people into practice. Their practice drew on very specific understandings and tactics of what I termed *journeying* that included being an ally with the young people and always moving them forward to create alternative futures. *Journeying* required staff to perform particular types of *relations of care* with the young people through accessing, for example, humour and giving and receiving respect, honesty and trust. *Relations of care* required that staff: were readily available and easily accessible; were able to relate in specific ways to the young people; and were people who found purpose in their work. These established relations were 'family like' and required responses of YOTS staff that went well beyond what is expected of a mainstream teacher.

Based on the above premises the staff also drew on specific *practices of care*. YOTS policy readily recognised that their practice had to be 'radically different' to mainstream schools in order to be able to reconcile the young people with their learning. The *practices of care* that that they drew on again were intimately related to the two basic premises of understanding the young people's lives as 'corrupted' and of needing to do something to take the young people beyond such circumstances. Through policy and practice, the staff acted in three key ways, drawing on: firstly, responses that worked to protect young people from others and themselves in a protective environment; secondly, responses that worked to prevent further damage from occurring to the young people; and thirdly, responses that worked to augment the young people's lives in order to give them experiences, choices and success that they had never had in their 'corrupted' lives.

How do these discourses and practices work to build reconciliation between young people and their learning?

My final sub question focused on the power relations inherent in the *journeying* relationship, which, I argued, the YOTS staff had established with the young people. I claimed that the YOTS approach to power relations enabled the YOTS staff to reconcile the young people with their learning. The YOTS staff were able to challenge the dominating power relations that existed in the young people's lives and therefore the alienation and resistance the young people drew on in response. By accessing power relations based on practices of freedom, the *relations and practices of care* became effective in building reconciliation. When care was approached from a stance of producing freedom (as opposed to domination) the young people were able to reconcile with education and begin to take advantage of it.

Theoretically freedom was constructed through the YOTS staff's use of the spaces in the 'action on action' cycle that I used to describe Foucault power relations. In Chapter 7, I argued that power relations, entrenched in the 'action on action' cycle, produced domination. The cycle perpetuated retaliation from both sides of the relationship, by drawing on a range of 'power stratagem'. The aim for young people in this relationship was to 'tactically reverse' their position of domination/subordination. However, to access freedom YOTS acted in the spaces of this cycle. By drawing on what YOTS described as 'radical' and unexpected responses to the young people, they could enter the 'action on action' cycle of power in ways that incited freedom rather than domination with new and different actions.

The practices of freedom that YOTS staff accessed began with their 'knowing' the young people in different ways. When young people are known differently, different practice followed. The staff's use of *relations of care* and *practices of care* enabled them to step between the young people and 'corruption' (protective responses) and to walk beside them through the 'corruption' of their lives. The use of these practices demonstrated freedom to the young people, showing them how they could use freedom effectively and beneficially (preventive and augmentative responses). It became possible for freedom to arise from resistance. The establishment of a practice of freedom that incorporated *relations and practices of care* was essential in the YOTS ability to build reconciliation.

What work is required of educators to create educational contexts that reconcile educationally displaced young people with their education?

I have argued that reconciliation requires a set of conditions that recognises the young people's lives beyond education and a willingness to act in those environments. It requires the disruption of deficit and the access of alternative understandings in a counter discourse. It requires constant critique and challenge to the status quo and a willingness to continually improve practice. It requires the access of practices that promote a form of care that allows young people *freedom from* the detrimental aspects of their lives and the *freedom to* take up the benefits of education and the flow on effect of more beneficial lives. These practices of freedom work to change the young people's 'aesthetics of existence'.

Reconciliation of these particular young people with education also required the removal of the dominating forces that had established the original breakdown of educational relationships. Reconciliation could not be about returning to these forms of domination. Instead, reconciliation has to be about establishing different understandings that do not dominate by accessing practices of freedom that produce an invitation to young people to re-enter a different relationship with education.

Implications

Much (although not all) of what YOTS did could be transferred to other contexts. YOTS has worked not only to gain young people an education but also to change their lives by drawing on a range of conditions. YOTS has done something that has implication for practice in a range of contexts. Mainstream schooling, teacher education programmes, other agencies that work with young people, and YOTS itself can learn from the findings of this study. In this section I discuss the implications of the findings of this study to these other contexts.

The existence of a deficit discourse and its tactics has provoked a resistance from YOTS that has created a different way of understanding and practicing education. Challenges to deficit discourses and the adoption of *relations and practices of care*, work to reconcile this group of young people with their education. It is therefore possible that establishing these types of conditions in larger institutional settings and contexts could also work to reconcile those young people not yet at the point of exclusion.

Other school contexts would not necessarily have to take the path that YOTS has taken but there are some general and more specific lessons that could be taken from this thesis into a range of contexts.

Implications for Mainstream Schooling

Some YOTS practices would not be able to be taken up in mainstream schooling contexts without significant change. For example, smaller class sizes are continually rejected for economic reasons and educational policy is embedded in neoliberal ideology that has a focus on economics and efficiency rather than working in the 'messy' nature of relationships. Issues of power could be addressed but would require significant retraining of staff and an overhaul of policy starting with federal and state policy through to school based policy. The focus of this training and policy would need to move away from neoliberal and deficit approaches and be able to deal with and promote the unexpectedness of practices of freedom. Training in particular would need to focus on exposing and eliminating deficit understandings and its supporting structures and processes. Alongside this would need to be a willingness for these changes to happen. Further research would be needed in order to determine how this might be approached.

However, many of the conditions established in the YOTS context could be taken up in mainstream school contexts. Establishing *relations of care* that place staff alongside young people and move them toward more beneficial lives; developing relations of respect, honesty and trust; being prepared to admit failure; moving young people forward; being committed; are all aspects of a relationship that is capable of producing freedom and could be established by staff in any school context. Taking on practices of care that act to protect young people, prevent further damage, and augment limited experience could also be drawn on to a more limited extent. The limitations of budgets and the sheer numbers of young people in the mainstream context would mean many of the types of activities YOTS was able to take advantage of, such as introducing the young people to Prince William, sending young people to set up an orphanage in Banda Aceh and East Timor, or having the Souths NRL team visit, might not be possible. However, more general practices such as protective and preventative strategies that provide safe environments and protection from the domination of others should be a vital part of school structures and in some instances can already be

seen through such things as child protection laws and in some more innovative schools the integration of external support services to cater for those issues that schools are not equipped to deal with.

My exploration of the young people's lives and their mainstream schooling experiences points to the need for schools to make significant, yet fundamental changes to understandings, processes and structure applied by the school institution in order to be inclusive of these young people. However, given the unchanging statistics related to these young people, just exposing a different approach, such as the YOTS approach to education, will not be enough to shake the 'inertia' of mainstream schooling. I would therefore suggest that one area of research that is desperately needed is in how institutional inertia might be approached to invoke and provoke a critical and receptive system that is able to respond to the needs of all the young people it educates, rather than just to some.

More specifically, educators need to challenge their understandings of young people as deficit. When deficit understandings are drawn on, educators can then approach young people with the intent of fixing them, permitting the use of a range of strategies, expertise, structures and processes that permit punishment and domination. The deficit understandings manifesting in notions of 'fixing problematic young people' as a way of caring for them in a mainstream, neoliberal context means that 'fixing' requires young people to agree with their treatment by schools and at times become complicit in their displacement and exclusion without resistance. However, if educators see young people as having to exist in 'corrupted' lives, it requires a whole different approach and requires educators (and others) to rethink their responses. They can no longer go about fixing a young person if they recognise that is not the young person that is 'broken' but the relationships and environments they are exposed to. A need to establish other reasoning and other courses of action are therefore required. The establishment of an environment that allows and encourages such critical work and that responds to change and challenge, becomes necessary and is exemplified by YOTS. Their questioning and replacement of deficit understandings with alternative discourses that recognise the 'corruption' of young people's lives removes any excuse for leaving young people in a 'corrupted' state.

Implications for Teacher Education Programmes

Teacher education programmes could well be an entry point for change. By incorporating understandings of power relations and deficit knowledges and accessing alternate understandings of young people within teacher education programmes, these knowledges could begin to establish new truths in mainstream systems. By including approaches that expose deficit understandings and their impacts along with understandings of the breadth of exclusion that occurs from these understandings, it might be possible to alter teacher education philosophy and practice that becomes part of the cultures of many schools contexts. Understanding critical areas of study such as developmental and educational psychology, neoliberal ideology, and the discourses they produce in education could help to draw out the types of practices that dominate and allow for the possibility of understanding practices of freedom. I would suggest that by exposing pre service teachers to different understandings makes it possible for them to be critical of both mainstream practices and their own pedagogies.

I would also argue that changes to education need to be addressed from two fronts. Understandings and attitudes towards individual young people need to be addressed on a relational level on one front. Whilst changes to educational institutions is required on another. Perhaps what is needed is a new 'aesthetics of existence' for education whereby educational institutions are able to challenge what they do and come to know themselves in different and less limiting ways. Schools do not have to maintain the use of deficit understandings. Some alternative education sites, including YOTS, have shown that it is possible to produce an education that focuses on the young people they serve rather than focusing on the maintenance of a culture that, while it works for some, is quite damaging for a large proportion of others.

Implications for other Agencies Working with Young People

The ways in which the young people and YOTS staff described their interactions with the law and other welfare agencies, implies that there is a need for change in these areas as well. Again, issues around deficit and power relations were central in these discussions particularly in the way care of the young people was approached. A critical understanding of not just the positive but the detrimental impacts of 'care' is required.

It is not enough to care. There is a burden on those in positions of power to be critical of what you do when you care, and for understanding the impacts of caring.

Implications for YOTS

Finally there are implications for YOTS that arise from this study. I would suggest that YOTS could take the positive aspects of what has been described in this study and use these to further enhance their practice. I would also suggest that they continue to maintain the critical nature of their approach for continual improvement. Even in an environment of such critical improvement, care must be taken to continuously question the impacts of all actions.

Many of the aspects of this research could also be used as part of induction programmes of new teachers to explicitly reveal the understandings and practices of the YOTS schools. The research could also be used as an evaluative tool to scrutinise the YOTS schools structures, policy and other documentation, processes, teacher inservicing, and staff relationships with the young people, on an on going basis. Questions such as: does this policy access deficit understandings, how does this strategy promote freedom, will this preventative measure enhance or detract from this young person's 'aesthetics' of him/herself – and more, can all be asked in order to maintain the constant state of critique that is needed to maintain the high standard that YOTS has of itself as an organisation, of its staff and of the young people they come in contact with.

Concluding Statement

This research presents a political and moral dilemma. It is not enough to have good intentions. Intentions have to be informed and constantly critical. It is not good enough to maintain something that damages young people regardless of whether it works for others.

In this historical moment, how is it that we want the morality of our society, and more specifically that of educators, to be judged. To maintain the status quo we become a society that has allowed the brutality of these young people's lives to exist by not just ignoring the 'corruption' of these young people's lives, but also by steadfastly continuing to maintain it. We cannot afford to hide behind attitudes like "education

works for the majority", when close to 30% of our young people are not included (see discussion of statistics in Chapter 1). We need to be prepared to break the cycle of 'corruption' in these young people's lives at some point in time. YOTS demonstrates that it is possible to enter this cycle to make a difference and has provided a set of conditions that allows for educational reconciliation.

In the 'reality' of these young people's lives, we cannot undo the damage that has already been perpetrated. But with YOTS as an example, we know that it is possible to challenge the status quo of education and to break the back of this brutality. It is possible to continue to promote alternative ways of approaching the YOTS young people, and indeed all, young people; allowing all to thrive, rather than just some.

In one sense I would suggest that enough research has been done. The available research is extensive and thorough. It critiques and, to some degree, condemns much of what mainstream schooling represents and embodies in relation to the educational 'displacement' of young people. It is now time to act with informed and critical intentions such as those presented by Youth Off The Streets, its staff and its young people.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1 Approval Letter to Name YOTS

Father Chris Riley's
Youth Off The Streets®

31 July 2013

To Whom It May Concern

Nicoli Humphry from the University of Wollongong conducted her PhD research with Youth Off The Streets. Having read a full draft of her thesis we are happy to give her permission to name Youth Off The Streets as the organisation her thesis is based on.

We recognise that Father Chris Riley and Lou Single will be able to be identified. However we also understand that Nicoli has maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of the rest of the Youth Off The Streets staff and students in the presentation of the data.

Yours sincerely

Lou Single

Lou Single
Director of Education

Patrons
Sir William Deane AC KBE
Lady Helen Deane

Chief Executive Officer
Father Chris Riley AM

Crisis Accommodation
Outreach Services
Drug & Alcohol Treatment Program
Residential Programs
Residential Treatment Services
New Pathways – Mark David Farr
Aboriginal Services
Accredited Schools
National Education Programs
Early Intervention Programs
Integration & Transition Programs

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Our Mission: Helping disconnected young people to discover greatness within by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices.

Our Values: Passion • Respect • Integrity • Dedication • Engagement

APPENDIX 2 Staff Information Sheet

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re-engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Participant Information Sheet for Staff

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. The research is a part of a PhD project being conducted through the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. The research aims to explore how young people come to re-engage with their education by looking at: your schools structure; the programmes and policies offered by your school; the relationships re-engaged young people have with both the school staff and their learning; and the impact of the school space. The researcher is an experienced teacher but has no connection with the school except through this research. Before agreeing to participate in this project it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures.

This research is being conducted to look at the possible ways alternative education practices help to reengage young people. It aims to contribute to current research in this area and thereby, to the future wellbeing of young people and teachers in secondary education settings. All the information that you provide is confidential and will be used as data in support of a research thesis and its presentation and in academic publications. To ensure confidentiality, no material will be used in a way that can identify you or the school. Pseudonyms will also be used for both participants and the school and your data will be combined with that of other staff participants when it is presented so that personal identification would be extremely difficult.

You have been asked to participate in this research as you interact daily with young people in a school setting, who have gone through or are going through a process of re-engaging in education. Your experience and insights of these young people and the processes involved in their re-engagement will allow a deeper understanding of the different aspects which might impact on the re-engagement of young people with school.

As a participant, you are being asked to be involved in two activities:
1. Two interviews, each taking approximately one hour. The interviews will be digitally recorded, then transcribed and stored in a locked filing cabinet with only the researcher having access to them. These two interviews will take place at dates and times negotiated with you and your school.
2. Journaling, which will take approximately 15-30 minutes each week for 6-10 weeks. A list of topics and issues will be provided which you may respond to in a variety of ways.

There are no foreseeable risks to you in the methods used in the research. On the attached sheet are some examples of the types of questions that you can expect to be asked during your interviews and journaling.

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time prior to publication of the research. In this case, your information will not be used and, where possible, will be returned to you. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with either your school or any future contact with the University of Wollongong. If you have any questions concerning this research you can contact either myself or my research supervisor:

Nicoli Humphry - Researcher	OR	Dr Valerie Harwood - Research Supervisor
02 42 215 618		(02) 42 215 618
nici@uow.edu.au		vharwood@uow.edu.au

Any concerns or complaints can be directed to the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 42 214 457.

Your time and effort in participating in this research is greatly appreciated. Thankyou

(Signature)

APPENDIX 3 Young People's Information Sheet

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Participant Information Sheet for Young People

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. The research is a part of a PhD project being conducted through the Faculty of Education at University of Wollongong. The research aims to explore how young people come to re-engage with their education by looking at: your schools structure; the programmes and policies offered by your school; the relationships re-engaged young people have with both the school staff and their learning; and the impact of the school space. The researcher is also a teacher but has no connection with your school except through this research. Before agreeing to participate in this project it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures.

Most young people will end up at an alternative school because they don't seem to 'fit' in mainstream schools. This research wants to look at how it is possible for you to 'fit' in one type of school and not another so that educators might be made more aware of how they might help young people feel connected with their education.

The information you give me will be used for a research thesis and its presentation; in academic publications and in a report for your school. But, it will only be used in a way that cannot identify you or your school. This will be done by using different names (pseudonyms) for you and your school. Plus, your data will be combined with that of all the young people who take part in the study so that you won't be able to be personally identified.

You participation is central to the project because you have lived through a unique set of experiences that have involved your disengagement and re-engagement with school. This makes you the expert in this area and a vital part of this research.

What would you have to do?

When you volunteer, you will be asked to do two things:
1. Two interviews, each taking about one hour. The interviews will be digitally recorded, then transcribed and stored in a locked filing cabinet that only I can access. These two interviews will take place at a time and date which I'll negotiatedwith both you and the school.
2. Journaling. I'll give you list of topics and issues which I want you to respond to in a variety of ways eg give your opinion, write a poem, create a collage, draw or paint a picture, draw maps, do a timeline. This will take about 15-30 minutes a week for 6-10 weeks.

The attached sheet gives you some idea of questions that you might be asked during your interviews and journaling. Generally, there are no risks to you if you volunteer, but if you are upset by the issues raised in the interviews then (counsellors name) is available (explain how to contact) to talk. You also need to know that you are free to withdraw from the project at any time up until the research is being published. If you do, your information will not be used and, where possible, I will return it to you. If you chose to withdraw it will not affect your relationship with either your school or the University of Wollongong at any time.

If you have any questions about the research you can contact either myself or my research supervisor:

Nicoli Humphry- Researcher
02 42 215 618
nici@uow.edu.au

Dr Valerie Harwood - Research Supervisor
02 42 215 618
vharwood@uow.edu.au

Any concerns or complaints can be made to the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 42 214 457.

Your time and effort in being a part of this research is greatly appreciated. Thank you.
(Signature)

APPENDIX 4 Parent's /Carer's Information Sheet

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re-engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Information Sheet for Parents or Carers

Thank you for considering your child's participation in this study. The research is a part of a PhD project being conducted through the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. The research aims to explore how young people come to re-engage with their education by looking at: your schools structure; the programmes and policies offered by your school; the relationships re-engaged young people have with both the school staff and their learning; and the impact of the school space. The researcher is an experienced teacher but has no connection with the school except through this research. Before agreeing to allow your son or daughters participation in this project it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed procedures.

What will your child contribute to the project?

Most young people who attend an alternative school do so because, for some reason, they haven't fitted the mould required by mainstream schools. This research looks at how your child's school has made it possible for your child to 'fit' into a different type of school setting, in the hope that the awareness raised from the research might ultimately, benefit the education of other young people in a similar situation. All the information that your son or daughter provides is confidential and will be used as data in support of a research thesis and its presentation; in academic publications; and in a report for the school. To ensure confidentiality, no material will be used in a way that can identify your son or daughter, or the school they are attending. Pseudonyms will be used for both participants and the school and data will be combined with that of the other participants when it is presented so that personal identification would be extremely difficult.

Your son or daughter has been asked to participate in this research as they have both disengaged from school and subsequently re-engaged in an alternative school setting. Their experiences and insight will therefore allow a greater understanding of the different aspects of the re-engagement of young people at this school.

What will your child need to do?

As a participant, your son or daughter will be involved in two activities:
1. Two interviews, each taking about one hour. The interviews will be digitally recorded, then transcribed and stored in a locked filing cabinet with only the researcher having access to them. These two interviews will take place at a date and time negotiated with your child and their school.
2. Journaling. A list of topics and issues will be provided which your child may respond to in a variety of ways eg opinions, poetry, collages, drawings. This will take about 15-30 minutes a week for 6-10 weeks.
The attached sheet gives you some idea of questions that might be asked during the interviews and journaling.

Generally there are no risks to your child, but access to counselling has been organised through the school if they need it. You also need to be aware that they or you may withdraw them from the project at any time up until the research is being published. In this case, their information will not be used and, where possible, returned to them. Their withdrawal would in no way impact on their relationship with the school or the University of Wollongong at any time.

If you have any questions about the research you can contact either myself or my research supervisor:

Nicoli Humphry - Researcher
02 42 215 618
nici@uow.edu.au

Dr Valerie Harwood - Research Supervisor
02 42 215 618
vharwood@uow.edu.au

Any concerns or complaints can be made to the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 42 214 457.

Your consideration in allowing your son or daughter to participate in this research is greatly appreciated.
(Signature)

APPENDIX 5 Staff Consent Form

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re-engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Consent Form for Staff

This research is a part of PhD research being conducted by Nicoli Barnes in the Faculty of Education at University of Wollongong, and supervised by Dr Valerie Harwood and Professor Jan Wright. In order to use the information that you have supplied, your permission is required. Please read the attached information sheet before signing this consent form.

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what the project involves. I understand that there is minimal risk to me and all my questions concerning the risks and the study in general have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage and I have the contact details to do so.

I understand that (please tick the relevant boxes):-

☐ a) my participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

☐ b) I am free to withdraw from the project at any time up until publication of the research and that withdrawal will not disadvantage me in any way. If I withdraw, my information will not be used and, where possible will be returned to me.

☐ c) any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed;

☐ d) the results of the project may be published but confidentiality and my identity will be preserved.

☐ e) I am able to contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer with any concerns or complaints concerning the conduct of the study and I have been given the contact details to do so.

I consent to (please tick the relevant boxes):-

☐ a) participating in two interviews of approximately one hour in duration each, which will be recorded and transcribed for analysis;

☐ b) completing a journal as a part of the research process which will be collected and used in research analysis;

☐ c) the information I provide being used in a PhD thesis, in presentations, in academic publications written by the researcher and in a report to for (name of school).

I agree to take part in this project and consent to my information being used in this way.

.....	.....	.....
Name of Participant – please print	Signature of Participant	Date

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research. Your input is invaluable.

APPENDIX 6 Young People's Consent Form

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re-engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Consent Form for Young People

This research is a part of PhD research being conducted by Nicoli Barnes in the Faculty of Education at University of Wollongong, and supervised by Dr Valerie Harwood and Professor Jan Wright. In order to use the information that you have supplied, your permission is required. Please read the attached information sheet before signing this consent form.

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what the project involves. I understand that there is minimal risk to me, for which I have access to counselling if needed. All my questions concerning the risks and the study in general have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage and I have the contact details to do so.

I understand that (please tick the relevant boxes):-

- ☐ a) my participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
- ☐ b) I am free to withdraw from the project at any time up until publication of the research and that withdrawal will not disadvantage me in any way. If I withdraw, my information will not be used and, where possible will be returned to me.
- ☐ c) any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed;
- ☐ d) the results of the project may be published but confidentiality and my identity will be preserved.
- ☐ e) I am able to contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer with any concerns or complaints concerning the conduct of the study and I have been given the contact details to do so.

I consent to (please tick the relevant boxes):-

- ☐ a) participating in two interviews of approximately one hour in duration each, which will be recorded and transcribed for analysis;
- ☐ b) completing a journal as a part of the research process which will be collected and used in research analysis;
- ☐ c) the information I provide being used in a PhD thesis, in presentations, in academic publications written by the researcher and in a report to for (name of school).

I agree to take part in this project and consent to my information being used in this way.

.....	.....	.....
Name of Participant – please print	Signature of Participant	Date

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research. Your input is invaluable.

APPENDIX 7 Parent's/Carer's Consent Form

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Education

Research: Re-engaging Young People in Education.
Researcher: Nicoli Humphry

Consent Form for Parents and Carers

This research is a part of PhD research for Nicoli Humphry in the Faculty of Education at University of Wollongong, being supervised by Dr Valerie Harwood and Professor Jan Wright. In order to use the information your child has supplied, your permission is required. Please read the attached information sheet before completing and signing this consent form.

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. I understand that there is minimal risk to my child and all my questions concerning the risks and the study in general have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage and I have the contact details to do so.

I know that (please tick the relevant boxes):-

☐ a) my child's participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

☐ b) my child is free to withdraw from the project at any time up until publication of the research and that withdrawal will not disadvantage them in any way. If they chose to withdraw, their information will not be used and, where possible will be returned to them.

☐ c) any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed;

☐ d) the results of the project may be published but confidentiality and my child's identity will be preserved.

☐ e) I am able to contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer with any concerns or complaints concerning the conduct of the study and I have been given the contact details to do so.

I consent to (please tick the relevant boxes):-

☐ a) my child participating in two interviews of approximately one hour in duration each, which will be recorded and transcribed for analysis;

☐ b) my child completing a journal as a part of the research process which will be collected and used in research analysis;

☐ c) the information my child provides being used in a PhD thesis, in presentations, in academic publications written by the researcher and in a report to for (name of school).

I agree to my child _____ (child's name) taking part in this project and consent to the information they provide being used in this way.

.....	.....	.....
Name of Parent or Carer – please print	Signature of Parent or Carer	Date

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research. Your input is invaluable.