Just whose story is it?

Investigating the discourse of *otherised at-risk* youth.

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Abstract

This research aims to illuminate the ways in which students and teachers understand, experience and respond to the discourse of *'at-risk'* within West Australian (WA) high schools. It addresses the central premise that a hegemonic covert/overt curriculum is at play within schools. This curriculum leads to the construction of deviant deficit victim-blaming labels and the *otherising* of non-dominant *at-risk* youth. It examines the contribution that deviant deficit labelling makes to the development of narrative self-identity and the subsequent negative impact on life trajectories. Further, it investigates to what extent 'deviant' behaviours is evidence of resistant cultural capital.

Improving the educational outcomes for *otherised at-risk* youth requires an unfettered examination of lived-experience and this is achieved by breathing life into the research participants' personal stories of schooling. When researchers bear witness to the lived-experience of non-dominant young people their culture is validated and transformative possibilities unfold. My research is based on a critical ethnographic tradition in which the voices of the research participants were actively sought during dialogic focus group interviews. Narrative vignettes were utilised to illuminate the lived-experiences of the research participants. The vignettes allowed me to co-jointly paint the image of lived-experience as I merge student voice and critical theorising. The vignettes are contextualised with a rich thick description of the 'setting' of schools through a document analysis of select federal and state government education field texts.

An analysis of the narrative vignettes identifies that systemic and ongoing class injury occurs for non-dominant youth within West Australian high schools. This research posits that the antithesis is the active promotion of *the socially just school* and the thesis makes recommendations that facilitate the development of *socially just schools* within Western Australia. These recommendations include the development of policies and pedagogical practices that redefine non-dominant youth as *at-promise* rather than as *at-risk*; the development of pedagogical strategies that facilitate youth positively re-storying their narrative identities; the development of curriculum, pedagogy and learning experiences that promote community engagement; and the introduction of critical pedagogies that facilitate the development of learner identity, self-efficacy and academic resilience.

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Acronym	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ALF	Alternative Learning Facility
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
BMIS	Behaviour Management In Schools
CTF	Critical Theoretical Framework
DCP	Department of Child Protection
FLAME	Future Learning and Motivating Education
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
NPO	Not for Profit Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SAER	Students at Educational Risk
SSPM	Selected Services Project Manager
VRO	Violence Restraining Order
WA	West Australian
WACE	West Australian Certificate of Education

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This research aims to breathe life into the stories and lived-experiences of young people from non-dominant backgrounds within the 'milieu' (Winkle-Wagner, 2010; Thompson, 2011) of schools. Too often young people are silenced. They are spoken of, and spoken to - but almost never spoken with in a truly dialogic conversation that seeks to expose the ways in which dominant ideologies impact their lives. Young people are the best source of information about what happens, helps and hinders their lives. As Freire (1992) notes, without speaking with young people we cannot effectively work with them to build agency, efficacy and aspirations, to transform and retain identity (Smyth, Down & McInerney, 2010). In this introductory chapter I introduce the research problem and questions. A synopsis of the key theoretical constructs is put forward and the methodological stance outlined. The significance and limitations of the research are discussed and a summary of the structure of the thesis is provided.

1.1 Problem

Critical theorists posit that education systems maintain hegemonic control by neutrally or tacitly teaching perceived social norms through a covert curriculum that is inculcated through neutral language and school routines, such as authoritarian hierarchical structures, rigid timetables, behavioural norms/rules and didactic pedagogy (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1983). Middle-class hegemony constructs inequality from a perspective of "the personal failings of the individual" (Johnson, 2005, p. 54) and educators "act as powerful agents in the economic and cultural reproduction of class relations in a stratified society" (Apple, 2004, p. 7). The overt curriculum within schools further entrenches hegemonic control by privileging middle-class cultural values and knowledge and in recent years the introduction of an *Australian Curriculum* has overtly embedded middle-class ideology without regard to local community circumstance. The hegemonic overt and covert curriculum ensconced within West Australian schools is a barrier to the attainment of desired education outcomes for students from non-dominant cultural backgrounds.

Smyth, et al. (2010, p. 149) claim that students from non-dominant cultural backgrounds are constructed as deviants when they do not possess the embodied, institutionalised and objectified cultural capital that is the accepted *habitus* of schools. This is problematic because they become disenfranchised, alienated, disengaged from learning and *at-risk* because of a process of *otherising* (Elbaz-Luwish, 2010; Winkle-Wagner, 2010; Slee). If educators become accustomed to viewing *at-risk otherised* "students through the lens of deficiency and not through that of competency" (Wellik &

Kazemek, 2008, p. 55) they are stereotyped as innately inferior learners who are lacking in skills and motivation and are perceived to be aggressive, insubordinate and disengaged (Johnson, 2005; Khalifa, 2010). Further, this institutional labelling causes injury as young people who are depicted "in condescending, patronizing, deficit, and victim blaming ways" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 15) are unlikely to develop a sense of learner identity and reach their full academic potential.

Finally, it is problematic if *at-risk otherised* students accept the hegemonic master-narrative/dominant discourse (Hammack, 2008) of middle-class superiority as normal as they devalue their own cultural and social experiences (Bradbury & Miller, 2010) and mediate their personal identity (i.e. narrative self-identity) through external deviant deficit victim-blaming labels. If *at-risk othered* students construct themselves from deficit perspectives their life stories will echo the unequal gender and class constructions in society (Bradbury & Miller, 2010, p. 689) resulting in "a totalising negative effect on their lives" (White, 1995, p. 22).

1.2 Aims

The aim of the research is to interrupt the deficit thinking that underpins educational policies and practices within public education sites in Western Australia with a view to illuminating non-dominant youth as *at-promise* to a wider audience. In particular, it aims to interrupt the deficit thinking of educators, policymakers and non-dominant youth themselves.

Elbaz-Luwisch (2010, p. 275) describes the potential of narrative to "bring forward issues that have not yet been identified, raising the questions that will have to be answered in the future". The narrative vignettes of the research participants lay bear and analyse the lived-experiences of non-dominant youth. These *stories* intend to expose the class inequalities (be they of socio-economic, gendered, racial or other origins) and raise the question of whether the narrative identity (including the potential for efficacy, agency and capacity) of *at-risk otherised* youth is negatively impacted by the delivery of hegemonic overt and covert curricula (Hayes, 2009).

I further intend to identify whether the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that are given to non-dominant youth are mislabeled sites of resistant cultural capital capable of "constructing emancipatory practices" (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995, p.390; Yosso, 2005) that help build the capacity, agency and self-efficacy of non-dominant youth and

their educators. Finally, it is the intent of this research to extend, explain and contribute added meaning to the pre-existing theoretical constructs of critical education theory, cultural capital, narrative identity and the relational space by examining their point of intersection and making explicit the links between them.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching research question is:

- How do students and teachers understand, experience and respond to the discourse of *at-risk* in an alternative school setting?

The subsidiary questions are:

- What role does a hegemonic covert/overt curriculum play in the construction of deviant deficit labels and the notion of *at-risk* students?
- How do students construct themselves from deviant deficit perspectives that negatively impact life-trajectories?
- To what extent are deviant behaviours evidence of resistant cultural capital?

1.4 Critical ethnography

Methodologically (and theoretically), this research draws on the tradition of critical inquiry as it is concerned with issues of ideology, power, injustice, praxis and hegemony and the way in which they coalesce through dominant neoliberal frameworks in education settings. Critical researchers contend that research should be used to illuminate inequalities and oppression in order to work "towards forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site" (Morell, 2004, p. 42). Consequently, I intend the research to have an emancipatory transformative effect on the non-dominant youth who are research participants (Mills, 2006; Morell, 2004; Smyth, Angus, Down, & McInerney, 2009; Thomas, 1993).

Methodologically, this research sits under the umbrella of critical ethnographic inquiry. Critical ethnography is a research methodology that addresses critical sociological themes allowing for critical ethnographers to "describe, analyse and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden, agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain" (Thomas, 1993, p. 3). Common sense assumptions such as hegemony, racism, classism, sexism and the social processes of domination, marginalisation and repression (Mills, 2006) can be placed under a microscope with a view to "removing inequality and injustice" (Robinson, 2011, p. 5). Critical ethnographers openly enter into their research with their assumptions and political agendas firmly "on the table so

no one is confused about the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site" (Morell, 2004, p. 42).

1.5 Narrative Vignettes

The narrative vignettes presented in this thesis relate the lived-experiences of non-dominant youth in the milieu of the contested, messy spaces in schools and provide a vehicle for their voices to be heard. The vignettes "are shaped through the dialogue between the researcher and the participants as they co-jointly "paint the image" (Robinson, 2011, p. 128). Narrative vignettes merge thematic analysis, critical theorising and the voice of the research participants to inform, provoke and interrupt. They are an advocacy oriented approach that listens for silences and "speaks data into existence" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 10) as an act of social justice (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Narrative vignettes facilitate the interlacing of an examination of theoretical, political and economic ideology and lived-experience. They retrospectively create meaning and provide an opportunity for the non-dominant youth - the research participants - to speak back to deficit labels. Freire (1992, p. 43) contends that "to write is also to redo what has been thought out in various moments of our practice", and in this case the dialogic conversations between myself and the non-dominant youth provides opportunities for the narrative vignettes to invoke reconstruction of self as the research participants re-envision their lived-experiences within the milieu of their schools (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Yosso, 2005; Hayes, 2009).

Human beings make meaning of their lives when they both live and retell the stories of their lives. Critical ethnographic narrative vignettes open up spaces for the examination of stories and these spaces "represent a salient opportunity for generating rich conversations" (Van Galen, 2010, p. 258) that lead to the construction of empowering counter-narratives that challenge the dominant middle-class status quo. "It is through the personal narrative that a coherent identity is constructed" (Hammack, 2008, p. 237) and the dialogic examination of the cracks and fissures of dominant master-narratives exposes opportunities for transformation (Clandinin, 2006; Elliot, 2000; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber & Orr, 2009; Hayes, 2009).

1.6 Theoretical Lens

Class injury is multi-faceted and as an 'ill-structured problem' (Tarricone, 2007) - a problem with many possible solutions - it requires multi-pronged theoretical critical

reflection, and consequently I draw on multiple theoretical lenses. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory is explored in the context of how the *field* and *habitus* of education sites reaffirm the dominant discourse of the middle-class to reinforce capitalist social relations that privilege some and excludes others (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 3) claim, "it is impossible to understand recent changes in education policy and practice without reference to the cultural and ideological impact of neoliberalism - an attempt to purify capitalism, restoring it to its (supposed) earlier coherence." Critical education theory is used to contextualise the ways in which schools have been infiltrated by neoliberal agendas that perpetuate class injury. The field texts and lived-experiences of non-dominant youth are examined for evidence of a hegemonic overt and covert curriculum that naturalises social norms and dispositions to reinforce a stratified middle-class status quo (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1983).

Neoliberal policy agendas are often badged as education reform and when high stakes accountability measures - such as testing, data monitoring and compliance - combine with neoliberal mythological meritocratic ideology it is easy "to pathologise young people as 'sick' or 'disordered'" (Robinson, 2011, p. 45). With this research, I contend that neoliberal reform agendas lead to the pathologisation of non-dominant youth as *at-risk* and that these labels are detrimental to young people as they shift "the blame for student failure away from unfair, discriminatory policies and practices to the inadequacies of individual students, their families and their communities" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 22).

Narrative identity theory encompasses the notion that identity construction is formed and meaning made when "People make sense of their lives by creating life stories" (Bauer, MacAdams, & Pals, 2008, p. 84). Narratives provide a framework for interpreting lived-experience and provide unity and purpose to what would otherwise be disparate events (Pals, 2006). Adolescence is crucial to identity formation as teenagers are developing the cognitive capacity to inferentially interpret experience, make meaningful connections and internalise life stories (Bauer, et al., 2008; Bradbury & Miller, 2010; Pals, 2006). Narrative self-identity is a product of social interaction and adolescents story their lives based on the interactions and dialogical experiences that they share with family, peers, educators, neighbourhoods and popular culture mediums such as music (Corcoran, 2007; Hammack, 2008; McIlveen & Patton, 2007; Pryor & Bright, 2008). Narrative identities take form and become coherent in cultural contexts and within schools are given meaning by the individual's internalised

interpretation of neoliberal dominant discourses such as deficit labels, hegemonic curriculum and meritocratic accountability practices. When non-dominant youth co-construct narrative identities that are informed by neoliberal deficit lenses it injures and negatively affects life trajectories (Smyth, et al., 2009).

With this research I posit that schools are places of conflict or subjugation for students from non-dominant cultural backgrounds. There is a need to forge deeper understandings by hermeneutically interpreting the relationship between non-dominant student behaviours and the enmeshed connections between cultural capital - including notions of resistant and sub-cultural capital, critical education theory and narrative identity and how they coalesce in the *relational spaces* of schools (Crotty, 1998; Yosso, 2005; Jensen, 2006). Education is "a *relationship* between an educator and the one being educated" (Biesta, 2004, p. 12) and when the relational spaces of schools are eroded by conflict or subjugation then non-dominant students' sense of self is corroded. On the other hand, when relational spaces are effective "speaking becomes possible, it is the space, in other words, where people - individual, singular beings - can reveal who they are, can come 'into presence.'" (Bingham, 2004, p. 23).

1.7 Collecting Data

This thesis incorporates a number of critical ethnographic methodological processes to collect data for analysis. Nine field texts were collated, based on their role in contributing to the construction of either an overt or covert hegemonic curriculum. They included both federal and state government policy and curriculum documents and a glossy magazine that is provided bi-monthly to educators within West Australian public schools. A document analysis of these field texts was undertaken in order to contextualise the lived experiences of non-dominant youth within the contested spaces of schools.

Focus group interviews were conducted with seven non-dominant youth who had either not successfully graduated or had 'dropped out' of school. The research participants were currently engaged in the Future Learning and Motivating Education - FLAME (pseudonym) program at a not for profit alternative learning facility (ALF). The focus group interview sessions utilised multimedia stimulus to provoke dialogical discussions whereby the research participants shared their lived experiences within school. The recordings of these interviews were transcribed and the data analysed through a critical theoretical framework (CTF). The research participants lived-experiences were then re-constructed through narrative vignettes.

Finally, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with the youth-worker FLAME facilitators and the Selected Services Project Manager (SSPM) from the not for profit organisation. These interviews were transcribed and analysed through the CTF with a focus on the notion of relational space. The transcribed data was then composed into narrative slices that were utilised in the analysis of the narrative vignettes.

1.8 Significance

This research is significant because an understanding of oppression begins a journey towards transformation and liberation (Freire, 1992). Through this research I seek to elucidate the intersection of cultural capital theory, critical education theory and narrative identity to ascertain how the hegemonic covert and overt curriculum impacts the lived-experience of the research participants. The research foregrounds the experiences of West Australian *otherised at-risk* adolescents as "the practices of witnessing and testimony lie at the heart of what it means to teach and learn…[so that] we can begin to understand the complexity and significance of the diverse conditions that have shaped our individual and collective histories" (Giroux, 2011).

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The findings of this research are intended to inform educators, policy makers and youth facing related circumstances (Hayes, 2009). The research has established links between an identified hegemonic overt and covert curriculum, educator deviant deficit victim-blaming labels of non-dominant cultural capital and the narrative identity of *at-risk othered* students. It has the potential to inform and contribute to the systems reconstruction of education sites as *socially just schools* (Smyth, 2004, 2013) where non-dominant *othered* students are no longer depicted from perspectives of *at-risk* but from those of *at-promise* (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Slee, 2011).

Finally, as this research has established links between subjugated adolescent narrative identity formation and the identification of resistant cultural capital there is scope for it to inform further research that develops pedagogical strategies and tools that build efficacy, agency and capacity in adolescent *at-risk othered* students from non-dominant cultural groups. In the words of Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008, p. 9) "With this deeper understanding of their students' lives, schools are in a much better position to appreciate and positively influence how these social contexts affect the educational outcome".

1.9 Limitations

This research is limited as it only scrutinises a small population of students. All of the teenage research participants were from non-dominant cultural backgrounds and within their schools were given deviant deficit victim-blaming labels of one kind or another; however, they did not share the same labels and thus it is not possible to generalise the findings to specific 'labelled' populations such as 'drug affected', 'learning disabled', 'deviants' etc. In addition, the research does not explore any non-dominant youth who have developed a sense of learner identity, academic resilience and educational aspirations to successfully graduate and move into higher education and it is likely that there is much to learn from this population of non-dominant youth as well.

The research further excludes youth who are from the dominant middle-class and this precludes the findings being extrapolated to include 'what works' for this population. Finally, the narrative vignettes only give a sense of what happened for the research participants in a limited temporal space and time. The study is not longitudinal and thus gives no sense of the effects of a hegemonic overt and covert curriculum on life trajectories over time.

1.10 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In this first chapter I introduce the problem that the research is addressing, what questions it seeks to answer and a brief description of the data collection methods. I further provide a preliminary overview of the theoretical lens adopted in the thesis and consider the significance and limitations of the research. Finally, I present this structural overview.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

Chapter 2 gives an in-depth explanation of the methodological approach and processes that are used in the research project. Critical ethnographic inquiry and the Critical Theoretical Framework (CTF) are explained in detail. The methodological perspectives of the *document analysis of the field texts* and *narrative vignettes* are explained in detail and the purpose of the research is outlined. Further, I position myself as a researcher by exploring the notions of an "ethic of care" (Robinson, 2011) and "reflexivity" (O'Sullivan, 2009).

Chapter 3 -Theory

This chapter examines the neoliberal agendas that exist in the contested, messy spaces within schools. It explains the key theories of the CTF and explores them in the context of current political neoliberal education agendas and the lived-experiences of non-dominant youth.

Chapter 4 - Neoliberal policy frameworks (document analysis of the field texts)

In this chapter I examine the ways in which neoliberal agendas manifest as policy frameworks within schools. The field texts are analysed to identify the ways in which curriculum and policy acts to -perpetuate social class hierarchies; reinforce middle-class cultural capital, propagate capitalist values through technocracy; turn schools into businesses, promote the myth of meritocracy, perpetuate deficit thinking; and silence social justice, thereby damaging the lived-experience of non-dominant youth in schools.

Chapter 5 - Just Help Me - Anakin's story - pedagogy of poverty; and Adrienne's story- the complexity of young lives

This chapter reveals and analyses the narrative vignettes of two youth from non-dominant cultural backgrounds, Anakin and Adrienne. The analysis of their stories illuminates the class injury that occurs when educators do not provide non-dominant students with the academic and emotional supports that they require to attain desired academic outcomes.

Chapter 6 - They Never Do Anything - Aurora's story -Toxic schools (bullying, safety and wellbeing) *implosion!* and Callisto's story - Toxic schools (bullying, safety and wellbeing) explosion!

In this chapter toxic school cultures are scrutinized through an analysis of the narrative vignettes of Aurora and Callisto. I explore how their educators inappropriately responded to the bullying and discuss the long term injury that has resulted for both research participants.

Chapter 7 - The Dark Side - Darth's story - destructive sub-cultural deficit prisms and Maya's story - deficit race relations.

This chapter explores the relationship between devalued sub-cultural capital, deficit prisms and the co-construction of narrative identity. The analysis of Darth and Maya's narrative vignettes illuminates the pitfalls of labelling students with deviant deficit victim

blaming labels because of the potential for non-dominant youth to construct self from perspectives of deviance. Further, it explores how the devaluation of sub-cultural capital can lead to intergenerational class injury, particularly in the context of race.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter concludes the research by providing an affirming alternative to toxic school cultures. A synopsis of John Smyth's (2004, 2013) *Socially Just School* - where teachers are active agents who recognise and build on the strengths of non-dominant youth by acknowledging their social capital and constructing "supportive relationships that overcome 'barriers', 'impediments' and 'entrapments' that make participation is schooling problematic for disadvantaged students" (2004, p. 21) - is offered. It further makes recommendations of how transformative practices can be incorporated into the pedagogical and relational spaces of schools.

In the next chapter I present the methodological approach - including an explanation of critical ethnographic inquiry, narrative analysis, narrative vignettes and the reason for undertaking a document analysis of field texts. I explain the notion of reflexivity and outline the personal challenges I encountered while undertaking the research. I further discuss the methodological processes that are utilised in the research, including the use of critical literacies as stimulus for the focus group interviews; the interview processes, thematic analysis and validity.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

In this chapter the methodological approach and processes are explained in detail. I explain the key elements of critical ethnographic inquiry and provide an in-depth explanation of the critical theoretical framework that developed during the research process. The notions of an ethic of care and reflexivity are explored and the methodological perspectives of the *document analysis of the field texts* and *narrative vignettes* are outlined. A description of the research site, research participants and the geographical demographics of the location are provided and the methodological processes - data gathering, data collection and the compilation of the thesis - are outlined.

2.1 Critical ethnographic inquiry

Critical ethnography affords the researcher opportunities to listen to the voices of young people from non-dominant backgrounds; to bear witness to their stories of anger, pain and frustration with a view to exposing and disrupting the dominant middle-class discourse of schools In critical ethnography, the researcher becomes a co-creator who has an "explicit and political goal of exposing, critiquing, and transforming inequalities with, rather than for, oppressed groups" (Maulucci. 2010, p. 844). In essence, I have become an omnipotent third person narrator who marries a qualitative methodological approach and critical theoretical framework to privilege those who are marginalised in an act of social justice. I intend to give young people from non-dominant backgrounds the chance to *speak* back to the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that they have been saddled with. Non-dominant youth are often gagged and disempowered by theories but they can also empower and transform and as such a theoretically rigorous lens is utilized to illuminate lived-experience. I bridge the gap between esoteric theories to expose and interrogate the dominant discourses that entangle the lives and narrative identities of young people who dwell in messy, contested school spaces (Freire, 1992; Smyth, et al., 2009; Robinson, 2011; Adams-Wiggans, 2010; Moss, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

Sociologically, class injury (regardless of socioeconomic, gender, racial, sexual, or other origins) can be considered from a perspective of complex ill-structured problem solving (Tarricone, 2007). Ill-structured problems comprise real life social dilemmas that have no one right solution. They are best solved dialogically, reflectively and critically in a process of meta-cognitive argumentation that prompts "an internal dialectic instigated by social interaction" (Tarricone, 2007, p. 49). Ill-structured problems require critical thinking and this is what separates critical ethnography from other forms of qualitative research. Critical ethnographers address the ill-structured

problems of domination and oppression by foregrounding questions of legitimacy, power and hegemonic values and how they impact non-dominant communities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003, p. 153). In the words of Smyth and Wrigely (2013, p. 76)

> Methodologically, we need ethnographic observations to 'pierce the screen of discourses whirling around these territories' so as 'to capture the lived relations and meanings that are constitutive of the everyday reality of the marginal city-dweller

Because I use critical ethnography I am provided with opportunities to partner with research participants to illuminate understanding of lived experience rather than to observe and interpret dehumanised research 'subjects', thereby, avoiding the paternalistic syndrome of sympathetic, but removed, academic researchers depicting non-dominant others from hegemonic middle-class constructions that disembody and undermine efficacy, capacity and agency in non-dominant communities (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2000). Critical ethnography affords educator researchers, like me, the opportunity to take "an interest in the lifeworlds of their students and to ... [create] opportunities of significance for them and their neighbourhoods" (Smyth, et. al., 2010, p. 90).

Critical ethnography is unashamedly political and its counter-hegemonic practices have afforded me an opportunity to cross-examine the multiple dominant meta-narratives that eddy within schools. Sociological meaning is made through a dialogic interrogation and observance of the complex interrelationships between social structures and lived experience (Mills, 1959). As Morell (2004, p. 42 contends, when hidden agendas and class injury are illuminated in schools research "becomes a transformative endeavour unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness" (Robinson, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2009).

2.2 The critical theoretical framework

Critical ethnography draws on "critical social theory for its theoretical formation" (O'Sullivan, 2009, p. 60). Within schools ill-structured problem solving requires expert and sophisticated domain knowledge and an appreciation of the transferability of this information to the differing lived-experiences of non-dominant youth (Tarricone, 2007). The critical theoretical framework (CTF) frames theory from social justice perspectives and provided me with a sophisticated guide of domain knowledge that has the potential to empower non-dominant counter-narratives (Adams-Wiggan, 2010; Yosso,

2005). I adopted the CTF to analyse the field texts and narrative vignettes as dominant meta-narratives are contested when power is negotiated through a theoretical examination of the cracks and fissures of embodied lived experience (Prosser, 2009, p. 610).

The CTF helped me to apply critical theoretical insights to seek multifaceted insights that contribute to new ways of thinking about ill-structured problems from within the messy, contested spaces of schools. I developed the CTF from an interdisciplinary approach to engender theoretical rigour and provide for greater understanding of the "key sociological themes of critical theory, such as power, agency, resistance, domination, and marginalisation" (Mills, 2006, p. 76) that affected the *otherised* non-dominant research participants. The theoretical constructs that inform the CTF are cultural capital theory- including notions of subcultural and resistance capital; critical education theory - including the hegemonic covert and overt curriculum that reify the capitalist middle-class; deficit labelling theory; and the co-construction of narrative self-identity (Robinson, 2011; Yosso, 2005).

The use of Bourdieu's full theoretical structure has facilitated an examination of "the microlevel interpretations of everyday experiences ... to be linked to the larger social structure in which it occurs" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 93). The examination of microinteractional processes incorporates viewing "the direct or indirect imposition of evaluative norms" (p. 93) that privilege dominant meta-narratives. The CTF of this research project is "geared toward an analysis of the way that power is more generally experienced by those in marginalised groups (the non-dominant cultural capital)" (p. 98). Critical education theorists posit that a covert hegemonic curriculum both totalises and normalises middle-class values and reinforces the middle-class status quo. Critical education theory's notion of a hegemonic curriculum is inextricably linked to cultural capital constructs. Lived-experience is best understood as life stories that are temporally contextualised and Hammack (2008, p. 241) contends that "the idea of identity offers a vital intellectual bridge between disciplines in its ability to transcend levels of analysis and, in the process, reveal the link between the structures of social life and their manifestations in individual subjectivity" (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

The CTF hermeneutically examines the interplay of meanings within storied self construction (narrative identity) and the dominant discourse or meta-narratives of a covert curriculum - including deviant deficit victim-blaming labels (Adams-Wiggan, 2010; Hayes, 2009; Moss, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2009; Robinson, 2011). Human beings

hermeneutically textualise lived experience to make meaning and texts transmit beliefs and values in social contexts (Bond, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Lyons, 2009; Orr & Olson, 2007; Randall, 2007) and the CTF scrutinises the dominant stories of the field texts to expose the interplay between the individual and embedded institutional, social and cultural narratives (Clandinin, et al., 2009; Prosser, 2009), in order to counter hegemonic discourse - master narratives (Adams-Wiggan, 2010; Hayes, 2009). Prosser (2009, p. 610) argues that economic interests influence the construction of deviant deficit victim-blaming labels and the CTF is used to analyse the narrative vignettes (Adams-Wiggan, 2010; & Hayes, 2009) to disrupt disempowering discourses. The CTF shifts praxis from a removed examination of research subjects to a dialogical relationship between the social actors (including me) in order to illuminate how schools operate to silence students by attaching deviant deficit victim-blaming labels in a process of *othering* (Robinson, 2011; Smyth, et al., 2009).

The data analysis phase (of field texts and the transcribed focus group interviews) sought to identify generative themes. This process provoked the incorporation of another theoretical construct, the notion of *relational spaces.* A plethora of data relating to bullying and toxic school culture was produced during the focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews in the research site. It became abundantly clear that the CTF should incorporate the additional theoretical construct of the *relational space* as knowledge and meaning are imparted through "the *interaction* between the activities of the educator and the activities of the one being educated" (Biesta, 2004, p. 12). Further, the relational - and thus learning - spaces of schools are polluted by the existence of teacher to teacher, teacher to student, and peer to peer toxic relationships.

I used the CTF to generate social, cultural, political and economic propositions that were tested in the analysis of the field texts and narrative vignettes. The CTF is utilised to examine the lived-experience of the research participants "to access the ways in which people make sense of how they are controlled and regulated, as well as how they accommodate or resist the power of regulatory structures" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 6). The CTF connects the *setting* - derived from the examination of the field texts - to the lived-experience of non-dominant youth - via the social critique and analysis of the narrative vignettes and it is the interplay between the CTF, document analysis and narrative vignettes that invokes a thick description of the messy, contested spaces in schools. The CTF was used to synthesise themes and prompted me to seek

"awakefulness" (Greene, 2005, pp. 77 - 80) that honoured and gave status to the stories of the research participants (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2009).

The notions *of deficit-identity* and *otherisation* are highly contingent on the geographic temporal fields of an individual's lived experience. The ways in which the research participants experienced *deficit lenses* (and therefore its concurrent effect on self-identity) and *otherisation* was neither unilateral nor based on singular academic notions of 'sexuality', 'ethnicity', 'gender', 'class' etc. The research participants' personal experiences of what are in essence – for them—esoteric theories was contingent on their complex lives and the individual's lived-experience of their varying school settings. Nevertheless, there was commonality of experience and this was the ways in which the research participants identified their schooling experiences as negatively impacting their life trajectories. The term *non-dominant* is used to reflect the varied ways that the research participants experienced *otherisation* when they did not conform to the perceived social or academic norms of their educators.

2.3 Narrative vignettes

Critical ethnography is a research methodology that bears witness to the lived-experiences of research participants through the analysis of the cultural, social, political, and economic circumstances that exist in the temporal spaces and places in which they reside. The understanding of the lived-experience of non-dominant youth within the milieu of schools is enhanced when attention is given to the *3D* temporal spaces and places in which they reside (Hemming, 2013; Clandinin & Huber, 2002). Questions of power, legitimacy, hidden agendas and cultural assumptions are scrutinised to "aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination of groups" (Thomas, 1993, p. 5; Given, 2008; Cohen, 2003). Critical ethnography involves using the CTF to undertake a "cultural critique of social structures" (Hones, 1998, p. 228) and the CTF that was used in the analysis of the field texts was further employed in the development and analysis of the narrative vignettes.

The theoretical constructs (CTF) that ethnographers develop gives voice to the research participants in a process of making meaning of lived-experience. Critical narrative vignettes are a form of hermeneutical critical ethnography that prioritises the voices of research participants in the belief that they are best able to recount lived-experience. When student voice is prioritised research is not done too them but dialogically with them. The critical narrative vignettes helped me make sense of the research participants'

ways of knowing and gave an insider perspective on class injury within schools. Van Galen (2010, p. 259) describes voiced narrative as first person readings that "introduce us to the mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, teachers, physical spaces, dreams, and disappointments" of non-dominant others. First person readings interrupt the status quo of class relations because they broaden understanding and afford opportunities for research participants to reframe and transform self. The data analysis of the field texts was undertaken in order to develop a rich, thick description of Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) *field* and *habitus* which are synonymous with *setting* in narratives. Critical narrative is "the study of experience as story" (Clandinin, et al., p. 22) and when dialogical first person readings combine with *setting* research participants are given status and honoured; and opportunities for transformation are engendered (O'Sullivan, 2009; Thompson, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Lyons, 2009; Maulucci, 2010).

Narrative vignettes tell the story of the individuals who have participated in the research process. These vignettes "are shaped through the dialogue between the researcher and the participants as they co-jointly paint the image" (Robinson, 2011, p. 128). They merge thematic analysis with, the CTF and the voices of the research participants to inform, "Inspire and intervene" (Robinson, 2011, p. 135). As a researcher, I am not neutral and my voice is embedded in both the interviews and text of the narrative vignettes. They are created from a process where purposeful dialogical conversations build dialectical theory that is represented through the narrative vignettes. This is an advocacy oriented approach that listens for silences and "speaks data into existence" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 10).

As a critical narrative inquirer I reconstruct the events of the messy, contested spaces in schools by drawing attention to both the social and personal conditions in the lives of the non-dominant youth who are research participants. Narrative vignettes capture the fluidity of the lived-experience where the story is always about more than one topic. Stories capture the ways in which the social, cultural, political and economic conditions interlace, intertwine and wend their way through lived experience despite a facade of removal and disconnect from the personal. I use narrative vignettes to complement the CTF to develop counter-narratives by exploring the intersection of dominant discourse and lived-experience (Hayes, 2009). The narrative vignettes incorporate the active first person voice of the research participants and my critical scrutiny of their lived-experiences "represent[s] a salient opportunity for generating rich conversations about schooling, constraint, and mobility" (Van Galen, 2010, p. 258). The lived-experiences - or narratives - of research participants are ongoing and it is this fluidity that facilitates

transformation. The telling of stories is both reaffirming and educative for both self and others (Randall, 2007; Fraser, 2004; Hones, 1998).

Hammack (2008, p. 241) argues that "the idea of identity offers a vital intellectual bridge between disciplines in its ability to transcend levels of analysis and, in the process, reveal the link between the structures of social life and their manifestations in individual subjectivity". People make meaning of their lives through stories that are temporally located and feature settings, characters and plots. Adams-Wiggan (2010, pp. 8-9) describes dominant discourse from the context of both a "*Master Narrative*" - discourse that reflects the beliefs and practices of the dominant stratified middle-classes- and "*Counter Narrative*" - discourse that depicts the experiences of *colonised otherised* non-dominant youth and plots manifest from the meta-narratives that contaminate or populate the social, cultural, political and economic contexts of lived-experience. The development of positive narrative self-identity is nurtured, or deprived and eroded, depending on the individual's response to the plots or master-narratives that infiltrate their lived-experience. When non-dominant youth have their stories of aggravation, hurt and rage; or trust, hope and optimism (Smyth, et al., 2009) attentively listened too, it is as if the culture of silence is suddenly shattered (Freire, 1992, p. 30) and they discover that they have a voice and an opportunity to remake their worlds (Hones,1998; Prosser, 2009).

I am a novice critical ethnographer who has entered the lives of the research participants to interrupt the negative self-identity construction of non-dominant youth to intervene, inspire and empower. The narrative vignettes of the research participants are not neutral, I am embedded in the text and have attempted to overturn the authoritative distance that is characterised in conventional student-teacher relationships (Robinson, 2011). Elbaz-Luwish (2010, p. 272) contends that the way stories are shared and received is "almost as important as how the original events were experienced" and the narrative vignettes make it possible for the reader to make problematic connections between the hegemonic master-narratives imposed on non-dominant youth, the construction of narrative self-identity and the affects that deviant deficit victim-blaming labels have - not only on those who are encumbered with them - but on manifold social and cultural sociological trajectories (Hammack, 2008; Maulucci. 2010).

The vignettes reflect my beliefs that "students are the best source of information about what helps them, what hinders them, and in many instances what stops them from becoming yet more statistical casualties of early school leaving" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p.

62). Further, the process of dialogically sharing lived-experience allows the research participants to examine self and reconstruct life dreams from trajectories of hope, optimism and strength. As Stephanie Jones (cited in Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 189) contends, "If I can't speak about the world, then how am I to understand my position, or hold my position, or negotiate my position, or change my position in the face of others?" When non-dominant youth are afforded opportunities to relate their stories they are able to make meaning retrospectively and recreate lived-experience from counter-narrative perspectives, that is their narratives are "working against dominant narratives" (Clandinin, et al., 2009, p. 88). And, when they do so in the company of other non-dominant youth they share dialogical experiences that illuminate potential sites of personal transformation in a "process [of] acquiring the agency with which to act back on the forces shaping their lives" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 10).

The narrative vignettes form the foundation of my efforts to 'do' social justice work in education settings. I cannot divorce myself from the predominantly middle-class temporal, educational, parental and familial spaces from which I originate but by privileging the voices of non-dominant youth I am facilitating a process whereby authority is restored to those who are marginalized. Those in authority within education contexts (both educators and researchers) often "write over" (Elbaz-Luwish, 2010, p. 274) innate social and cultural capital to negate the lived-experience of non-dominant youth but this research gives them the opportunity to *speak-back* in a manner that Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 189) explain as emerging from "silent witnesses to active agents" (King & Hicks, 2006; Hayes, 2009; Adams-Wiggan, 2010; Moss, 2004)

2.4 Document analysis of field texts

Contemporary critical ethnography utilises diverse ranges of data sources to connect esoteric theory with lived experience. Winkle-Wagner (2010) identifies marginalized youth from non-dominant backgrounds as *otherised* and Allen and Rossoto (2009, p.168) describe the oppressive hegemonic discourses that they are exposed to as akin to *colonisation*. I have made use of a document analysis of field texts to provide diversity and contextualisation of the lived-experiences of *colonised otherised* youth (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995).

The social, cultural, political, and power relations within schools need to be interpreted and ousted. Attention to tension within the landscapes that shape the *colonising* contested spaces within schools elucidates the overt and covert curriculum and uncovers damaging power relations. The critical ethnographic document analysis of the

field texts opens to scrutiny hidden power agendas and illuminates the embedded experiences of research participants. The juxtaposition created by ousting hidden neoliberal agendas and repressive assumptions within schools and the subsequent voiced narrative vignettes of research participants provides a rich thick description that sets the scene. This process engenders vivid imagery to that links our capacity to think, feel, see and listen to the silences that oppress and control the lives of *colonised otherised* youth (Clandinin, et al., 2009; Given, 2008; Thomas, 1993; O'Sullivan, 2009).

The field texts were selected for their potential to help make explicit the hegemonic overt or covert curriculum that contributes to the deficit construction of *otherised at-risk* students within schools. Orr and Olson (2007, p. 822) claim that identity making and curriculum making are intertwined and the document analysis helped to contextualise the *field* and *habitus* of schools as they are tantamount to the *setting* in narrative vignettes (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). As I conducted the document analysis the themes emerged from the field texts; however, it is important to acknowledge that I still acted as an agent. The themes emerged from a multi-layered approach to theory in which I actively sought to illuminate the intersection of cultural capital, critical education theories, the relational space and narrative identity and the ways that they play out within the neoliberal frameworks of schools. The CTF developed in response to the foregrounding of theory.

This process engendered a dialectical relationship between the data and theory to generate propositions that can be drawn on in the examination of the narrative vignettes of the lived-experiences of the research participants. The federal and state policy documents build up a picture/story of the setting in which the students narrative (lived-experiences) evolve (Khalifa, 2010). Further, the analysis helped to generate topics for the focus group and one-on-one interviews. The following documents were incorporated in the document analysis of the field texts:

- *The Melbourne Declaration;*
- *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum - Technologies;*
- *Students at Educational Risk: Policy;*
- *Student Attendance: Policy;*
- *Dress Requirements for Students: Policy;*
- *Behaviour Management in Schools: Policy;*
- *Curriculum Assessment and Reporting: Policy;*
- *Exclusions: Policy; and*

- *School Matters*

The emergent themes illuminated ill-structured problems that arise within schools and the document analysis was undertaken in order to adequately define and address the ill-structured real world problem (Tarricone, 2007) of the failure of non-dominant youth to attain desired educational outcomes. Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007, p. 23) note that research needs to "draw attention to the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise that form each individual's context". The sociological lens of the CTF needs to reflect that the conditions of the milieu in schools occur temporally and to recognise that *colonised otherised* youth are inseparable from their "immersion in particular communities and cultures" (Randall, 2007, p. 384).

Human beings are hermeneutical because they interpret their worlds via a process of "*textualisation*" (Randal, 2007, p. 371) that makes sense of ours and others existence. The data analysis of field texts facilitated a process whereby the lived experiences of the research participants was contextualised, or in narrative terms it *set the scene* and what emerged was a scene where "historically constructed categories embody and weave[d] together social, technological and institutional patterns" (Popekewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 18) that impacted lived-experience. The interplay between the setting of the document analysis and narrative vignettes illuminates a counter-narrative that has the potential to disrupt the oppressive dominant discourse that burdens and paralyses *colonial otherised* non-dominant youth.

Dominant neoliberal themes emerged from the document analysis of the field texts and these themes were reflective of the dominant meta-narratives that promulgate and reverberate through the lives of *colonised otherised* youth and the temporal contested spaces of schools. These neoliberal frameworks induce stereotypy - fixation and rigidity (Tarricone, 2007) - in educators and stifles them from seeking solutions to the negative social and cultural affects of the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that are given to *colonised otherised* youth. The critical document analysis of the field texts has afforded me the opportunity -as an educator researcher - to augment my research and dig "below mundane surface appearances" (Thomas, 1993, p. 195) and deliberate on dominant discourses - or master-narratives - to develop a CTF that helped to illuminate the storied lives of those who dwell in the messy, contested spaces of schools (Orr & Olson, 2007; Fraser, 2004). As explained by Tuck, Allen, Bacha, Morales, Quinter, Thompson and Tuck (2008), it facilitates a process of *'researching back'* in the vogue of Linda Tuhiwai

Smith who advocates using theory that "involves, a 'knowingness of the colonizer' ... an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination" (Robinson, 2011; Pellico & Chin, 2007; Prosser, 2009).

2.6 The research site

I am a practicing educator in the geographical region of the research participants. To prevent potential conflicts of interest and ensure a smooth attainment of ethics approval I sought to conduct the research in a non school site. Alternative Learning Facilities (ALF) in the region were identified and an initial site selected. Although permission was obtained from the management and principal of the ALF a number of educators were hesitant to engage in the research process. Even though conducting the research within the initial ALF was viable I elected to withdraw from the research site. The primary objective of the research was to empower the voices of non-dominant youth by dialogically exploring their experiences and the hesitation of educators within the ALF would have diverted the focus from the research participants to the adult dynamics within the research site. As such, I elected to withdraw from the site. My experience in the original ALF was not wasted as it served to remind me that meta-narratives within a research site can impact on the lived experience of non-dominant youth.

2.6.1 Workwise Academy

The second research site is a large, long standing NPO in the suburbs of Perth in Western Australia and for the purpose of this research they have been given the pseudonym of Workwise Academy. Workwise Academy delivers a diverse range of state and federal government funded programs that seek to build agency within communities through an ethic of care and by promoting life-long learning. They approached the research project as an opportunity to build personal capacity in the researcher. Their Selected Services Project Manager - SSPM (pseudonym) encapsulated their approach to the research in the following way "our involvement in your project ticks a box for my staff. We're assisting you through our knowledge and acumen to build your capacity to better youth in our region".

Workwise offers services to approximately 500 youth through a bouquet of services. Some services are funded by the state government and offered from within mainstream schools. Workwise is also a RTO (Registered Training Organisation) and most of the courses are filled by scholarship positions. Further, they run a transformational leadership program that incorporates leadership camps, mentoring and employment

services. One element of the suite of youth services that are offered is ongoing support for *at-risk* youth. Dedicated youth-workers liaise with external agencies in a case management approach to providing crisis and continuing assistance. In addition, Workwise has forged strong relationships with local government authorities, schools and other community agencies. They have a long history of providing physical spaces and support for engagement and education programs designed for *at-risk* youth within the region.

Workwise's Alternative Learning Facility (ALF) status allows them "to work with those very pointy end clients who have specific barriers to education and training" (SSPM). The Future Learning and Motivating Education (FLAME) program is delivered under the auspice of the ALF. The program has been developed by youth workers who have a myriad of experience and dedicate their careers to working with *at-risk* youth. FLAME has been running for at least two years and the number of participants enrolled in the program at any given time is kept deliberately small. The program is highly individualised and aims to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and experience to help them reengage with learning. All of the youths engaged in the research project were no longer enrolled in mainstream schooling and were participating in the FLAME program. In 2013 the organisation ran two FLAME courses per semester. The research took place in the first semester and the classes were split along gender lines. I conducted the research with the two separate groups and the groups were accordingly gender divided.

My experiences as a researcher within the different ALFs were diametrically opposed. All of the staff at Workwise were supportive of the research and provided more assistance than I had anticipated. They generously gave of their own time in one-on-one semi-structured interviews, nominated themselves to cultivate and proactively promote the research project with the non-dominant youth in their FLAME program and handed out and followed up permission forms with potential participants to ensure that the ethics requirements were met. They did not pressure any youth into being involved in the research project but their enthusiasm and personal investment engendered support and enthusiasm within the non-dominant young people themselves. The youth-workers and SSPM involved in the FLAME project held strong professional and personal beliefs that non-dominant youth are injured and disempowered by systemic and educator practices in schools. They believed that the research project would provide non-dominant youth with the opportunities to have their stories told and could engender self-esteem. Their encouragement, assistance and support meant that I was able to foreground the voices of the non-dominant research participants who had dropped out school.

2.6.2 Demographics of the geographic location

School failure can be described as the pervasive persistent low academic achievement that often leads to school dropout and the risk of school dropout is exponentially exacerbated when viewed from the context of socio-economic status. In 2008 the *Melbourne Declaration* instigated the move to a national curriculum and identified that "by comparison with the world's highest performing school systems, Australian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are underrepresented among high achievers and overrepresented among low achievers" (Barr, et al., 2008, p. 5). This trend is not abating and in Australia the most significant factor that contributes to poor academic outcomes is socio-economic status (OECD. 2012, Fig. 1.3). The negative impact of social stratification along class lines is ongoing and Australia's 2012 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) results are indicative of this. Across all three key testing areas of numeracy, literacy and science young people who are in the lowest quartile of the Index of Economic, Social and Cultural Status accounted for approximately a quarter of the low performing young people and less then five per cent of the top performing students. Conversely those students in the highest quartile had approximately five per cent of low performing young people and a quarter of young people performing in the top range (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Buckly, 2013).

The geographic location of both the research site and the research participants is a suburban area of Perth. The region encompasses two local government areas and five suburbs. According to ABS statistics (2013a, 2013c) the unemployment rate in the region is significantly higher than the national average and the workforce participation rate is significantly lower. Prior to disengaging and dropping out of school the research participants attended a total of five mainstream public high schools in the area. These schools form an educational alliance to better service students in the region. ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority) created the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) in order to meaningfully compare NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) results across Australia (ACARA. 2014). The mean ICSEA values of the high schools in the region is 960 when the mean average across Australia is 1000. The ICSEA is divided into quartiles and each quartile has an average of twenty five percent of students in each quartile. The public high schools in the research location have a mean of 61 percent of students in the bottom half of the ICSEA and a mean of 9 percent in the top quarter. Although statistically all of schools have a relatively low ICSEA there is still a broad spread. One of the schools is identified as being in the bottom ten percent of schools in WA (Alibaba group. 2014) and

the NAPLAN results are also reflective of this. Whilst all high schools in the region underperformed and didn't reach either the WA or Australian mean score for NAPLAN results the school with the lowest ICSEA value achieved scores that were significantly lower than the other schools in the region (*MySchools; &* ACARA, 2013). The post secondary school destinations of the 2012 school leavers in the region do not compare favourably to youth across Australia. The unemployment rate was almost double the average and only 20% of youth in the region went on to attend university compared to the national rate of 35% (WA *SchoolsOnline;* ABS, 2013b)

Even though the collated quantitative data does not shed light on the lived experiences of the research participants it does identify that they are geographically statistically disadvantaged compared to many other youth who attend public high schools in both WA and Australia. The names of the schools in the region that the non-dominant youth attended prior to dropping out have been changed to Boulder High, Maiden Head High and West Waterfall High.

2.6.3 Research participants

There were eight young people who agreed to participate in the research project, two males and six females and focus group interviews were conducted along gender lines. All of the youth were aged 18 or under when they participated in the research project. They were all enrolled and actively participating in the FLAME program. One of the male participants had completed year twelve in 2012 but had failed to graduate. The other male participant had failed to pass in year eleven and did not graduate. None of the female participants had completed year twelve and they had dropped out of high school at varying stages between grades eight and eleven. All of the youth who participated in the research project come from non-dominant backgrounds, predominantly linked to class. None of the research participants are from middle-class backgrounds and most of them had experienced significant barriers to learning from sources outside of school.

The male research participants specifically initiated a discussion and requested that pseudonyms based on Star Wars characters be allotted to them. The names Anakin and Darth were selected because in essence they are one and the same. Although the researcher is not a Star Wars fan I am aware that Anakin and Darth are the same character. Anakin is the name given to the main antagonist in the film when he is a Jedi knight who uses *the force* to protect and serve the galaxy. Darth Vader is the name he takes on when he becomes a Sith lord who masters the dark side of *the force* to serve

the evil Galactic Empire. The names Anakin and Darth were selected to reflect the similar experiences, yet different trajectories, that the research participants have taken.

The female participants made no such demands for pseudonyms and merely requested that they not be identified. However, in keeping with the fictional warrior theme, I selected names of heroines from Marvel and DC comics. The names have been allocated based on similarities between the life experiences of the comic book heroines and the research participants. Like the research participants all of the comic book heroines have faced great adversity; and like the research participants they demonstrate great courage and strength in overcoming them.

In addition two youth-workers and an executive from Workwise Academy participated in one-on-one interviews and their input was greatly appreciated. The youth-workers were given the pseudonyms of Cadell and Niles and the SSPM was given the pseudonym of Alisa.

2.7 Ethic of care

Critical ethnography places ethical issues at the centre of research and they "permeate narrative inquires from start to finish" (Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 30). Critical ethnographers "examine the power differentials between researchers and participants to question who is speaking for whom and how they can be represented" (Given, 2008, p. 150). It foregrounds the lived-experiences of the participants through the interpretation of a critical framework that mirrors the researchers own social and political lens (Hayes, 2009) and as such, an ethic of caring (Schulz, Schroeder, & Celeste, 1997) that employs mutual respect, honesty and trust has been essential throughout all phases of the research. Clandinin (2006, p. 52) argues that researchers "need to imagine ethics as being about negotiation, respect, mutuality and openness to multiple voices". Furthermore, critical ethnographers develop reciprocity where the research participants "are given some control over the research process yielding a more democratic form of knowledge production" (Carspecken & Apple cited in O'Sullivan, 2009, p. 86) and contributing to an ethic of caring where a dialogic collaborative relationship is built (Schulz, et al., 1997) and participants are viewed as more than data possessors (Adams-Wiggan, 2010).

Ethical considerations were inseparable from the everyday interactions I had with the research participants. I went out of my way to be respectful and continuously acknowledged that the research participants were more than mere possessors of

knowledge that I wished to collect (Adam-Wiggan, 2010). Although I had not directly taught any of the participants in the research project I am an educator in the geographical location and a number of potential research participants - who were enrolled in FLAME - had to be excluded from the research due to a potential conflict of interest as I had previously taught them. This created a situation where my reputation had preceded me because the students that I had previously taught had provided positive feedback to their peers and there was the very real possibility that the research participants could didactically respond to research questions with a view to pleasing 'me the educator', rather than dialogically responding to 'me the researcher'. I overcame this by utilising multimedia stimulus materials that prompted dialogical conversations between the participants in the focus group interviews. Consequently, although I had collated and occasionally asked guiding questions, generally the students owned the conversations and traversed many different aspects of their lived-experiences within schools (Given, 2008).

All of the research participants were offered the opportunity to review transcripts and maintain an ongoing dialogue when the narrative vignettes were compiled. However, none of the participants chose to take up this offer as they were unsure that their time or circumstances would allow for it. This is reflective of the complex issues that impact on their daily lives. All of the youth-workers and the SSPM who were interviewed reviewed their transcripts and clarified information where they felt it necessary. As Schultz (1997, p. 479) argues, I have "a responsibility to present the teller with a telling of her story in a way that does not leaver her feeling vulnerable or exploited" and although the participants professed that they were happy with the process and thought that their opinions had been respectfully heard I would have liked the opportunity to present them with their compiled personal narratives. However, a copy of the final thesis will be provided to the ALF and I will encourage them to share the stories with the research participants if they have remained in contact with their youth-workers.

2.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a crucial component of critical ethnography as it recognises that the inter-relationships between the researcher and the research act itself are "part and parcel of the social world under investigation" (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995, p. 394). Reflexivity involves the researcher introspectively acknowledging their preconceived judgments and underlying assumptions to evaluate the relationship between one's beliefs about the world and the research findings and interpretations (Tarricone, 2007). Reflexivity requires the researcher to acknowledge that no research is truly 'objective' and that in

fact we all bring our personal beliefs and interpretations to the phenomenon under observation. In this section I addresses concepts such as the impact of personal voice; ethics approval; selecting/discarding data; and personal limitations in conducting research.

2.8.1 Personal voice:

It was neither possible nor desirable for me to be neutral or withdraw self from my dialogical relationship with either the field texts or the research participants. Being truly reflexive of personal voice required me to self-appraise my own cultural and social capital as well as the *habitus* which I am most comfortable in and to further acknowledge and share this with the research participants (Clandinin, et al., 2007; Freire, 1992; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). I am a white Australian born educator and recent PHD candidate who comfortably traverses the hegemonic middle-class habitus of schools. Nevertheless, I grew up in a politically active family who aligned themselves with working-class perspectives despite their obviously middle-class incomes. In addition, my family was given the label of 'dysfunctional' due to my mothers 'mental illness' and a non-conformity to hegemonic societal norms - such as conscientiously objecting and not wearing school uniform; and a father who was a highly visible union official actively involved in instigating strikes within the public transport sector.

Childhood was not easy for me and was juxtaposed with a passionate introduction to social justice concepts and traversing the emotional and physical violence visited on me by my unwell mother who exposed me to neglect, early sexualisation and underage alcohol consumption. Clearly these influences have shaped the adult ‘me’ and I am often heard to contend that "if my adolescence defined my adulthood then I would have never amounted to anything", and quite frankly it's true. These experiences have led me to have an unwavering belief that regardless of personal challenge and difficult circumstances that it is never too late for the young people that cohabit my relational classroom spaces to set and achieve their personal goals. Further, within the messy, contested spaces of schools my own children acquired labels of their own; the eldest's label is '*autistic*', the next one down '*gifted and talented*', the third *'hearing impaired'* and the youngest *'dyslexic'*. These labels have led to my children being totalised from deficit perspectives - it's amazing how a label of gifted and talented can be construed as deficit if you do not conform to hegemonic norms - and it would be naive of me to believe that my own personal lived experience did not shape my theoretical constructs. As O'Sullivan (2009, p. 64) explains it, "I

recognise that I cannot assume to be able to transcend my positionality and that I am integral part of the research process".

I entered the research process acknowledging my epistemological and political baggage (Morell, 2004, p. 42) conscious that I was a co-creator and not a removed objective observer. I am passionately committed to social justice perspectives of education and am continually seeking to identify the potential for non-dominant youth to be depicted as *at-promise* rather than *at-risk* (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) and as such it became important for me to personally challenge authorship and voice during both the focus group interviews and writing of the narrative vignettes. Dialogic co-authoring of lived-experience is empowering; however, when friendly researchers re-interpret and re-author the lived experience of non-dominant youth it is merely a form of sympathetic *colonial* paternalism that disempowers. If non-dominant youth are to *speak-back* to their deficit labels then they need to be given their own voices and not silenced by allies (Prosser, 2009, p. 608).

2.8.2 Ethics approval

The university ethics approval process is both daunting and challenging. It is difficult to gain ethics approval to do human research within schools because of the possibility that uneven power relationships between students and educators could cause harm for students. Schools are contested spaces in which educators are gatekeepers of student results, curriculum access and relational spaces and therefore the concerns raised by ethics committees are genuine. However, educator researchers have unique access to and understandings of the machinations of schools and the prohibitive difficulties in obtaining ethics approval for educator researchers to conduct research within the public education system is twofold, it acts to silence student voice and prevent dialogical co-construction of knowledge. Critical educators can research within public education systems if they do so through a retrospective reflection on their practices; however, once again this does not facilitate student participation and thus any proposed pedagogical or systems responses are not informed by the young people most effected. In this research project the issue was circumvented by selecting a research site outside of public schools and by conducting research with non-dominant youth who had already dropped out of the system.

Another challenging component of the ethics approval process was the requirement to provide a list of pre-arranged proposed questions that I would be asking the research participants. As critical ethnographic interviews "tend to be totally unstructured and

open-ended and rely entirely on the spontaneous development of questions in the flow of conversation" (O'Sullivan, 2009, p. 65) it seemed counter intuitive to develop questions that were removed from the notion of co-constructed dialogic understandings. However, these questions did serve as reminders of overarching topics and acted as a departure point, particularly at the beginning of the focus group interviews when the researcher and participants were getting to know one another.

The innovative methodological process utilised in the focus group interviews - multimedia stimulus to prompt critical dialogical conversations - was not familiar to the ethics committee (although critical literacies are an acknowledged English pedagogical strategy within schools). One condition of ethics approval was the provision of a full list of stimulus that would be used during the focus group interviews as parents/guardians were required to give permission for their young person to view the stimulus as part of the research process. Although there was no difficulty in compiling the list it was somewhat restrictive as it meant that when the research participants wanted to introduce their own related stimulus it was not able to be included in the research project.

Finally, this research project intended to disrupt the deficit perspectives of *at-risk* youth within the messy, contested spaces of schools and a suggestion of the ethics committee was that a clause be made that parental permission could be obtained over the phone because the parents of the *at-risk* research participants might not be able to read the approval forms. This caused internal conflict for me as the clause reinforces the deficit labels of non-dominant people, on the other hand it also afforded me flexibility. The clause was included and actually facilitated a number of youth becoming research participants, not because of parental illiteracy but because the young people themselves hadn't remembered to bring the forms back in.

2.8.3 Selecting/discarding data

One of the key motivations that I had for undertaking this research project was the empowerment of non-dominant student voice in an endeavour to build capacity, agency and efficacy in the research participants. Schools are messy, contested space and there is a lot to learn from the temporal exploration of systemic cracks that manifest in the lived experiences of those who dwell within (Van Galen, 2010; & Robinson, 2011) and as a consequence, I found it very challenging to know when to discard stories. The research participants and I dialogically co-authored manifold narrative vignettes that incorporated empowering counter-narratives that challenged

the dominant status quo (Adams-Wiggan, 2010). However, research necessarily has constraints and in order to ensure that my thesis was neither repetitive nor rambling it became necessary to incorporate some narrative threads and discard others. This is a perplexing notion because as a researcher I do not want to negate any of the research participants' lived-experiences. In the end, I came to the conclusion that all of the narrative threads informed the critical framework and thus was not devalued; however, I am still troubled and hope that I have privileged the *right* stories (Robinson, 2011).

2.8.4 Personal limitations

The first interviews that I conducted were with the youth workers and SSPM at the research site. These were one-on-one interviews with guiding questions and I was initially appalled at my interviewing skills, particularly my propensity to get excited and 'talk-over' the research participants. Fortunately, I was aware that I was doing it and was able to rein myself in. By the end of the third interview, my skills had improved significantly. I was pleased that I had conducted the one-on-one interviews first as it alerted me to the importance of keeping myself in check and to not 'talk-over' the participants in the focus group interviews. I was comfortable with the focus group interview processes because I was in familiar territory. I have always taken a dialogical approach to teaching and it was only a small step to hand over complete authority to the research participants.

Thompson (2011, p. 47) contends that "Only the care of self allows an individual to act as an ethical person." When we take care of self we afford ourselves opportunities to consider our place in the world and the relationships that we participate in. Although this is a concept that I wholeheartedly agree with I find it very difficult to put into practice. The competing time constraints of working full time within a school, trying to complete the Research Masters and to be a plugged in wife, mother and grandmother was challenging.

2.9 Methodological processes

2.9.1 Critical literacies stimulus and focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were selected as the best methodological approach to interviewing the research participants. The focus group interviews were conducted in the physical space where the research participants had spent most time in the ALF. The FLAME facilitators had valued the participants as active agents in the space and encouraged them to take control and responsibility for the social and learning expectations that occurred within (Smyth, et al. 2010). The research participants were

comfortable expressing their opinions and having a voice within the physical space and their agency easily transferred to the focus group interviews. The participants were at ease with one another, shared jokes, talked over one another, keenly contributed to the dialogic conversations and were respectful of one another. Even when they held dissenting views they were masked by easy banter and an acceptance of the other persons right to have a different view (Robinson, 2011).

Focus group interviews foster dialogical relationships as all participants - including me - learn from the telling of stories and the debating of issues (Shor & Pari, 1999). Further, the focus group interviews "reduced the methodological and ethical problem of me as adult interviewer controlling the interviews and eliciting from students what they thought I wanted to hear" (Robinson, 2011, p. 161). The physical space where the focus group interviews were conducted is "a messy contact zone, to recognize and elevate the deep and varied local knowledges" (Fine, 2008, p. 223) and lived-experiences of all of the participants. Diverse lived experience can often contain similar threads and when non-dominant youth scaffold one another through dialogue, social interaction, collaboration and cooperation the focus group interview method becomes particularly effective in eliciting dialogic understanding (Horsley, 2007; Tarricone, 2007; Thompson, 2011).

From the beginning of the research process I intended to utilise multi-media stimulus to provoke critical discussion and draw stories and dialogic group responses from the research participants. Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 190) contend that critical literacies "challenge students to 'build a critical understanding of their presence in the world' as 'active critical investigators into their own lives and society'". As an educator, I have utilised critical literacies as an emancipatory pedagogical strategy that empowers students to interrupt dominant discourse - or master narratives - and to take ownership of the political and cultural places in their worlds. Reviewing multi-media stimulus afforded the research participants an opportunity to dialogically reflect on lived-experience from critical perspectives. Jordan and Yeomans (1995, pp. 401-402) contend that it is the role of the researcher to impart skills that allow the research participants "to continue investigating the world in which they will go on living" and the critical discourse analysis that was prompted in the focus group interviews will scaffold the research participants to continue to question and story their own futures in a manner in which they can change their worlds and not just study them (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threats, 2008; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). The stimulus materials that were used during the focus group interviews is outlined below:

- Coach Carter - excerpts from the movie;
- The Simpsons - excerpts from the TV series;
- When We're Young (3 doors down) - official film clip;
- If Everyone Cared (Nickleback) - official film clip; and
- The Wall (Pink Floyd) - spliced snippets from the movie.

Utilising critical literacies stimulus within the focus group interviews prompted a process of dialogical collaborative unstructured problem solving. The multimedia stimulus prompted group contemplation and fostered reflexivity where the research participants assessed their "beliefs, values, assumptions, feelings, prior knowledge, understandings and construction of experiences" (Tarricone, 2007, p. 55) in a process of collaborative ill-structured problem solving. Non-dominant youth have experienced historic oppression and "should help shape the questions, [and] frame the interpretations of research" (Cahill, et al., 2008, p. 98). When research participants are involved in dialogic ill-structured problem solving of 'their' spaces they are afforded opportunities to "heal themselves and recover their wholeness" (Tuck, et. al., 2008, p. 73).

Lived-experience is temporal and the focus group interviews allowed the participants to dialogically examine lived experience to "always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition" (Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 23) and to construct knowledge from past, present and future perspectives. Freire (1992, p. 13) contends that dialogue becomes meaningful when dialogical participants retain and actively defend identity. When the research participants dialogically make meaning from shared experiences they scaffold one another to shatter the culture of silence as they discover that "their critical discourse upon the world, their world was a way of remaking that world" (p. 30). The research participants were "expatriate and exiled students" (Tuck, et al., 2008, p. 63) and their dialogical co-construction of narratives from within schools helped them to hermeneutically understand and re-envision their worlds as they textualised their shared lived-experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; & Randal, 2007).

Using multi-media stimulus and critical literacy pedagogy to engender dialogical meaning making during the focus group interviews was an extremely effective methodological process and I would recommend it to others. To successfully utilise this strategy the researcher must ensure they have their own technology including a

data-projector, lap-top and prepared stimulus. In addition, the researcher needs to ensure that their device for recording the interviews can cope with competing conversations, interruptions of the stimulus and the researchers voice itself.

The guiding questions (see appendix 1) for the focus group interviews were predominantly related to the multi-media stimulus. They were non-confronting as they did not immediately delve into the sometimes painful lived-experience of non-dominant youth. Instead, the students were introduced to critically considering the stimulus material and the messages that this stimulus gave about 'imagined others' experiences within schools. This engendered dialogical discussions that lead to the research participants raising their own questions and dialogically sharing their lived experiences (Robinson, 2011).

2.9.2 One-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted with the FLAME facilitators and the SSPM. These research participants provided an alternative *adult* view of school spaces. They were able to provide a different subjective reality that shed light on both the lived-experiences of non-dominant youth and the long term challenges that had led to them seeking support within FLAME (Robinson, 2011). These dialogical conversations illuminated different tangents on the dominant meta-narratives of schools and informed the co-construction of knowledge for me as "talking always changes us" (Randall, 2007, p. 383).

The guiding questions (see appendix 2) for the one-on-one interviews were semi-structured and related directly to the professional experiences of the adult research participants. The guiding questions were useful for the researcher to re-direct where necessary but by and large the research participants led the interviews by steering the dialogic conversation in the direction that they felt best identified and explained systemic problems within the schools of the region and how they felt this impacted on the lived experiences of non-dominant youth.

2.9.3 Transcription

I personally transcribed the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and whilst time consuming it was worthwhile. It allowed me to become close to the stories and consider thematic threads during the transcription process (Fraser, 2004). Nevertheless, the time required to transcribe the interviews was prohibitive and the focus group interviews were transcribed by professionals. I found it essential to revisit

the raw recordings and edit through the professional transcripts as there were subtle inconsistencies and errors. The professional transcribers were not from the same geographical location and further, were not immersed within schools. This led to both conceptual misunderstandings and the insertion of interstate place names in the transcripts. In addition, on a number of occasions the more colourful language of the research participants was edited out. This misrepresented and negated the emotional responses - fear, anger, sorrow etc. - that were part of the narrative self-identities of the research participants. Reviewing the transcripts brought me closer to the data (O'Sullivan, 2009).

2.9.4 Thematic analysis of field texts

A document analysis of field texts was undertaken to contextualise the lived experiences of non-dominant youth within the messy, contested spaces of schools. Education systems produce significant volumes of field texts that take the form of the policy and curriculum that are imbued in lived-experience. If qualitative research, is to be valid it requires rigorous data collection and the documents were selected on the basis of their relevance to the CTF and systemic priorities within schools (Bowen, 2002; Clandinin, et al., 2007). The document analysis of the field texts facilitated a process of dialectical theory building where the CTF and field texts intertwined to depict the 'setting' for lived experience.

The following processes were undertaken in the document analysis:

1. A first pass document review was undertaken where meaningful passages of the relevant field texts were highlighted in accordance with their relationship to the CTF.
2. Open coding of the documents based on themes generated from the research questions, the CTF and emergent themes that engendered from the field texts.
3. A thematic analysis was conducted. The field-texts were re-read, reviewed and interpretively coded based on the previously identified themes.

2.9.5 Thematic analysis of the focus group and one-on-one interview transcripts

The thematic analysis of the narrative text involved identifying themes and subthemes that were related to the CTF; the findings of the document analysis; and themes that emerged from the narrative data. The following steps followed were undertaken:

1. Proofreading and re-reading the narrative transcripts.
2. Identify emergent patterns and themes.

3. Transcripts and texts from narrative coded around the research questions, research categories, critical perspectives and topics of relevance (Moss, 2004; Prosser, 2009).
4. Chunking of data according to narrative threads that were identified through the CTF (Maulucci, 2010).
5. Axial coding was undertaken to examine connections between narrative lived-experience and the CTF (McClure, Szelenyi, Niehaus, Anderson, & Reed, 2010).
6. The data was examined for consistencies or competing stories (Maulucci, 2010; Pellico & Chin, 2007)
7. Comparison of the thematic coding of the transcripts and field texts.
8. Writing of the narrative vinegarettes.

An unanticipated theme that arose from the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews was that of 'the relational space and bullying.' The CTF was adapted to incorporate this theme and the field texts re-examined accordingly.

2.9.6 *Validity*

Triangulation and member checking were incorporated into the data analysis try and ensure the validity of the data. The data was triangulated by applying a critical theoretical framework to the document analysis, narrative vignettes and one-on-one interviews to identify synonymous themes. If emergent themes were able to be identified across all three research areas (document analysis, vignettes and one-on-one interview transcripts) they were considered generative and were further expanded and analysed.

Member checking was facilitated for the participants in both the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews:

Focus group interviews - each focus group was held over two separate interview periods. The research participants indicated that they did not want to read through the transcripts to check for validity but were happy for me to seek clarification and ask interpretive questions as the interviews progressed. When the participants said something that could be interpreted in several ways or used slang that I was unfamiliar with I immediately checked for meaning. I replayed the taped sessions in between the interview periods and sought further clarification during the second session. The research participants disinterest in coming in to member check the transcription or

narrative vignettes concerned me but ultimately it was reflective of the difficult and chaotic lived-experiences that they were working to overcome (Khalifa, 2010).

One-on-one Interviews - All of the research participants who were involved in the one-on-one interviews took copies of their transcripts to review. None of them retracted or changed their comments but one was particularly keen to ensure that they remained de-identified. These research participants were very open and honest in both their personal opinions and life-experiences and their insights were invaluable, particularly in the context of relational spaces.

2.10 Writing the narrative vignettes

Writing the narrative vignettes allowed for a more nuanced read of the transcribed data (Maulucci, 2010). I was able to merge and contextualise the lived-experience of the research participants through the lens of the CTF and reconstruct the data into narratives (Hones; 1998; Tarricone, 2007). A key purpose of the research was to ensure that non-dominant youth had a chance to *speak- back* to the deficit constructions that have been allotted to them. I felt it was imperative that their voices were privileged and not the authoritative narrative discourse of the researcher (Robinson, 2011). Nevertheless, when you are reconstructing lived-experience through narrative, the resultant stories need continuity. Conversations do not always flow in coherent, logical patterns that read well and this meant that at times my voice needed to be superimposed into the narrative. I wanted to clearly distinguish between my voice and the voices of the research participants and I elected to do this visually. The genuine voice and words of the research participants are formatted in italics whereas my voice is in usual typewritten form.

Further, the research participants were neither hegemonic nor stereotypical, consequently the ways in which they participated in the research process varied. Some participants had more to say and the verbal language skills of some participants (in particular Darth, Callisto and Aurora) were at much higher level than the others. As a consequence my voice became more interwoven and 'privileged' in some of the narrative vignettes. In addition, the length of the vignettes also varied and these two factors combine to give an appearance of some voices being privileged over others. In some respects the easiest response to this imbalance is to discard the voices of the research participants by either shortening the vignettes of those who loudly and vigorously had a lot to say or by abandoning the voice of the quieter or less articulate participants. However, sometimes the simple solutions are not the best solutions and

ultimately I made a decision to share all of the participants' stories in the ways that they had told them to me.

2.11 Writing the thesis

The intent of research is to identify problems, illuminate problems, or to propose new solutions for problems. This research addresses the problem of the negative effects of deviant deficit victim-blaming labels and the hegemonic overt and covert curriculum on non-dominant youth within the messy, contested spaces of schools. This is an ill-structured problem as it is "inherently about a host of topics at once, not one of which can be pried from the others for handy inspection" (Randall, 2007, p. 372). Successful ill-structured problem solving requires critical thinking that is "characterised by processes such as reflecting, judging and identifying data as well as contemplating and determining solutions, position and conclusions" (Tarricone, 2007). As the research progressed, new elements and components of the problem were identified and these had to be taken into account and necessitated that I redefine both the CTF and the way that the thesis was structured. This process was challenging and time consuming but absolutely necessary if I was to genuinely capture and give voice to the lived experiences of the non-dominant youth involved in the research project (Orr & Olson, 2007).

For me, writing research is a narrative act that requires the pulling of threads to weave many elements of the problem into a cohesive and readable theoretical construct. It also required that I "identify and synthesize the relationships among the stories by listing and then juxtaposing them with the other stories" (Pellico & Chinn, 2007, p. 62). The document analysis of the field texts is a thread that is juxtaposed through all of the narrative vignettes. In addition each of the chapters that analyses the field texts (just help me; they never do anything; and the dark side) juxtaposes two narrative vignettes that tell two different stories that have similar settings.

Finally, in writing this thesis I was careful to ensure that when I attended to the tensions within schools that I did not depict a sense of despair or a sense of hopelessness and in this way I found myself attending to counter-stories, i.e., the "narratives working against the dominant narratives" (Clandinin, et al., 2009, p. 88)

This chapter has provided an in-depth explanation of the methodological approaches and processes that were used in the research project. Critical ethnographic inquiry and

the CTF were explained in detail and the methodological perspectives of the document analysis of the field texts and narrative vignettes were outlined. In addition, my personal attention to the notions of reflexivity and an ethic of care were explained.

In the next chapter I provide an in-depth theoretical analysis of the neoliberal agendas that promulgate schools. The theories that inform the CTF are thoroughly examined and their relationship to the research explained.

Chapter 3 - Theory

3.1 Introduction

Neoliberal ideology has become the mainstay in schools within Western Australia. This ideology is implemented through the policies of both Federal and State Governments and through educator practice. High-stakes testing, centralised curriculum, reform agendas, "state-sanctioned teaching methods" (Thompson, 2011, p. 4), accountability management practices and notions of individual meritocratic success have aligned education to business and are accepted norms within the milieu of schools (Smyth, et al., 2010; Thompson, 2011; Lund & Carr, 2008). A corporate capitalist agenda has become paramount and as a consequence notions of education as a vehicle for social justice are largely silenced.

Normalised neoliberal agendas have led to non-dominant youth receiving impoverished education opportunities that narrowly focus on meeting mediocre test results that are deemed acceptable for accountability purposes (Tienken, 2013; Haberman, 1991). In addition, the deviant deficit victim-blaming label of *at-risk* that is allotted to non-dominant students further narrows the curriculum to the vocational attainment of low level skills and competencies. The neoliberal corporate agenda within schools focuses on preparing *at-risk* students for work within a hierarchical labour market (Smyth, et al., 2009; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). This leads to a "thin exposure to critical democracy and engagement, especially in relation to social justice" (Lund & Carr, 2008, p. 8). The neoliberal discourses that eddy within schools create conflict and class injury and non-dominant youth become collateral damage in the reification of capitalist ideology (Freire, 1992; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

In this chapter I examine the association between neoliberal deficit prisms and the theoretical constructs of narrative identity; cultural capital theory; hegemony; and the relational space. Neoliberal discourses and policy frameworks have eroded the educational experiences of non-dominant youth in multiple ways and this theory informs the CTF.

3.2 Neoliberal deficit prisms

In the current climate of neoliberal education paradigms that incorporate high-stakes testing and the reification of capitalist ideals students are increasingly pathologized and criminalised thus shifting the focus from broader sociological concerns and systemic educational policies (Giroux, 2008). Neoliberal capitalist corporate culture emphasises individualism and competition and as education systems have adopted neoliberal

policies and practices this has proliferated into the contested spaces of schools. Educators link academic-success with mythical notions of meritocratic success (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Smyth, et al., 2010) that negate the complexity of lived-experience - particularly in contexts of class injury - to reinforce the dominant capitalist middle-class status quo (Apple, 2004; Smyth, et al. 2010; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Mythological meritocracy and notions of the good student are binary with deficit. The deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that are allotted to non-dominant youth *otherise* and prime them for failure (Thompson, 2011; Valencia, 2010; Smyth, et al., 2009; Becker, 1963).

Young people have been labelled *at-risk* for decades and when the term is used in its base form it is simply referring to students "who are unlikely to complete the compulsory years of schooling" (Ashman & Elkins, 2005. p. 408). Over time the term *at-risk* has morphed and become synonymous with other deficit labels such as *'learning disabled'*; *'low socio-economic'*; *'low socio-cultural'*; '*behaviourally challenged', 'Indigenous', 'Maori'; 'teen mother'; 'drug affected'* and *'homeless'* - to name but a few (Valencia, 2010). Swadener and Lubeck (1995, pp. 1-2) liken the term *at-risk* to a "buzzword" that pathologizes people based on class, family structure, race, gender and immigrant status with an underlying assumption of deficit that remains unchallenged. Young people from non-dominant backgrounds have become demonised by the term a*t-risk*. They are given labels that alienate and disenfranchise and "draws attention away from the material conditions of social suffering ... and denies the reality of the marginalised" (Bullen & Kenway, 2005, p. 51).

Deficit labels presuppose that young people are failures because of their innate individual deficiencies and not because of the ongoing systemic failure of education systems. They facilitate a process whereby educators - who belong to the dominant middle-class - appear to be in a catatonic state unwilling to alter the deficit perspectives that reproduce inequalities for non-dominant students. As Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 151) assert "Schools assume that middle-class students can learn, and they do. Likewise, schools assume that lower-class students cannot learn, and they don't" (Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

In the West Australian context student success is increasingly measured from homogenous neoliberal perspectives (e.g. NAPLAN, the attainment of curriculum outcomes, a mandated syllabus—demonstrated through rigid assessment tasks, external WACE (Western Australian Certificate of Education) exams etc. - and these high-stakes standards based school reforms are "riddled with deficit thinking"

(Valencia, 2010, p. 152) that lead to "a culture of false caring" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, pp. 182-183). If students do not succeed within standardised settings they are labelled and placed into categories that traverse a wide range of so called deviant qualities. Deviant deficit victim-blaming labels totalise non-dominant youth who are perceived as individually flawed (Apple, 2004; Smeyers, 2010; Valencia, 2010; Swadener & Lubeck). Deficit thinking models are endogenous theories that are grounded in a hegemonic classist, sexist, racist discourse that manifests in covert and overt curriculum that ignores systemic failures (Robinson, 2011) rather than "positing that the student who fails in school does so because of his/her internal deficits or deficiencies" (Valencia, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Within schools diversity is increasingly being deemed a disorder (Prosser, 2009, p. 610) and the labels given to *otherised* students leads to whole groups of students being stereotyped based on social categories such as socioeconomic status, colour, and geographic locations such as ‘urban’ and ‘remote’ schools’ (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Khalifa, 2010; Smyth, et al., 2010). In schools these social categories often become euphemisms for deviance. As a consequence, educators don’t recognise, and therefore validate, student success or social capital other than those associated with dominant middle-class ideology. This process of *othering* students based on non-dominant characteristics (including adolescence itself) is a form of "structural oppression" (Hill, 2008, p. 38) that entrenches intergenerational inequality and demarcates and differentiates to "produce lines of separation between ‘them’ and ‘us’" (Smyth, et al., 2009). Deviant deficit victim-blaming labels fail to acknowledge the "strengths, competencies, and promise of low-SES children and parents" (Valencia, 2010, p. 114) and instead, perpetuate oppressive negative stereotypes that generate educational inequities and reinforce the neoliberal capitalist economic status quo (Apple, 2004; Smyth, et al., 2009; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). Schools and educators often respond to the deemed deviant deficit victim-blaming labels of *otherised at risk* students by setting out to ‘fix’ them by reintegrating them into the middle-class ideology that caused the alienation in the first place. As Smyth (et al., 2010, p. 7) explain, "the system that is showing such benevolence in ‘fixing them up’…is exactly the same system that expelled or exiled them in the first place. To put it bluntly, the contradiction is simply mind-boggling!"

Schools located in low socio-economic/low socio-cultural areas are almost always depicted from preordained deficit perspectives that are entwined with negative scrutiny of young people based on gender, race, family background, cultural heritage and

sexuality (Shor & Parri, 1999; Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Non-dominant young people begin their schooling with J. K. Rowling's metaphorical Sorting Hat where they find themselves summarily stitched up and dumped into the *deviant deficit* house of *at-risk*.

3.3 Narrative identity

It is in adolescence that young people begin to develop their narrative identity, that is, a sense of "who they are and who they will become in the adult world" (Pals, J. 2006, p. 103). The development of an individual's narrative identity is socially mediated and does not occur in isolation. Social systems are representative of the individual's social capital and include parents, families, carers, peers, teachers/schools, media, sporting/community groups and others that who, although not necessarily directly involved in the individuals social circle, nevertheless, directly impact upon it. Hammack, (2008, p. 224) contends that "the process of identity development represents the link between self and society". Young people story themselves according to their acceptance or rejection of the meta-narratives (or a culturally stratified discourse) that pervades their lives in the environments in which they exist. When this environment is regulated by a surreptitious covert curriculum that depicts non-dominant groups from deviant deficit perspectives of gender, race, sexuality, learning disability, behavioural challenge, age - the mere act of being a teenager itself - and more significantly class, young people can define self from deviant perspectives. As McAdam (cited in Bradbury & Miller, 2010, p. 689) explains, "It is painfully clear that life stories echo gender and class constructions in society and reflect, in one way or another, prevailing patterns of hegemony in the economic, political, and cultural contexts wherein human lives are situated" (Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Atkins, 2004; Bauer, McAdams & Pals, 2008; Randall, 2007; McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

Personal narratives take form and become coherent in particular cultural contexts and are given meaning by the individuals' internalised interpretation of dominant discourses (Bauer, et al., 2008; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Hamack, 2008). Neoliberal ideology impacts identity because it provides a persuasive world view. The hegemonic dominant discourses in schools provide adolescents with emotive second and third-person perspectives that serve to connect them with the dominant ideology. As Hammack (2008, p. 233) contends, the dominant discourses:

> become the stories of an individual as he or she constructs his or her own personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience (themselves dependent on his or her

> particular social identity and its status in a larger social order) with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity.

Narrative identity is influenced by issues such as gender, health, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, aptitude and socioeconomic status (Horsley, 2007; McIlveen & Patton, 2007). It develops in the midst of social relations and it is constructed in lived places that are shaped just as much by the gaps and silences of dominant discourse as by overt ideology (Fraser, 2004). Dominant discourse can stifle constructive narrative identity, particularly when the individual is from a non-dominant cultural background. When deviant deficit victim-blaming labels are assigned to individuals they are stereotyped and may edit their narrative stories to display stereotypical behaviours that are reflective of hegemonic deficit perspectives of self (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Horley, 2011; Pals, 2006; Windfield, 2008). Conversely, if individuals turn towards the future temporal plane it allows for the emergence of new possibilities (King & Hicks, 2006; Randall, 2007). When we reflect on lived-experience we may become self-realised and consciously choose to make change and alter life stories. We value ourselves, learn from our successes and failures and it becomes possible to restory and transform our future (Achara, 2010; Hones, 1998; McNay, 1999; Orr & Olson, 2007; Pryor & Bright 2008). The impact of the intertwining of dominant discourses and life experiences on narrative identity is perhaps best articulated by Freire (1992, p. 23) when he states:

> No one leaves his or her life without having been transfixed by its roots, or with a vacuum for a soul. We carry with us the memory of many fabrics, a self soaked in our history, our culture; a memory, sometimes scattered, sometimes sharp and clear, of the streets of our childhood, of our adolescence; the reminiscence of something distant that suddenly stands out before us, in us, a shy gesture, and open hand, a smile lost in a time of misunderstanding, a sentence, a simple sentence possibly now forgotten by the one who said it.

Van Galen (2010, p. 258) asserts that when students lived-experiences are critically examined a "salient opportunity for generating rich conversations about schooling, constraint, and mobility" evolves. When young people from non-dominant backgrounds story their lives there is potential for contamination or transformation. Contamination leads to depression, low life satisfaction and a sense of helplessness. Transformation - even when it manifests as resistance or aggression - leads to efficacy, agency, status, independence and personal mastery. If the lived experience of young people in schools is to become transformative then their stories need to be laid bare. Without laying bare the stories of non-dominant young peoples and interpreting them through a critical lens

to challenge the dominant meta-narratives/discourses that engulf their lives we are complicit in their silencing and the status quo remains. As critical ethnographers we can attempt to redress the imbalance by giving young people a voice. Only then does it become possible to "expose and disrupt the ways in which power operates to discipline and silence individuals" (Robinson. 2011. pp. 68-69) to contaminate their narrative self identity (Bauer, et al. 2008; Yosso, 2005).

3.4 Cultural capital theory

Cultural capital is a theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, that attempts to show how society reproduces itself (Barone, 2006; Yosso 2005). Schools significantly contribute to this reproduction by inculcating the populace through pedagogic action. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. viii) argue that pedagogic action is symbolically violent as it "define[s] dominant classes and groups in a particular society" and serves to reinforce the economic stratification of the dominant middle-class. Bourdieu claimed that capital was more than mere economics (Moore, 2004; Reay, 2004) and that other categories of capital, including social and cultural capital, contribute to the inculcation of academic culture from hegemonic middle-class perspectives. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977, p. 8) contend that the meanings that "defines a class's culture ... owes its existence to the social conditions of which it is the product and its intelligibility to the coherence and functions of the structure of the signifying relations which constitute it." This contention is imbued within the notion of social capital, that is, the system of social connections that act in conjunction with cultural capital to perpetuate privilege and economic stratification (Khalifa, 2010; Bullen & Kenway, 2005; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). There are three variants of cultural capital. *Embodied* cultural capital is accumulated through the existing cultural capital of parents, other family members and care givers. They are the traditions and cultural norms incorporated in mind and body. *Objectified* cultural capital is encapsulated within cultural goods such as books, artefacts, dictionaries, paintings, software etc. *Institutionalised* cultural capital are the tastes, norms and values mediated through spatial environments such as schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Apple, 2004; Barone, 2006; Bullen & Kenway, 2005; Silva, 2005; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Habitus and *field* are integral components of cultural capital theory. *Habitus* is one's perspective on and position in the world. It is a build up of structured tastes, norms, dispositions and values that are bound by *field*. *Habitus* gives the appearance of being natural but it is actually a schema that embodies class and is embedded in *field*. Bourdieu (cited in Barone, 2006, p. 1040) developed the notion of *habitus* "to show that social practices follow a common logic in different fields." *Field* is the physical space in

which tastes, norms and dispositions are perpetuated, identified as cultural competence, privileged and given objectified worth. Cultural capital depends on notions of *field* and Winkle-Wagner (2010, p. 7) describes it as "the space in which cultural competence, or knowledge of particular tastes, dispositions or norms, is born, produced and given a price". *Field* is characterised by conflict and competition.

The following framework exemplifies the interrelationships between cultural capital concepts in schools.

1. *Field* acts as catalyst to *Habitus*
2. *Field* plus *Habitus* forms *Cultural Capital*
3. *Cultural Capital* leads to and interrelates with existing and developing social capital- power accumulated through relationships with others, e.g. family, friends, teachers, peers etc. (Klein, 2006; Winkle-Wagner, 2010)

Klein (2006, p. 59) states that "cultural capital accrues to those who comply with the dominant values of the social order and is withheld from those who oppose or resist". Class privilege is inter-generationally transferred through the "stockpiling of resources in privileged portions of the populations" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, pp. 189-190). If schools are *fields* then the *habitus* that is inculcated within them is where adolescent narrative identity is born. Young people from the middle-classes have greater economic access to objectified and institutionalised cultural capital and the invisible nature of dominant pedagogy is insidious as it disempowers the working-classes and contributes to cultural reproduction "by enabling the possessors of the prerequisite cultural capital to continue to monopolize that capital" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 47). Duncan-Andrade (2009, pp. 189-190) describes the effect of monopolised cultural capital as "heaping unnatural causes of socially toxic environments onto others, create[ing] undeserved suffering while simultaneously delegitimizing it" (Apple, 2004; Reay, 2004; Winkle-Wagner, 2010; Foucault, 1980).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. 192) contend that "the disposition which middle-class students ... manifest towards education - e.g. cultural willingness or esteem for hard work - cannot be understood unless the system of scholastic values is brought into relation with the middle-class ethos". Schools are *fields* that distribute *cultural capital.* They are the embodiment of a distinctive *habitus* that validates the social structures of the dominant middle-class as they legitimate privileged knowledge. Middle-class ideological perspectives of history, democracy and economy are foregrounded within schools. The ability to maintain the economically stratified status quo is dependent on

the strength of normative middle-class structures. Schools utilise traditional institutional conditions - such as subservient behavioural expectations, an authoritarian management hierarchy and rigid timetables - to implicitly value the dominant culture and inculcate the *habitus* of non-dominant students. In effect, schools decide who escapes poverty in a system that is "marked by high concentrations of wealth and privilege in some districts and abject poverty, welfare dependency and educational disadvantage in others" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 21).

Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 31) contend that the “practice of middle class-ness increasingly appears as a cultural project and discursive construction that lacks a viable economic foundation”. There are increasing numbers of well qualified workers who are unable to obtain access to high skilled knowledge economy employment and have instead become “low-waged, low-skilled work of a nonindustrial kind” (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 30). Regardless of the physical shrinking of any elite middle-class neo-liberal rationalist middle-class ‘market economy’ discourse is rife and is remains the dominant ideology (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

One way to challenge the stereotypy that is inculcated through privileging dominant ideology - is by expanding the notions of field, habitus, cultural capital and social capital from perspectives that privilege non-dominant groups. This makes possible the nurturing of "aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant cultural capital" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69) in non-dominant groups (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977; Canestrari & Marlowe. 2004; Moore, 2004; Valencia, 2010; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Duncan-Andrade & Morell (2008, p. 23) recommend that schools be "analysed as a cultural and historical process in which students are positioned within asymmetrical relations of power". Foucault (1980, pp. 73-74) argued that individuals are the product of power relations exercised over bodies. Schools are symbolic institutions that align with and sustain neoliberal capitalist ideology by "instilling individualistic, consumerist, capitalist common sense" (Hill, 2008, p. 41). Privileged explicit and implicit middle-class ideology is presented as neutral 'knowledge' within schools and is accepted as both natural and a given. This 'knowledge', in turn, silences the ideology and knowledge held within non-dominant class groups. Apple (2004, p.1) labels this knowledge as both an "overt and covert" curriculum. The covert curriculum is often referred to in the more gentle terms of a "hidden curriculum" (Freire, 1992, p. 67); however, I have elected to use the word *covert* due to its militaristic connotations. Like Kress, DeGennaro, and

Paugh (2013, p. 7), I believe that "what is happening in public schools ... especially in institutions populated by minoritized students, also constitutes a battle, the outcome of which may have dire consequences." The overt and covert curriculum within schools tacitly teach norms, values and dispositions through 'content' exposure to the meta-narrative of middle-class ideology/perspectives. Exposure to normative middle-class ideology does not improve educational outcomes for young people from non-dominant backgrounds.

3.5 Hegemony

The neo-marxist critical education theorist Michael Apple (2004) identifies schools as constructs that have been influenced by neoliberal agendas to become gateways between family and the employment market. He argues that the curriculum implemented within schools is linked to neoliberal capitalist ideals and is becoming increasingly technocratic so that students "learn to function in an increasingly corporate and bureaucratized society" (p. 111). In reality, most schools are inherently political and a primary function of curriculum design is to influence students into accepting the existing social and economic stratification within society. At their core, the overt and covert curriculums in schools serve to link cultural and economic reproduction.

In schools middle-class ideology and cultural and social norms are tacitly conveyed through neutral language and the saturating of students consciousness through school routines such as authoritarian hierarchical structures, rigid timetables, classroom design, school rules, the lauding of behavioural norms, didactic teacher talk (Shor, 1992) and the promotion of education serving to prepare students for different life functions, primarily centred on the production of workers for the capitalist labour market (Apple, 2004; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Khalifa, 2010; Lund & Carr, 2008; Shor & Pari, 1999; Smyth, et al., 2010). These practices are known as the *covert curriculum* (Apple, 2004) and they can be defined as the hegemonic and socially normative practices of formal education. As Apple (pp. 56-57) contends:

> society reproduces itself…perpetuates its conditions of existence through the selection and transmission of certain kinds of cultural capital on which a complex yet unequal industrial society depends…it maintains cohesion among its classes and individuals by propagating ideologies that ultimately sanction the existing institutional arrangements which may cause the unnecessary stratification and inequality in the first place.

Didactic teacher talk (Shor, 1992) is a particularly insidious element of the hegemonic curriculum as it restricts students' responses and questions as educators limit dialogical discussion by asking closed questions, answer their own questions, berate and request improved performance, correct student speech, lecture uncritically from official syllabus or textbooks and have different class expectations. Students are silenced as education becomes "an authoritarian transfer of official words, a process that severely limits student development as democratic citizens" (Shor, 1992, p. 18). In addition to exposure to the hegemonic curriculum within schools students are exposed to hegemonic cultural practices that reify dominant middle-class ideology, and are propagated by popular culture mediums such as the media, music, movies etc. (Ducan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Giroux, 2008).

In 2010 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011, p. 31) identified that 26.9% of Australian students were not being retained in secondary schools and are dropping out prior to year 12 completion. Overall, almost a third of Australian adults have not completed secondary school. This is higher than the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) average where Australia lags behind other Western countries such as the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom, (OECD. 2011, Fig. 1.4).The neoliberal pedagogical strategies that manifest through the overt and covert curriculum within schools "have failed spectacularly in their efforts to lift education standards, improve school retention and participation rates, ameliorate educational disadvantage, and improve the quality of teaching in schools" (Smyth, et al., 2009, pp.128-129)

3.6 The destructive effect of neoliberalism on relational space

A relational epistemology recognises that knowledge is socially constructed and occurs in temporal physical spaces where people are in relationships with one another. People gain or extend knowledge through their interactions with one another and the physical material spaces that surround them. Educators hold great power over students as they are "dispensers of knowledge and evaluators and judges of what students have learned" (Thayer-Bacon, 2004, p. 167). If students are to develop a sense of learner identity, academic resilience and to acquire the knowledge that they require to achieve desirable academic outcomes educators must foster effective relational spaces (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004). Neoliberal ideals damage, detract and corrode the relational space in the following ways.

3.6.1 Mythological meritocracy

The interactions between educator and non-dominant youth has implications for academic success and eudemonic wellbeing. When the relational space is contaminated by the neoliberal concept of individual unilateral power - that is notions of meritocratic individuality - knowledge and knowing are devoid of systemic accountability. Hierarchical notions of *right* are normalised from middle-class ideological perspectives and this thwarts the development of relational practice which engenders efficacy/agency and is responsive to non-dominant cohorts. "It is important to emphasise that it is not a matter of shifting blame from student to teacher; it is about going beyond an individual blame type of focus to a systemic one" (Downes, 2013, p. 354; Patton, Hong, Williams & Allen-Meares, 2013; McAlister & Catone, 2013) Neoliberal school management policies that focus on accountability, standardization and control are detrimental to the relational spaces in schools. When educational policies reflect macroeconomic analogies of consumers who receive educational services notions of relationship, responsibility and acceptance are negated to mere economic currency and notions of transformation are stifled (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004).

3.6.2 Deviant deficit victim-blaming labels

Deviant deficit victim-blaming labels devastate school climate as temporal relational spaces are infiltrated, constructed and defined through deficit paradigms. Deficit categories lead to hegemonic notions of student ability that steer relationships along stereotypical lines. Relational spaces within schools are tainted when non-dominant others are perceived from deviant deficit categories. Despite an overwhelming multitude of deviant, deficit, victim-blaming labels ultimately "the division of the students falls between socioeconomic classes" (Romana, 2004, p. 157). One significant consequence of deficit labelling is the construction of self along stereotypical lines of the prescribed deficit. When non-dominant youth construct self along deficit lines the relational space is prone to contamination and socially destructive behaviours. Contaminated relational spaces are sites of conflict as non-dominant youth attempt to gain respect and self-esteem by challenging institutional power through non-participation, disengagement and physical practices such as bullying (Smyth, et al., 2010; Hemming, 2013; Patton, et al., 2013; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004)

3.6.3 Hegemonic overt and covert curriculum

All knowledge is contextually formed through "selves-in-relation-with-others" (Thayer-Bacon, 2004, p. 172) and the social relationships that are formed within schools are framed by institutional influences. Dominant groups maintain the status quo via the overt and covert curriculum and this process ascribes worth or the value of difference.

Students do not develop a sense of self prior to being exposed to culture within classrooms. They are exposed to dominant institutional discourse that manifests as 'culture' within classrooms and do not have an acquired self-identity from which to critique it, thus knowledge is a form of indoctrination. The temporal spaces of the milieu are not under student control but mediated through educators who inevitably act out their own socially stratified middle-class roles. Margonis (2004) contends that relationships within schools become tension filled as middle-class educators and working-class students enact wider societal conflict through the relational act of schooling. Class tensions are not relationally overcome through teacher-centred instruction as working class students are expected to complete their work as quiet, obedient individuals and are not encouraged to challenge or intellectually engage with learning (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Tucker, Smith-Adcock & Trepal, 2011).

The mediated relationships in the temporal spaces and places of schools are punctuated with educator authority. Students become acculturated unconsciously and automatically by educators and are schooled into not even recognizing the differences amongst themselves (Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Schools are public spaces and when educator authority seeks to maintain the middle-class status quo and instil conformity possibilities for transformation, empowerment and the development of agency are quelled (Mayo, 2004). Downe (2013, p. 257) contends that student voice is needed to elicit students' "views so as to ensure authentic representations and constructions" of student identity.

Hegemonic curriculum negates the innate cultural and social capital of non-dominant youth and the relational space is eroded as students feel disempowered and alienated within the temporal spaces of their lived-experiences. The authoritarian hegemonic nature of the covert curriculum creates a relational fracture between educator and student and this directly correlates to corrosion in the "malleable dimension of school climate" (Downes. 2013, p. 351). When the physical and relational spaces of schools are characterised by authoritarian teaching; hegemonic neoliberal bureaucratic process -that facilitate the categorising of youth from deviant deficit perspectives - e.g. suspension expulsion and exclusion; and hierarchical power structures there is a palpable connection to early school leaving and a failure to meet learning outcomes (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; & Downes, 2013).

Pijanowski (2004, p. 104) contends that the "relational space between teacher and student, student and student, student and curricula, and student and community commands attention". The overt curriculum that splits knowledge into specified subject

areas facilitates the process whereby educators wield great power as 'all knowing' dispensers of expert knowledge. When the relational space is characterized by omnipotent educators who set limitations and frame knowledge from perspectives of what is considered 'right,' creativity, investigation, experimentation and true learning are stifled. Students become subordinate to *right* knowledge and are encouraged to evaluate their academic success from one dimensional perspectives (Stengel, 2004). *Right* knowledge may elicit *right* answers but students divorce learning from pleasure and develop an instinctual understanding that *right* knowledge is limited - as are their educators - and has no real relevance for their lives. The temporal relational spaces within schools are damaged by *right* knowledge and by default so is the narrative construction of self because we are selves-in-relation to others (Bingham & Sidorkin. 2004).

In this chapter I have examined the way in which the theoretical constructs of deficit prisms, narrative identity, cultural capital theory, hegemony and the relational space interconnect with neoliberal agendas that promulgate schools. In the next chapter I outline the ways in which neoliberal agendas manifest as policy frameworks. Further, I outline the ways in which these policies directly impact on the lived-experiences of the research participants.

Chapter 4 - Neoliberal policy frameworks (document analysis of the field texts)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the ways in which neoliberal agendas manifest as policy frameworks within schools. The field texts are scrutinised to identify the ways in which curriculum and policy is - perpetuating social class hierarchies; reinforcing middle-class cultural capital, propagating capitalist values through technocracy; turning schools into businesses, promoting the myth of meritocracy and perpetuating deficit thinking. Policy documents are interpreted and implement within school settings before they are experienced by young people and I identify ways in which the policy frameworks have silence social justice and directly impact on the lived-experiences of the research participants.

Neoliberalism and the promulgation of capitalist ideals are synonymous and the document analysis of the field texts revealed that neoliberal tentacles are rampant within schools. Neo-conservative educators have adopted pedagogic positions that privilege middle-class discourses and a hegemonic teacher-dominated overt and covert curriculum. Administrators within schools have adopted an agenda of 'managerialism' and do not foreground the role that educators play in building socially just pedagogical networks that build capacity in youth. The introduction of NAPLAN (National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy) and the Australian Curriculum have further entrenched neoliberal mechanisms of knowledge control. By necessity, attention to innovative pedagogy, authentic assessment and an engaging relevant curriculum dramatically dissipates as the focus turns to catchphrases such as "strengthening accountability and transparency ... Assessment of student progress [that] is rigorous and comprehensive ... [and] student achievement [being] ... measured in meaningful ways" (Barr, et al., 2008, pp. 10-14). Smyth, et al., (2010, p. 198) have identified "a need to break free from the debilitating and fatalistic effects of neoliberal discourses".

The document analysis of the field texts is derived from the natural contexts of the research participants and the subsequent illumination of neoliberal practices and policies provide thick, rich descriptions that privilege the perspectives of those who are colonised rather than those of the colonisers. The field texts were chosen because of their capacity "get close-up to sites of exploitation and oppression" (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995, p. 30; Hayes, 2009; & Robinson, 2011). Neoliberal policy frameworks incorporate a complex conglomerate of factors that intermingle to provoke oppressive lived-experiences for non-dominant young people. When the stories of non-dominant young people are analysed using a CTF that exposes the neoliberal frameworks that lead to increased

class divisions and poverty for non-dominant youth (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) - they become manifestations of "theory" being lived out (Fraser, 2004).

The field texts that were analysed are summarised below:

Australian Federal Texts:
The Melbourne Declaration - a watershed memorandum of understanding/policy document between State and Federal Education Ministers. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was subsequently initiated from the *Melbourne Declaration* and a mandated Australian Curriculum is currently being both designed and implemented.

Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum - Technologies - This document was co-developed by ACARA and technologies teachers to guide the development and substance of the content of an Australian technologies curriculum.

West Australian Department of Education Policy Documents:
Students at Educational Risk - this policy outlines the background and procedures that state public schools must implement for students who are considered *'at-risk'.* Perhaps tellingly, this document has not been updated in 12 years and is shorter in length than the other policy documents.

Student Attendance - this document focuses on the management, documentation and recording of information relating to students who are not attending school along mandated lines.

Dress Requirements for Students- literally outlines the dress requirements for students within the WA public schooling system, outlining exemptions and recourse for non compliance.

Behaviour Management in Schools - this extensive policy document defines problematic behaviours, dictates behaviour management responses (including suspensions, detentions and the use of physical restraint) and outlines both planning and recording requirements.

Curriculum Assessment and Reporting - a policy document that delineates the monitoring and reporting requirements for student achievement and notes the requirements for state schools to provide a balanced curriculum.

Exclusions - This was the lengthiest policy and it focuses on the relevant legislation and procedures that schools must undertake when they wish to permanently exclude a student from school.

Other:
School Matters- is an A3 sized glossy magazine with full colour photos and advertisements. It is a WA Department of Education initiative and is forwarded to WA educators on a bi-monthly basis. In essence it is a magazine that 'sells' education to educators.

4.2 Perpetuating social class hierarchies

Access to the dominant cultural capital is "considered the main determinant of school success" (Barone, 2006, p. 1040) and the document analysis reflected the notion that school *fields* celebrate and validate hegemonic middle-class cultural ways of knowing. The *habitus* of relational, community and institutional *fields* differs and within schools young people have their intrinsic cultural capital validated or withheld (Bourdieu & Passerson,1977; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). It is impossible to extricate middle-class values from the promulgation of economic capitalist ideals and within schools economic privileging becomes the norm as they purport to be social justice vehicles that are "striving for equity and excellence...[to] position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives" (Barr, et al., 2008, pp. 5-7). The document analysis illuminated that neoliberal policies within WA schools privilege and validate the *tastes* - unconscious or conscious signs/symbols - of those youth who have access to embodied and objectified middle-class cultural capital (Yosso, 2005).

The *Melbourne Declaration* (2008, p. 9) reveals middle class *tastes* and desired cultural capital as aspirational virtues where young people are "Confident and creative individuals...[who] develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others...[and] are committed to the national values of democracy, equity and justice". Within WA schools there is a "complex nexus linking cultural and economic reproduction" (Apple, 2004, p. 28) as the policy documents co-locate and enmesh values and economics whilst privileging virtuous *tastes*. Students are "required to be suitably groomed... [to] learn to engage with employers in the

community" (2007, p. 3); they must also be punctual and consistently attend and participate in schooling (2011b, pp. 45) and "accept responsibility for their own behaviour"'(2013a). The *School Matters* field text can be considered a barometer of educator beliefs. The text privileges expectations and personal attributes that are valued within employment contexts, for example, students "demonstrate to their peers that, with motivation and hard work, they can improve their opportunities for future employment' (2011a, p. 29)

Schools represent themselves as institutions that purposefully develop personal attributes and qualities that contribute to the development of good democratic citizens but in reality "social and economic purposes of education have been collapsed into a single emphasis on policy making for economic competitiveness" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 134). Success is equated with middle-class notions such as "training and employment [and]...generic employability skills" (Barr, et al., 2008, pp. 9-13) and worth is dictated from perspectives of a conformist middle-class capitalist hegemony that manifests as an ability to access tertiary or education or further training (Smyth, et al., 2009) "to engage with society and a knowledge-based economy" (ACARA, 2012, p. 4). Education has become a commodity for the middle-class and non-dominant youth are denied equity of access.

4.3 Reinforcing middle-class cultural capital

Schools are *fields* that use pedagogic authority to arbitrarily inculcate in order to fulfil the "social function of legitimating the dominant culture" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pp. 123 - 124). Pedagogic authority resides in educator practice - where *(habitus) (*validated *capital)* + ES *field* = *practice* (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 114). Within WA hegemonic educator practice perpetuates privilege by validating the values, norms and histories of the middle-class (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Consequently, students and families from dominant backgrounds are better able to "collaborate ... amongst families, communities, schools, and other professional staff" (Dept Ed., 2001, p. 3) to negotiate mutual agreements at "formal meetings" (Dept Ed. 2011b, p. 6) and display an "inward conviction of what is morally right and wrong" (Dept Ed. 2007, p. 6).

The knowledge that is distilled within WA schools is value-laden, imparted by teachers and revealed through the covert curriculum. As explained in chapter 3, educators are afforded an appearance of neutrality and the covert curriculum manifests as the behavioural expectations/rules, rigid routines, dress requirements, and a reified morality that tacitly reinforces middle-class ideology. The covert-curriculum is reflected

in the WA policy documents as they explicitly outline the procedures to be undertaken when students do not meet middle-class behavioural norms. Parents must provide "an acceptable explanation for any absence" (2011b, p. 3) and face prosecution if they do not comply with school expectations (p. 7). When students do not meet dress standards it can lead to them being unable to represent their schools or have "any other sanction that is part of the school's behaviour management policy" (2007. p. 7). The Behavioural Management in Schools (BMIS, 2013, p. 4) policy explicitly states that schools are expected to "promote pro-social behaviours... and self discipline" and can apply sanctions such as detention, withdrawal, suspension, protective isolation and physical restraint when students do not comply (pp. 8-10).

Curriculum is mandated in schools and the document analysis of the federal field texts revealed an overt curriculum that privileges middle-class capitalist ideology. The *Melbourne Declaration* claims that "Globalisation...[is] placing greater demand on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever" (p. 4) and the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum - Technologies* (2012, p. 17) gives high status to capitalist technical knowledge and class for students to develop productivity skills such as the ability to create software manuals, design briefs...3D models, notated engineering drawings, software instructions/coding, project outlines, briefs, project management proposals, evaluations, prepare detailed specifications for production etc. The embodied cultural capital of educators is illustrated within the *School Matters* (2011a, p. 29) text that explicitly and proactively highlights educators who help students to develop "physical and technical skills...[that] improve their opportunities for employment". Apple (2004, pp.77-78) contends that the privileging of middle-class 'society based on technical cultural capital and individual accumulation of economic capital needs to seem as if it were the only possible world' and when schools overtly and covertly stratify and distribute knowledge non-dominant youth are injured. Access to capital is preordained and 'inequity is assumed to be normal and acceptable' (Agnell & Lucy, 2008, p. 260).

4.4 Perpetuating capitalism in schools - technocracy

Foucault (1980, p. 99) contends that non-dominant youth are "colonised, utilised, involuted...[and] displaced...by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global control". Within WA the rhetoric of schools teaches young people that success is defined by economic capacity and not social contribution and lived-experience is polarising. Educator *practice* exposes non-dominant youth to the "technicization of life in industrial economies" (Apple, p. 2004, p. 7) and contributes to the trivialisation of

non-dominant social capital (including community) by eroding social justice initiatives that aim to build efficacy and capacity in non-dominant populations (Hammack, 2008). White (1995, p. 17) contends that technocracy has "significanty contributed to a transcultural 'monolithic self'" that eliminates diversity, homogenises and disempowers *colonised otherised* youth. Apple (2004, p. 105) argues that technocratic ideology legitimates the "existing distribution of power and privilege in our society." Within schools young people from the middle-classes are automatically exposed to pedagogic action that affords them opportunities to develop "complex computational thinking...to work creatively an purposefully" (ACARA, 2012, p. 9) and are positioned on "pathway[s] towards continued success...to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives" (Barr, et al., 2008, p. 9; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Conversely, the pedagogic action that non-dominant youth are exposed to is the teaching of "some basic, general skills" (Hill, 2008, p. 36) and the dumbed down curriculum that is found in low level "vocational pathways" (ACARA, 2012, p. 36; Hoist, 2003; Smyth, et al., 2010).

The document analysis of field texts uncovered the privileged position that technocracy holds in schools. For instance, the *Melbourne Declaration* (Bar, et al. 2008, pp. 4-5) notes that "Globalisation and technological change [is associated with]... Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies are changing the ways people, share, use, develop and process information and technology" and that schools must prepare students for technological advancement. The *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum - Technologies* (ACARA, 2012, p. 4) is predominantly procedural and outlines the technocratic skills that "fosters students' capacity to be discriminating and informed users, producers and innovators of technologies". The skills that students will need to function in the technocracy of the knowledge economy incorporate - but are not limited to - "systemically create[ing] information processing solutions for specified audiences, end users, clients/consumers e.g. artificial intelligence, communication databases, digital media, robotics, transactions and websites...[learning to make use of] Gant charts, simulations, physical and virtual prototypes, 3-D models etc." (pp. 5-10)

In WA schools teaching and learning *practice* are depicted as functional technical skill sets. Theoharis (cited in Valencia, 2010, p. 210) identifies that "90% of educational leaders...[and] administrators...reaffirm the value of technical leadership over that of courageous leadership." The privileging of global capitalism and technocracy in *School Matters* (2011a) is indicative of its naturalised state within schools. Educators develop

innovative technologies for overseas consumption (p. 21); *otherised* students (labelled as learning disabled and housed in specialist support programs) are now gaining "technical skills" (pp. 28-29); "Technology has been a huge change in education" (p. 36); and technological tools such as websites and "virtual tours" are "contributing to building success" (p. 36). The predilection for technical leadership disempowers non-dominant youth as technocratic managerial policies are enacted through their lived experience (Apple, 2004; Smyth, et al., 2009). When educators become enmeshed in technocratic managerial processes - such as the *BMIS* (2013a) and *Exclusions Policy* (2013b) deviant deficit victim-blaming labels are applied and non-dominant youth are exposed to alienating processes that disempower their *otherised* social capital (Robinson, 2011; Thompson, 2011).

4.5 Turning schools into businesses

The privileging of technocracy within WA schools has led to the implementation of bureaucratic managerial processes where the administrations have become managers (e.g. principals) who are "firmly entrenched in the logic of technocratic rationality" (Giroux, 1983, p. 3). Managerial administrators are required to follow neoliberal agendas that call for "strengthened accountability processes [including] using performance data...as the key elements of planning" (Dept Ed., 2001, pp. 3-4); "monitoring the attendance of all students...[and] participating in the Attendance Audit" (Dept. Ed, 2011b, pp. 3-8); "using student performance information to plan future learning programs" (Dept. Ed., 2010, p. 3); and having educators who "demonstrate accountability" (Dept Ed., 2013a, p. 4). Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 152) contend that dominant capitalist paradigms that focus on schools "as a managed organization... [place] an inordinate emphasis on leadership and management rather than on curriculum and pedagogy". The document analysis of WA field texts supports this analogy as the *Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting* policy document (2010) only discussed curriculum from the context of time and did not discuss pedagogy whatsoever, rather, the focus was on the neoliberal accountability processes of monitoring, evaluating and reporting on student achievement (pp. 6-8).

In WA schools neoliberal policy frameworks have promote a business ethos, where corporate managerial practices rein and students and their parents are seen as consumers of education. Public schools have become pseudo corporations and pedagogic relationships are valued as commodities (Smyth, et al., 2010). Although public schools are not literal members of market economies education systems have become quasi marketised sites. Corporate sponsorship is actively encouraged -

"Teachers Credit Union is proud to sponsor My Classroom and to support the creative and innovative teachers" (2011a, p. 25) and the "program launched...with a $16,000 grant" (p. 28). Schools develop corporate logos, mission statements and covet the media by providing stories and photo opportunities to "develop good relationships with local media" (p. 37). The Education Department actively encourages schools to spruik their wares - "More tips and ideas on marketing your school are online at *Communications and marketing: a guide for staff"* and schools produce "virtual tours...video clips...regular newsletters...and informative school brochures" (pp. 36-37) in an attempt to develop a school "brand" (p. 36). The corporate marketisation of WA schools exacerbates classist, racialised school hierarchies. As Smyth, et al. (2010, p. 72) contend they become "no-go zones except for those to poor to buy their way out or who lack the resources with which to shuttle their children to more affluent schools" (Smyth, et al., 2009; Reay, 2004; Gatto, 2010; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

4.6 Promoting the myth of meritocracy

Neoliberal policy frameworks in schools celebrates and venerates the individual as having the embodied ability to achieve at the highest level regardless of socio-economic/socio-cultural disadvantage (Apple, 2004; Reay, 2004; Shor, 1992). Venerated individualism is elucidated in the federal field texts with the *Melbourne Declaration* (2008, p. 8) stating that it is the students responsibility to "play an active role in their learning...[and to] be motivated to reach their full potential". The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum - Technologies* (2012, pp. 6-9) text highlights individual students as "responsible and accountable for their designs and solutions...[and] individual progress...[by] consolidating skills". WA policy promotes neoliberal individualism and refer to "Individual Education Plans" (2010, p. 3) where student achievement is individually monitored (p. 3); individual students are "supported whilst being taught how to accept responsibility for their own behaviour" (2013a, p. 4) and individual behaviour management plans are documented (p. 7). *School Matters* (2011a) extols the virtues of the individual - "I am still inspired by individual stories of struggle and triumph" (p. 30) and "with motivation and hard work they can improve their opportunities" (p. 29).

Hegemonic neoliberal notions of the individual being responsible for success (and thus conversely failure) are self-serving. They allow schools to divest notions of systemic failure to apportion blame to the individual who is scrutinized from contexts of personal responsibility. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p. 213) note that individuation is a "totalizing form of power" and the neoliberal "sink-or-swim individualism" (Shor, 1992,

p. 61) that manifests in WA schools serves to disempower non-dominant youth. Innate, embodied cultural capital is invalidated by "contemporary policy trajectories" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 24) that objectify students from deviant deficit perspectives (Giroux, 1983; Apple, 2004, Smyth, et al., 2009). The WA *Students at Educational Risk* (SAER, 2001) and *Exclusions* policies (2013b) effectively illustrate the ways in which non-dominant youth are alienated and injured by rampant individuation. Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 57) contend that "there is a long history of seeking to place the blame for academic-underachievement outside the school" and within *SAER* this lies with individual students. The document highlights individual student flaws and they must become "responsible for...behaving in a manner that is acceptable to the school" (2001, p. 4). Success is linked to a hegemonic middle-class disposition that relies on students conforming to behavioural norms and reaching their "individual potential" (p. 3). Students caught up in the lived-experience of the *Exclusions* policy (2013b) are identified as unwelcome individuals who are alienated from the schools they are enrolled in. An "exclusion order is the most extreme sanction that can be applied to a student...and should be reserved for the most serious of...offending behaviour[s]" (pp. 4-7). The individual students are depicted as having failed to take advantage of the support provided to them as the school "attempts to modify student's behaviour" (p. 7) and The *Exclusions* policy (2013b) clearly connects expulsion with the individual. If individuals are excluded it is because of t*heir* actions, *their* dispositions and fundamentally, *their* willingness to be colonized into hegemonic middle-class behavioural norms. There is no onus on WA schools to explore alternative reasons for negative student behaviours and as such, they are not required to address issues of equity, curriculum effectiveness, confrontational educators or a non-engaging curriculum.

Within WA schools neoliberal discourses privilege the notion that school success is not class based but dependent on whether the students work hard, put in an effort and display sheer tenacity. When a small number of non-dominant youth "ensure that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of education outcomes" (Barr, et a., 2008, p. 7) they are held up as evidence that "schools are the great equalizers, the place where the poorest can excel" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 136). Winkle-Wagner (2010) contends that mythical notions of meritocracy point to domination and pedagogic action within the milieu socialises non-dominant youth to accept mythical hope. As Duncan-Andrade (p. 184) argues:

> Mythical hope is a profoundly ahistorical and depoliticized denial of suffering that is rooted in celebrating individual exceptions. These individuals are used to construct a myth of meritocracy the simultaneously fetishizes them as objects of the myth. Ultimately, mythical hope depends on luck and the law of averages to produce individual exceptions to the tyranny of injustice, and thus it denies the legitimacy of the suffering of the oppressed.

Neoliberal notions of meritocratic competitiveness providing access to preferred futures - including access to capital - leads to non-dominant youth inhabiting cut-throated spaces within schools. Social competition legitimates the meritocratic myth and students are pitted against one another to compete for the highest grade, competitive scholarships and places in specialist spaces (Tienken, 2013). *School Matters* (2011a) is brimming with references to meritocratic competitiveness with both teachers and students lauded for their high ranking results in awards and competitions - including the winning of rewards ranging from satisfaction to the "$50,000 Prime Ministers Prize for excellence in Science Teaching" (p. 38).

4.7 Perpetuating deficit thinking

The document analysis of the field texts illuminated the multitude of ways that young people are depicted from deficit perspectives in WA schools. Meritocratic mythology proposes that all success resides within the individual but this is binary, those students who do not succeed are summarised, categorised, packaged and labelled from deficit perspectives and non-dominant youth are exponentially more likely to be labelled and viewed from deficit perspectives (Yosso, 2005; Apple, 2004; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). The privileging of deficit meta-narratives is a societal feature and on any given day sensationalist headlines stereotypically depict individuals and cultural groups from perspectives of deviance. Increasingly, class is being redefined from perspectives of cultural culpability and deficit meta-narratives serve to reify the dominant middle-class. Khalifa (2010, p. 621) contends that "people do not know how to validate capital other than their own" and this has a nefarious effect on dominant youth who are increasingly labelled from deviant deficit victim-blaming contexts. As Smyth, et al. (2009, p. 4) contend "the intimate relationship between academic success and social power in Australia" is disregarded.

Schools are messy, contested spaces wherein non-dominant youth are totalised and labelled from deviant deficit perspectives (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Giroux, 1983; Valencia, 2010). The *Melbourne Declaration* (2008, p. 5) identified non-dominant youth as being "over-represented among low achievers". Young people from middle-

class backgrounds are considered to be "supported by healthy safe and stimulating environments" (p. 11) whereas young Indigenous children's' families and cultural ties are found wanting and they may need to attend "culturally different learning environments" (p. 11) if they are to successfully transition to schooling. Non-dominant groups are considered to have low educational expectations and teachers are required "to encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations of their education" (p. 14). Students from "low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from remote areas, refugees, homeless young people, and students with disabilities [are considered to]...experience educational disadvantage" and are depicted as requiring targeted support "to achieve better educational outcomes" (p. 15).

Deficit labelling is binary with hegemonic middle-class notions of Thompson's (2011) 'Good Student' and the field texts depicted the *good student* from normative perspectives. These were students with "attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others" (Barr, et al., 2008, p. 5); they "act with moral and ethical integrity...[and] work for the common good" (pp. 8-9); wear uniform to promote a positive image of their schools (Dept Ed., 2007, p. 3); "actively participate in the ... school community" (Dept Ed., 2001, p. 4) and "achieve their individual potential" (p. 3). The dominant neoliberal binary to the *good student* is the *bad student* and Thompson (2011, p. 8) contends that these binaries are used as technology to govern the student and are deployed in ways that seek to make students complicit in their own governance". When non-dominant students do not rigidly adhere to hegemonic stereotypical ideals of the *good student* educators reify middle-class ideology by creating 'abnormalities ...[which they] then must treat and reform' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 198). As a consequence the cultural capital of non-dominant youth is *otherised* and constructed through deficiency lenses - such as an impoverished family background, welfare dependency, having inadequate life-skills or being aligned to deviance or criminality (Wellik & Kazemek, 2008; Johnson, 2005; Bullen & Kenway, 2005; Livingstone & Sawchuck, 2000; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013; Becker; Thompson, 2002).

The federal field texts *otherise* non-dominant youth into totalising, disempowering, debilitating labels based on "gender, cultural, language background and socio-economic factors" (ACARA, 2012, p. 6). They are identified as "at risk of disengaging from learning" (Barr, et al. p. 12) and within WA field texts are depicted as having "a rate of progress that differs noticeably from... that of his/her peers" (Dept Ed., 2001, p. 3)'; as having "social, cultural, lingual, economic, geographic or learning difficulties"

(Dept Ed., 2011b, p. 6). Stereotypical notions or race and cultural background are enough to predispose non-dominant youth to failure and ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students are identified as requiring individual learning plans "to address barriers to attendance, respond to identified educational needs and improve attendance" (Dept Ed., 2011b, p. 11) regardless of whether any *risk* has been identified.

Robinson, (2011, p. 65) identifies the *BMIS* as a "social phenomenon ... [that is] enmeshed in the power and processes of social change" and I posit that this notion be extended to encompass all of the analysed WA policy documents. Valencia (2010, p. 125) contends that schools categorise non-dominant youth with exogenous indicator inventories that assert they are *at-risk* of school failure and the analysis of the WA field text substantiates this notion. Lived-experience does not occur in a vacuum and the bureaucratic processes outlined in the policy documents foregrounds consensus, differentiates and distances non-dominant cultural groups as they are *otherised* in a process of *colonial* domination (Livingstone & Sawchuck, 2000; Klein, 2006; & Khalifa, 2010). Smyth, et al. (p. 2009, p. 4) contend that the process of *otherisation* serves to justify a lack of material equality within schools as "diminished opportunities...are attributed to a combination of cultural, family and individual deficiencies rather than oppressive economic and social conditions" and the findings of the document analysis supports this contention.

4.8 Silencing social justice

An interesting element of the document analysis was the realisation that the field texts were disappearing social justice. I had expected 'silences' - particularly in relation to the recognition of socially just practices that address class injury/disadvantage. However, I held an innate belief that educators would be foregrounded as intellectuals who were expected to scaffold student capability and success via academically rigorous pedagogical strategies/curricula. This proved not to be the case. Notions of academic rigour, student capability and student success were barely represented within the field documents and only became significant when noted for their incongruity. WA schools are unable to critically challenge unjust norms and harmful cultures because they are stifled by neoliberal curriculum and policy frameworks (Smyth & Wriggley, 2013) and consequently, socially just themes are silenced.

The federal documents briefly depicted capability and success as attainable skill sets; however, they were akin to inspirational vision statements without procedural

scaffolding. The *Melbourne Declaration* (2008, p. 8) classifies student capability and success as "a capacity to learn and play an active role in learning... having essential skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT... [being] creative, innovative and resourceful [and...motivated to reach their full potential" with employment related attributes such as an ability to "plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas' with a view to 'acquire[ing] the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives" (p. 8). The *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Technologies* (2012, p 9) refined the skill set to encompass "higher order thinking skills to reflect, evaluate and validate technical knowledge" (p. 9); and the development of skills "to verbally articulate their ideas" (p. 23) to become "effective communicators" (p. 23). The incorporation of academically rigorous curriculum and pedagogical strategies in the policy documents would scaffold student capability and success should be at the forefront of policy and the fact that they are not even intuitively represented is both absurd and speaks volumes.

Romana (2004, p. 153) contends that systems priorities in schools are narrowly focused and reduce or render "invisible the thousands of moments in each teachers day when a word, a look, a gesture of encouragement, or a nod of acceptance moves a student toward growth" and the silencing of socially just educators and relational spaces within the field texts supports this contention. I had expected teachers to be privileged as supportive collegiate professionals who strove to create positive learning environments and advance pedagogy; however, this was not the case. On a positive note, the *Melbourne Declaration* (2008) calls for all education systems to design and promote curriculum, policies and pedagogy that, inspire, motivate and ensure equity of outcomes. It further acknowledges that "teachers have the capacity to transform the lives of students to inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens" (p. 11) and it is a pity a greater focus is not placed on the transformative possibilities of socially just educator practice. The WA policy documents are conspicuously silent on the notion of collegiate, innovative educators. The SAER policy document (2001) is the oldest of all the policy documents and was the only text to acknowledge collegiate professionals who are responsible for the "dissemination of good practice" (p. 3); a relevant curriculum and positive learning environment; and "a shared philosophy about the learning environment and teaching practices" (p. 6). It is disappointing that recent policy documents do not consider the empowering possibilities of collegiate socially just educators who empower through pedagogy and constructive relational spaces.

The *Melbourne Declaration* (2008, p.11) addresses the issue of educator support from the perspective of leadership where "school leaders play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching though coaching and mentoring teachers" (p. 11). The theme of educator support was identified in all of the WA policy documents and was primarily privileged from hierarchical managerial perspectives. The SAER (2001) field text notes that the "Director of Schools are responsible for...providing a support service to assist with whole-school planning and implementation of programs" (Dept Ed. 2001, p. 4). The network or regional officer assists in revising attendance improvement plans and facilitates formal meetings (Dept. Ed. 2011); school "dress panels" offer assistance and support to students and their families (Dept. Ed. 2007, 5); and "interagency partners ... psychologists ... [and] district office" (Dept Ed. 2013a, p. 9) are involved with the review of behaviour management plans that "determine management strategies and future consequences for behaviour" (Dept Ed. 2013a, p. 9). The Exclusions policy (2013b) was the field text that most illuminated educator support, it was also the document with the most references to hierarchical managers and procedures. Amongst others, the regional "case managers ... Regional student services team" (p. 19), "Director General and Regional Executive Director" (pp. 19-32) and "Executive Officer" (p. 11) were identified as non school based employees who provide support for schools who are undertaking the process of excluding a student. The notion of educator support in the context of student/parent assistance was lost amidst the technocratic doctrine that placed managerial procedures at its core.

The document analysis of the field texts was illuminating. As an educator I have been schooled - through tertiary studies and a mandated adherence to implement curriculum - to believe that our core business is to support, develop and implement pedagogical strategies and curricula that is academically rigorous, builds student capability and scaffolds student success. However, the document analysis uncovered that these ideals are by and large immaterial. What is privileged in WA public schools is a hegemonic overt and covert curricula and technocratic managerial systems that entrench both class stratification and the subjugation of *colonised otherised at-risk* youth (Smyth & Wrigley. 2013; Smyth, Down & McInerney 2010).

In this chapter I have identified the ways in which neoliberal agendas manifest as policy and curriculum in schools. Freire (1992, p. 79), notes that neoliberal discourses "do not have the power to do away with social classes and ... do away with the conflicts and struggle between them" and the document analysis of the field texts illuminated the ways

in which neoliberal curriculum and policies negatively impact the lived experience of non-dominant youth in schools.

The next chapter introduces the narrative vignettes of Anakin and Adrienne. The analysis of their stories illuminates the class injury that occurs when teachers do not provide non-dominant students with support despite their pleas to *just help me*. Anakin's story is contextualised and analysed through Haberman's (1991) notion of a pedagogy of poverty and Adrienne's narrative vignette is analysed from the perspective of the complexity of young lives (Robinson, 2011; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Chapter 5 Narrative vignette - just help me

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reveals and analyses the narrative vignettes of two non-dominant youth, Annakin and Adrienne. Wellik & Kazemik. (2008, p. 55) contend that "All too often in our culture there is a tendency to focus unduly on the lens of deficiency and not through that of competency" and the narrative vignettes presented in this chapter afforded me an opportunity to critically examine the types of innate, objectified and embedded social and cultural capital that are valued and privileged within schools. Cultural capital is a social relationship and Apple (2004, p. 123) notes that within schools the preordained deficit labels that are allocated to non-dominant youth are a form of "social valuing". The analysis of Anakin's and Adrienne's stories illuminates the class injury that occurs when educators do not provide non-dominant students with the academic and emotional supports that they require to attain desired academic outcomes (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

As I have argued in Chapter 3, school *fields* legitimate and value the dominant social and cultural capital by privileging the tastes, norms and dispositions - or *habitus* - of the middle-class (Winkle-Wagner. 2010). Educators are imbued with the dominant embodied social and cultural capital and legitimate knowledge by asserting Pedagogic Authority (power) through the hegemonic overt and covert curriculums - or *practice* (Moore, 2004; & Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Educator views are privileged within schools and the deficit labels that accompany notions of individualistic mythical meritocratic accomplishment damage non-dominant youth and reinforce the economically stratified status quo (Corcoran. 2007; & Apple. 2004).

Robertson (2011, p. 30) contends that schools 'produce students who begin to participate in their own oppression' and the two non-dominant youth who are featured in the narrative vignettes in this chapter have done just that. Both Adrienne and Anakin co-constructed identity based on the deviant deficit labels that they were given but the dominant meta-narratives that played out in their lived-experiences is markedly different.

5.2 Anakin's story - pedagogy of poverty

In Giroux's (1983) words, "Working-class students were taught how to follow rules, which usually meant learning how not to ask questions or raise issues that challenged teacher-based assumptions" (p. 51) and this may go some way to explaining why Anakin accepts the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that are allocated to him. Anakin's imbued social and cultural capital is working-class and his exposure to learning within the contested space of his school was characterised by Haberman's

(1991) *Pedagogy of Poverty*, his teachers refused to help him and acted as though there was no point in teaching him because the "research shows that achievement test scores of poor and minority youngsters are affected primarily by their socioeconomic class" (p. 290).

Haberman (1991, p. 291) identifies teaching strategies that coalesce as the 'pedagogy of poverty'. The strategies are teacher directed and include the asking of questions; giving directions; making assignments/marking assignments; monitoring seatwork; giving tests/marking tests; giving homework/marking homework; punishing noncompliance and not being willing to provide individualised support. The teacher-student relational spaces that Anakin was exposed to were characterised by the pedagogy of poverty and distant removed educators, who let him know they were in charge, expected unwavering obedience and in large part completely ignored him. Haberman (1991, p. 291) contends that the pedagogy of poverty "does not work. Youngsters achieve neither minimum levels of life skills nor what they are capable of learning". In Anakin's case, his classrooms were characterised by "constant teacher direction and student compliance [that] seethe[d] with passive resentment" (p. 291). Anakin never comprehended why his teachers refused to provide him with the assistance he felt that he needed.

5.2.1 Vignette- Anakin

Anakin was at West Waterfall High until 2012. He didn't pass year 11 and never graduated. He has a tumultuous relationship with his mother including frequent relocations and periods of homelessness. Culminating with the Department of Child Protection (DCP) abruptly intervening after he and his siblings were *whipped with a belt* by their mothers friend *until we were back and blue.* DCP barricaded the driveway, blocked the entrance to his house, and whisked the children away before placing them in their fathers care. *We weren't this colour we were completely black and blue!* Initially Anakin's father tried to engage with the school and support his children but he became frustrated because he felt like his discussions fell on deaf ears and he completely withdrew from this messy, contested space. Anakin knows that things outside of school affected his education but feels let down by teachers who never helped. *There are certain types of teachers, nice, fun, boring and then there's mean teachers. Good teachers are practically extinct. I was always asking for help and the teacher never came, with the smarter kids they were straight there. They should've helped me I could've completed things and got higher grades. We'd do much better if teachers just helped!*

Anakin was a victim of frequent bullying that got worse in high school and he feels let down by teachers who time and time again did nothing to prevent it. *Anyone can be a bully. Certain people are violent they look mean and you don't want to stuff with them, it's in the way they move, the way they talk. I was bullied! They called me "Fatso" and it got physical. One guy and 5 or 6 of his friends chased me. I escaped under a building where I wouldn't be hit but they threw rocks at me. During the sports carnival a guy just walked up and sat on my face, farted and walked off; I still don't know why he did it. I didn't get bullied in any other school except West Waterfall. The teachers do nothing about it. They never ever do anything accept splitting you up to a new class but the next semester you'll be back in class with the same idiots. Ninety percent of the time it's the kids that don't start the bullying that get in trouble. I'd get myself sent to detention, you sit there doing nothing but you're out of harm's way.*

Anakin found help in others and was a member of an in school gang called 'The Outsiders' before eventually teaming up with his good friend Faine. *I was with 'The Outsiders' before I met Faine, it was good because you could stand with one another. Then I started hanging out with Faine, even though I wondered if he was gay he was nicer to me and when anyone's nice to you you'll stick with them. Faine was popular and smart and others would be nice to me. He was top of the class and he'd teach me a simple way to do the work. Teachers just make it way to complicated. Faine did a way better job, he'd keep it simple.*

Despite comparing West Waterfall to a prison Anakin readily acknowledges the few teachers who encouraged him and is particularly grateful for the time he spent in Special Ed in year 11 where *everyone helped each other, teachers and students.* He is signed up at TAFE to become a mechanic and is proud of undertaking his current course where he's been focused and committed. Anakin has an endearing quality of looking on the bright side - *Humans are not stupid, some people have changed their world. We can all be heroes and if I could I'd stop all violence. Life would be easier if we were more tolerant.*

5.2.2 Analysis

Anakin's familial *field* and *habitus* is working-class. His lived experience includes transience, relationship breakdown and domestic violence - *we weren't this colour we were completely black and blue* - and these are evidence of the intergenerational class injury that his family has endured. Smyth. et al. (2010, p.15) ask the poignant question "Whose view of poverty gets to be adopted?" Anakin's family were labelled in the

schools he attended and they felt that they were treated in "condescending, patronizing, deficit, and victim blaming ways" (p. 15). In Anakin's case poverty and it's associated *at-risk* label rendered him invisible. He was stigmatised and the "underclass discourses" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 148) that he was forced to narrate had an enormous impact on his academic success; he feels like he would have done better if the *teachers just helped.*

Anakin was exposed to a disempowering hegemonic overt and covert banking model of education (Freire, 1992). His classroom experiences were characterised by authoritarian didactic teacher talk, rigid timetables and exposure to a mandated curriculum that was of no interest to him with teachers who *just make it way to complicated.* When students like Anakin are forced into learning experiences that privilege dominant class meta-narratives their own lived-experiences are silenced and "they display depressed performance levels, having learned that education is something done to them and not something they do" (Shor. 1992, p. 132). Anakin's experience of pedagogy closely mirrors Haberman's (1991, p. 291) *pedagogy of poverty* in which *otherised non-dominant* students are exposed to "limited and limiting forms of pedagogy" as teachers compel *at-risk* students to "learn their basic skills" (p. 291) because urban educators often "have low expectations for minorities and the poor" (p. 291).

Anakin's educators deficit perceptions of the low educability for poor and working-class students is reflective of a dominant societal meta-narrative that demonises people from low socio-economic backgrounds (Nieto cited in Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004). Apple (2004, p.129) contends that labels "are *massively* applied to the children of the poor...much more than the children of the economically advantaged" and Anakin's *learning disabled* classification is reflective of this. Haberman (1991, p. 291) contends that many urban teachers rationalise that non-dominant students have "debilitating home lives...[and as a consequence] ranking of some sort is inevitable; some students will end up at the bottom of the class". For much of his school life Anakin was designated to the bottom of the class by his educators and was only afforded a limiting education due to his supposed innate inferiorities (Smyth, et al., 2010). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008, p. 4) claim that schools who serve low-income non-white minority children "disproportionately produce citizens who will spend most of their adult lives in the least desirable and least mobile socioeconomic positions" and Anakin's lived experience within school demonstrates that this proposition extends to almost all working-class children regardless of racial background.

Identity formation is shaped by deviant deficit victim-blaming labels of both the past (including familial labelling) and future. The hegemonic overt and covert curriculum inculcates as middle-class ideology "lodges itself within the minds of the unthinking" (Hammack, 2008, p. 231). Narrative identity is socially mediated and "inherent within the discourses of an individuals context" (McIlveen & Patton, 2007, p. 230). Giroux (1983, pp. 33-34) claims that social repression is generated in the inner history of individuals when they "are mediated and reinforced through the patterns and social routines of everyday life ... and they become reduced to patterns of habit." Anakin accepts the dominant master-narratives and deficit labels allotted to him to such an extent that he *is grateful for the time that he spent in Special Ed.*

Anakin fundamentally believes in meritocratic opportunities for success as *some people have changed their world* and *We can all be heroes.* However, he never brought into the belief that school would afford him meritocratic opportunities for success. He didn't think he was smart enough and this was reinforced by teachers who showed preference for *the smarter kids* by devoting the vast majority of their resources and support to them. Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 162) contend that "we create types of children by believing that there are types and consequently treating them differently". Annakin was saddled with the deficit victim-blaming label of being learning disabled and his teachers could not conceive that he could succeed. This shut off his access to higher order learning and resulted in his predetermined failure. When he was placed in the Special Ed class for Year 11 he was precluded from being able to graduate.

Anakin's endeavours vehemently disprove simplistic neoliberal notions that everyone can succeed in life if they apply themselves and work hard (Smyth et al. 2010). When confronted with failure he redoubled his efforts and valiantly continued to seek teacher assistance and even carved out his own social networks to academically assist him, *he'd teach me a simple way to do the work...Faine did a way better job [than the teachers], he'd keep it simple* (King & Hicks. 2006). As Haberman (1991, p. 292) contends students 'in urban schools overwhelmingly *do* accept the pedagogy of poverty, and they *do* work at it!' But no matter how hard Anakin tried to pull himself up by his bootstraps (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) he was unable to interrupt the pathologising labels that depicted him "as incompetent and guilty" (Freire. 1992. p. 45), the author of his own failure.

Popkewitz and Brennan (1998, p. 15) claim that "the multiple and complex interweaving of discourses through which childhood is constructed has produced systems of inclusions/exclusions." The meta-narratives that manifested in Anakin's childhood - including poverty and an identified need for state protection based on his mothers inability to protect him - led to his deficit labels and to some teachers conferring him inferior status and holding "perceptions of low educability" (Valencia, 2010, p. 16; & Apple, 2004; Haberman, 1991).This led to him being depicted as requiring remedial support and resulted in him being given diminished encouragement and denied access to teacher assistance. Anakin believes that *Good teachers are practically extinct* as the teachers *never came* no matter how often he sought assistance. Bernburg, Krohn and Rivera (2006, pp. 69-70) conducted a longitudinal study on the effects of deficit labels and identified that nonlabeled adolescents avoided their labeled peers; however, in Anakin's experience it was the adult educators who were uncomfortable and kept a safe, righteous distance. Consequently, he was enormously grateful for his time in the Special Ed class as he shared a sense of camaraderie and *everyone helped each other, teachers and students.*

Anakin clearly articulates his belief that there are *certain types of teachers, nice, fun boring and then there's mean teachers*. In Anakin's experience most teachers are mean and only value *the smarter kids* and it is this feature that he believes most determines a good student. Anakin compared West Waterfall to a prison and had developed a high sense of academic futility because the teachers didn't care whether he succeeded or not and he effectively had no control over his learning (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). He learnt to follow rules and was the picture of conformity but the privileging of adult educator deficit labels exposed him to a limiting curriculum that *otherised*, silenced and effectively *colonised* by forcing his academic potential into dormancy (Windfield, 2008; Corcoran, 2007; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013; Haberman, 1991). Anakin was acutely aware that his educators had constructed "barriers to opportunity" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 25) and believed that if he'd received the assistance he required that he *could've completed things and got higher grades* and that all students who are not smart would *do much better if teachers just helped.*

Anakin's agency, capacity and self-efficacy were eroded at West Waterfall. He employed passive behaviours and adopted socially stratified behavioural norms (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Further, he readily accepts that he is not a good student and in the manner of Allen and Rossatto's (2009, p. 166) *oppressor student* he did "poorly on class assignments, both in terms of understanding the concepts or critiques and

completing assignments in a full and timely manner." Thompson (2011, p. 8) contends "that notions of the good student are heavily imbued with binary thinking". This binary thinking - driven by a top down authoritarian hegemonic covert curricula and the pedagogy of poverty - led Anakin to accept specific norms and dispositions (e.g. time management, organisation and a capacity to rote learn) of the good student. Anakin knew that he did not possess these skills and this led to him adopting the binary view that he was a *bad student*. Adams, Robertson, Gray-Ray and Ray (2003) emphasize the importance of understanding how adolescents form their identity in the context of the labels that they are saddled with and in Anakin's case binary notions of the good student led him to become "complicit in his own governance" (Thompson, 2011, p. 8). By the time Anakin left school he had embedded negative notions of self; a resistant pervasive belief that he is academically incapable; and took personal responsibility for his failure (Shor & Pari, 1999; McNay,1999; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

The way that we view self and therefore construct identity is based on how others see us and Anakin's response to his learning disabled 'label' was to adopt the stereotypical position that he was faulty (Windfield, 2008). Christensen (cited in Shor & Pari, 1999) insists that many students who find themselves in remedial classes are creative and bright but have not succeeded in school. Anakin was indoctrinated into accepting the dominant stereotypy and this has served to limit his life experiences and shape life trajectories along preconceived stereotypical pathways (Elliot, 2000; Johnson, 2005). The learning disabled are depicted as only being able to undertake manual labour and accordingly, Anakin has *signed up at TAFE* to undertake a low level vocational education pre-apprenticeship course to work towards being *a mechanic.* Anakin's exposure to - and acceptance of - the hegemonic covert curriculum seduced him into adopting the self-fulfilling prophecy of the learning disabled being unable to academically achieve and caused him "to act in ways that are not as free as they could be" (Thompson, 2011, p. 65).

Gatto (2010. p. xxi) argues that schools do a "spectacular job of turning our children into children" by engendering a perpetual state of adolescence that facilitates the reification of middle-class ideology and maintains the capitalist status quo (Apple, 2004). Anakin's deviant deficit victim-blaming label and enrolment into a special education class pre-ordained his entry into the manual labour classes. When he joined the remedial program he was exposed to further "direct instruction in the basics...[as] the best way to remedy weak skills" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 179) but it did not improve his academic skills. Conveniently, Anakin's placement in the program also

resulted in the school being able to side-step the neoliberal accountability processes of targeted graduation rates for senior students. Anakin did not receive funding to move into the Year 12 special education class but as he was turning 18 in that school year the school requested that he did not return. Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008, p. 38) contend that the "majority of students are trained to occupy the margins" and that "failing to acquire academic competencies and credentials is not a desirable outcome of education" (pp. 101-102). Anakin's exposure to the pedagogy of poverty and its encumbered expectations of inevitable failure characterised his learning and his failure to graduate has stymied him from creating any identity counter-narratives that could empower him.

Anakin was frequently bullied at school. He was teased about his weight, *they called me Fatso* and on one occasion *a guy just walked up sat on my face, farted and walked* off. Another time he was chased and *escaped under a building ...[where they] just threw rocks at me.* Incidents like this left Anakin feeling constantly under siege and he resolutely believes that educator responses to bullying are inadequate *The teachers do nothing about it. They never ever do anything.* Biesta (2004, p. 15) contends that meaning, and thus knowledge exchange, occurs as a social practice that "does not exist in the heads or bodies of individuals who make up the social practice, but rather is located *in between* them." This can be considered as the relational space. Within messy, contested spaces of school relational space constitutes physical space and the relationships between all people - educator and educator, educator and student, student and student; and all others who are co-located. The bullying that Anakin experienced profoundly affected his relational space and thus his learning. When educators continued to expose him to toxic bullying by putting him *back in the class with the same idiot* they further disempowered him and diminished his ability to acquire the knowledge that he needed to graduate.

Klein (2006) argues that the social structures of cliques act to reinforce status and power. When bullying disempowered Anakin he demonstrated tremendous resiliency in joining *The Outsiders*. Anakin never demonstrated violent tendencies and did not participate in any aggressive events that the gang carried out; however, they afforded him protection and the bullying dramatically decreased when they took him under their wing. Research demonstrates that "the relation between peer victimization and depression was mediated by social support" (Ghoul, Niwa, & Boxer, 2013, p. 458), particularly for boys. Jensen (2006) identifies the social spaces that gangs occupy as *habitus* that engenders *subcultural capital*. *The Outsiders* provided Anakin a relational

space that negated threat and helped him envision self from an empowering perspective where he *could stand with one another* to prevent injustice.

Labelling theory tends to assign minimal agency to labelled individuals but explorations of subcultural capital and the relational space demonstrate that these notions are overridden when non-dominant youth align themselves in subcultural contexts (Kalkhoff, Djurich, & Burke, 2007, p. 495). "Loyalties and connections are absolutely vital to survival in conditions of poverty" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 71) but Anakin's narrative self-identity did not encompass the anti-disestablishmentarian delinquent nature of a gang so when the opportunity afforded itself he switched allegiances to Faine. Anakin spoke in reverent tones when he was discussing his relationship with Faine, he described him as *popular and smart* and other *people would be nicer to me.* Patton, et al., (2013) correlate pro-social support with a dampening of the negative affects of peer victimisation including loneliness. Faine's status and prestige and thus subcultural capital was high within the school. He transcended social groupings and was seen as powerful. During the focus group interviews both Anakin and Darth fervently attributed this merely to him being *nice* to everyone. Further, both boys questioned his sexuality and believed him to be homosexual, nevertheless their usual alignment with the stereotypical hegemonic male (Klein, 2006, p. 57) was swept aside when it came to Faine, *I wondered if he was gay ... [but] when anyone's nice to you you'll stick with them.* However, subcultural capital is not always valuable in other *fields* and although Anakin's attainment of subcultural social capital blunted harm ultimately it did not help him at to attain the passing grades that were required for him to graduate.

Anakin's youth-worker and facilitator of the boys FLAME program Cadell has empathy for non-dominant youth like Anakin. In his words:

> *I really struggled at school. When I look back it makes sense now. My dad was old school and I wasn't encouraged to talk through my worries. I was always getting in trouble and being suspended. I'd put in heaps of effort but still get really low grades and I found it really hard. I left at year ten because I didn't think I was smart enough to go on.*

Cadell spent many years working in the service industry before gaining the confidence to become a youth worker and he thinks that some people just need to be taught in different ways.

> *My own struggles definitely help me to understand the perspectives of the kids I work with. I keep reminding myself what I was like at school and it helps me to know what to*

do with them. If we want them to learn we can't do it in a school setting way. We try and get away from the bookwork and stuff because that's a lot of the reason why they're not engaged, where they've struggled. Some kids just need to be more hands on about it. I get them to do things like run an event, like a barbie. I give them a budget sheet, a calculator and the money. They work it out, decide together and run it themselves. We're more real life here, some of us just need it that way.

The analysis of Anakin's vignette has illuminated the ways in which the pedagogy of poverty is perpetuated by the deficit prisms of educators. The analysis illuminated the ways in which class injury occurred to Anakin when he adopted his deficit labels. Finally, the analysis acknowledges the role that sub-cultural capital, proactive peer-to-peer relationships and a positive relational space played in mitigating risk for Anakin.

5.3 Adrienne's Story - the complexity of young lives

Adrienne's familial *habitus* was complex, "fractured and fragmented" (Smyth, 2004, p. 23). Her mother is a violent drug addict who has wreaked havoc in Adrienne's life. Protective organisations and bodies outside of the home let Adrienne down and her relationships with "police, the legal system, children's services, welfare agencies, drug enforcement bodies - have been antagonistic and factious in nature" (Smyth, 2004, p. 30). Adrienne's life was characterised by a "spiral of precariousness" (Paugam cited in Smyth, 2004, p. 26) from birth. Her support networks were virtually non-existent and "the multiple and complex interweaving of discourses through which [her] childhood [w]as constructed has produced systems of inclusions/exclusions" (Pokewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 15). Adrienne's home life was violent and she readily accepted the pathologised deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that she was allocated in exchange for the relative safety of school. Adrienne's familial habitus and deviant deficit victim-blaming labels situated her on the outside of the mainstream and she struggled to be allowed the privileges of other class members (Robinson, 2011, p. 177).

Haberman (1991, p. 291) notes that many non-dominant students within schools lead debilitating home lives and that this automatically disadvantages them as they will be ranked or labelled and "end up at the bottom of the class". Smyth (2013, p.117) notes the importance of embracing complex lives within "the curriculum of the school rather than treating them as issues to be castigated or treated punitively". Adrienne's lived-experiences within the contested spaces of her school compounded the violent subjugation and oppression she was forced to endure at the hands of her mother. Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 159) note that the lived-experience of students in schools

can visit further "violence to the complexity of young people's lives, in a vain attempt to keep youth culture outside the boundary fence."

5.3.1 Vignette - Adrienne

School was always a safe haven for Adrienne. *My mother smokes gear 24/7 and she'd flog us every time she was coming down and doping out.* Adrienne was too scared to tell her teachers. She was terrified DCP would become involved. She'd already been taken away twice and was scarred from the experience. *DCP's real bad! You're forced away at a young age and you cry for your parents, you want them real bad. A foster family's not like a real family, they force you into doing things you don't want and they just don't care*. *I didn't tell people about mum but Mr Honour* [the coordinator] *could see she was off her head anyway. She was strung out grinding her teeth and biting her lip. He'd see her eyes go bang and she's just like noofty. She'd wouldn't pay school fees and would stop me from going to school. School was better than being with my mother, hell yeah! If I was stressed the teachers would do the class work first then come and talk to me and I wouldn't get picked on by bullies too badly because they'd be there to stop it.*

It's hard to know what flagged additional support for Adrienne, her increasing outbursts, DCP involvement or her mothers erratic behaviour. *I used to be real bad with my anger. I was on depression pills being checked for bi-polar. I'd switch real quick, get angry and flip the desks or throw chairs. Honestly, I used to be real bad.* By year 9 Adrienne was regularly seeing the school psych for rage blackouts and a lack of concentration. *I had too much going on in my head.* Adrienne's reverence for her psych is palpable, *she used to take me everyday in first period. We used to write it all down and get it out of my head which was good.* In addition the school plugged her in with a youth worker at the local *Youth Space*. She'd frequently visit him and *he used to just talk to me and calm me down when I was in a grumpy mood after school.*

Adrienne takes great pride in her completion of year ten and attributes her success to hard work and the support of her teacher aides that she had from years eight to ten. *Sometimes I'd be called dumb by the other kids but I didn't really care. Even though I'd had depression for years I had it in my head that I had to go to school. I'd say to myself "you have to do it, you can't fail and drop out because of your mum".* School was paramount because Adrienne *really wanted to graduate then be a person that helps people.* However, in Year 11 unforseen events shattered her dream. *When I was 15 mum kicked me out. She thought I'd come crawling back but I didn't. I just left!. She put me on a missing persons list and the police kept taking me back, the wankers! I'd tell*

them I'm not staying here, she's on drugs, heroin and stuff like that. I wanted them to help me get out of there but they wouldn't, they just kept taking me back. I'd run away again as soon as they dropped me off. I stayed at a mates house, I had my bag, books and school uniform and I'd walk to school every day. Eventually I ended up at mums mates place but then she decided to move in too. I wanted to leave straight away but I couldn't because for three weeks I was curled up in a ball on the floor 24/7 crying. I'd doze off and the pain would wake me and I'd cry again. Every now and again I'd go to school because it didn't seem quite as bad but I'd just be sent home because I'd vomit. Every time I ate I'd just bring it straight up, I couldn't swallow it and my throat was that sore. Mum just left me there she thought I had my girlies or something. On that last day mums mate picked me up from school. As soon as she unlocked the door I ran straight to the toilet and was in there for 30 minutes vomiting. She decided it didn't matter what mum said and drove me to the hospital. Lucky because the doctors said that if I'd come in any later and my right kidney would have burst and my left would've failed. I was kept in hospital for a month cause I couldn't leave until I was better. The school was supposed to give me work but they didn't. I would've done it!

In year 11 they took away my teacher aides, they said I was smart enough and didn't need them but when I came out of hospital they wouldn't help me because they said I'd fail anyway. Almost all my teachers just didn't care. My English teacher helped me catch up though. When I got back she sat me down with all the work and helped me until I finished it all and I passed. But she was the only one! I went the whole way through year 11, but I failed. I wasn't allowed back to school after that. I'd have gone back and done year 11 again but they wouldn't let me. I turned 18 at the start of the next year and they didn't give me any options, just told me to leave. I wasn't even allowed on school premises. They should've helped me. I felt so bad. I wasn't able to get anywhere and I was going to be like my mum.

Despite facing periodic bans for blackout rages Adrienne continued to attend *Youth Space*. After being forced out of school for over twelve months she floundered but a worker from *Youth Space* plugged her into the course that she is currently undertaking, coincidently reuniting her with her previous youth worker. In the last two months *Youth Space* has also reunited her with the school psych who now acts as a mentor. *She comes and picks me up and takes me to the movies or dinner and we have fun. We talk about my depression and other things, she helps me through it.* Adrienne feels that she has *already come out stronger. I've locked everyone out from my previous life and moved on* [she has an enduring VRO taken out against her mother] *because everyone's*

helping me through it. I'm never ever going to take drugs. I don't want to turn out like her, she's bad. I'm already enrolled in TAFE to do a Cert III in community services. School never helped, I think that 's just how schools are, the teachers don't care. But my youth workers did!

5.3.2 Analysis

Adrienne's mother is an aggressive, single mother with a pervasive drug habit. She used to *flog* her kids *every time she was coming down and doping out.* Adrienne was profoundly impacted by her mothers erratic behaviours and is acutely aware of the potential for her family life to have negative long-term intergenerational effects and she repeatedly reiterated her concern that *I don't want to turn out like her* (her mother). Adrienne's experiences in school, foster care and with the police who failed to protect her have left her with a deep distrust of authority because they failed to appreciate the reality of her life (Smyth, Down & McInerney, 2010; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The realities of Adrienne's home life meant that she was enmeshed in a *habitus* that privileged aggressive violent dispositions. Adrienne's exposure to middle-class cultural and social capital was non-existent in her familial *field* (Khalifa, 2010; Yosso, 2005; Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Her mother's personal drug history impacted on her relationships with educators because when she came into contact with them *She was strung out grinding her teeth, her eyes went bang*, and they *could see that she was off her head anyway*. There is no doubt that for Adrienne "the hidden injuries of class in capitalist schools run very deep" (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2000, p. 136) as through no fault of her own, she paid for the sins of her mother.

Adrienne entered the contested spaces of Maiden Valley high without normative hegemonic social and cultural capital and her external life experiences functioned to depict her from pathological deficit perspectives (Yosso, 2005; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). By virtue of birth Adrienne was allotted into a "moral out-group" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 73) as her imbued capital led to exclusion in institutional fields. It is argued that children born into non-dominant capital are "socialized into the 'deviant' culture or their families, families typically headed by single mothers" (Bullen & Kenway, 2005, p. 46) and they are categorised with deviant deficit victim-blaming labels such as the 'learning disabled' and 'psychologically disturbed' labels that Adrienne acquired. These labels facilitated a process whereby Adrienne was stigmatised, blamed for her misfortune and shunted out of school; and consequently from the protective networks that she had accessed (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013), *they didn't give me any options, just told me to leave and that I wasn't allowed on school premises*. Niles, Adrienne's youth-worker and

facilitator of the girls FLAME program sums up what he feels school do to non-dominant youth like Adrienne.

> *Teachers have classrooms of thirty kids and if three of them have issues, well the teacher's still got to focus on the other twenty-seven. It's all about the numbers. I don't think most of these things are addressed at school to be honest, even when they're on the radar. They go to school and they're feeling crappy because no one gives a shit about them. They react, they're angry, then they're in trouble with the teachers and it's just a vicious cycle. They're isolated and they've got to many issues going on with their lives outside of school...*

Thompson (2011, p. 76) contends that "identity formation in young people speaks of the past as much of the future". Adrienne's childhood was a conglomerate of interweaving dominant discourses/meta-narratives which led to her being characterised from deficit lenses within the 'social ecology' (Hammack. 2008, p. 233) and lived experience of the ES. Individuals make sense of identity through their engagement with sanctioned meta-narratives and Adrienne was conditioned to see herself from deficit perspectives where she didn't consider herself academically capable (McNay. 1999). Adrienne's rage outbursts could be considered a natural response to trauma but she was assigned the totalising mental health labels of *depression* and possible *bi-polar* that left her believing that she was *real bad* and *couldn't concentrate* because she *had too much going on in my head*. Gatto (2010, p. 63) contends that schools provide us with our first insights into the way that others depict us. The neoliberal need to rank and scale individuals as winners or losers damages non-dominant youth, alternative self narratives close off and negative imprints last a lifetime (Johnson. 2005). Adrienne's school experiences were demoralising. When Adrienne was faced with a life threatening medical emergency during her last year of school her historical character was negated (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Giroux, 1983).

Educators within the messy, contested spaces of Maiden Head were aware of Adrienne's familial *field* and knew she had near perfect attendance and never left school early. Despite her persistent vomiting, ongoing absences, and obvious distress, nobody intervened to assist her in accessing the medical services she desperately needed. To add insult to injury, despite Adrienne's unwell mother having enough foresight to request school work her teachers did not provide it. As Adrienne noted, *Almost all my teachers just didn't care*. When she returned from an extended hospitalisation - in an act of blaming the victim - Adrienne's was told she would never pass. There was a deficit

perception of Adrienne as a disconnected youth with a parental history of "failure and moral decay that feed into intergenerational lack of ambition and aspiration" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, pp. 197-198). Deviant deficit victim-blaming labels were used to justify systemic failure when all bar one of her teachers refused to provide additional assistance because she'd *fail anyway.* White (1995, p. 83) contends that "if a person is recruited into a very negative story about who they are as a person, then it is likely that they will give meanings to their experiences that emphasise culpability and worthlessness" and Adrienne genuinely believed *she wasn't going to be able to get anywhere and I was going to be like my mum.*

Although Adrienne genuinely believed that she was academically incapable she also brought into the meritocratic myth that individual determination, perseverance and willpower would ensure that she could overcome adversity and break the cycle of inter-generational drug dependence, *Even though I'd had depression for years I had it in my head that I had to go to school. You have to do it, you can't fail and drop out because of your mum.* Duncan-Andrade (2009, p. 182) identifies this as hokey hope "an individualistic up-by-your-bootstraps hyperbole that suggests if urban youth just work hard, pay attention, and play by the rules" then they are guaranteed social and economic success. However, hokey hope does not transcend the deficit lenses of schools which, in the words of Smyth, et al. (2010, p. 16), succumb to "labelling people and treating them in condescending, patronizing, deficit, and victim blaming ways" (Wellik & Kazemek, 2008).

Within schools non-dominant youth are expected to willingly immerse themselves and conscribe to the hegemonic overt and covert curriculum that privileges the dominant middle-class. Rigid authoritarian structures - timetables, mandated class sizes, hierarchical managerial structures and punitive behaviour management strategies; mandatory curriculum; and didactic pedagogies combine to create contested spaces that are characterised by knowledge (or power) that oppresses non-dominant cultural and social capital by 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them' (Freire cited in Canestrari & Marlowe. 2004, p. 101; Bourdieu & Passeron. 1977). *Habitus* functions below the level of consciousness and the natural authority afforded to educators gives the hegemonic curriculum an illusionary appearance of neutrality. Conformity is highly valued within schools and Adrienne willingly accepted the 'rules' that governed the Maiden Valley *field* in exchange for escape from trauma at home - *Hell yeah, school was way better than being with my mother* - and with the lure of hokey hope she felt that she could break away from toxic

life experiences to *be a person that helps people* (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2010; Moore, 2004; Apple, 2004).

Adrienne was acutely aware that compliance, cooperation and skills such as punctuality and organisation are hallmarks of a good student. However, her unfamiliarity with middle-class *habitus* predetermined an inability to breakdown, abstract and generalise the procedures required to acquire the necessary social and cultural capital to attain academic success in school. Adrienne felt that her exclusion from learning was in large part her own fault - *I switch real quick and when I was angry I used to throw chairs and flip desks, honestly I used to be real bad* - because it prevented her from building positive relationships with those who had the ability to help her transcend her current circumstances (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2000; Lund & Carr, 2008). Adrienne's attempts to conform by attending school regularly, ensuring that she completed all her school work, and plugging into external services to try and modify perceived deviant behaviour were to no avail as her efforts went unnoticed by the majority of her teachers who looked to internal flaws to explain her deviance (Winkle-Wagner. 2010; Windfield, 2008)

Smyth et al. (2010, p. 42) contend that failure is "the frustrated will to know...that results from a mismatch between what the learner wants to do and is able to do' leading to a 'sense of inferiority and inadequacy". This is precisely what happened to Adrienne as she floundered for over twelve months after being cast out of school. Her depression deepened and her violent blackout rages increased until a youth-worker plugged her into the FLAME program that she is now attending. Adrienne's totalitising acceptance of the silent rules that govern the hegemonic overt and covert curriculum led to her policing herself to act in a normative, rather than freer way (Thompson, 2011, p. 12-13). This eroded her self-identity to such an extent that she acquiesced and participated in her own oppression by accepting the preordained failure of year 11 without demanding the additional support and tutoring that she required. Adrienne recognised that the teachers *should've helped me get through it* but her broken dreams led to what Freire (1992, p. 24) coined a "tumult in the soul...utopia lost. The danger of losing hope" (Robertson, 2011).

In Adrienne's penultimate year she was informed that her teacher aide support would be withdrawn because *they said I didn't need them because I was smart enough*. Adrienne was dubious and voiced her concerns but her opinion was marginalised as educator views prevailed. There is inherent risk involved in ranking deficit (Yosso, 2005) and although the school expected Adrienne to obtain the cultural and social capital of the

middle-classes it failed "to give explicitly to everyone that which it implicitly demands of everyone" (Sullivan. 2001, p. 910). Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008, p. 80) contend that "students are taught to under-value, or worse, to devalue their own experiences". By the time Adrienne reached year 11 she had been labelled as learning disabled and segregated as requiring teacher aides. Despite other students attempting to humiliate her, *I'd be called dumb by the other kids*, Adrienne had framed her sense of learner identity as being reliant on teacher aid support.

In a true act of symbolic violence Adrienne's teacher aides were removed from her during her senior years of schooling, a time when she felt she needed them most (Smyth, et al., 2009). Adrienne's medical emergency enforced an extended absence and as a consequence her academic results plummeted. As Adrienne failed to have her teacher aide support returned to her it is not difficult to deduce that she was no longer considered "salvageable" (Smyth and Wrigley, p. 152). She became justifiable "collateral damage" (p. 152) as the deficit thinking model of her educators allowed them to posit that she was failing because of her internal deficits (Valencia, 2010; Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004). The subsequent injury to Adrienne is palpable. When she discusses the issue it is clear that she feels a sense of futility and a lack of acceptance from others because she was unable to maintain hegemonic social norms *I felt so bad because I wasn't going to get anywhere* (Windfield, 2008; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Nieto (cited in Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004, p. 56) claims that "students perform in the ways that teachers expect." Lived experience becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in response to the hegemonic overt and covert messages of schools (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The reclassification of deviant deficit victim-blaming labels is virtually non-existent and they serve to both define and govern the individual (Apple, 2004). Deficit labels are a form of *colonial othering* that provokes institutional *fields* of domination and contestation (Giroux, 1983, p. 63). They provoke self-fulfilling prophecies of academic failure and damage the narrative self-identity of non-dominant youth (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Self-identity is not fixed and is mediated by our social relations, the dominant meta-narratives of our *fields* and the negative labels that we have been classified with. Adrienne's teachers low expectations stigmatised her, encouraged her to adopt her allotted labels and to view herself as an academic failure (Adams, et al., 2003; McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

Adrienne is ascribed negative labels in multiple *fields.* Her home life is permeated with violent rejection and she feels labelled as unlovable by a mother who *kicked me out* , at

school she is labelled as *at-risk,* learning disabled and as psychologically damaged. Windfield (2008, p. 9) contends that labelling leads to the individual viewing themselves "through the eyes of others" and Adrienne's co-construction of self-identity is resistant to change because of its deep "historical resonance and durability" (McNay. 1999, p. 323). Adrienne felt that she had no control over her academic success or failure and that there was no alternative to futility because she *wasn't allowed to go back to school...I'd have gone back and done year 11 again but they wouldn't let me* (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Giroux (1983) contends that non-dominant youth are exposed to a dumbed down pedagogy and curriculum and Shor (1992) posits that this passive hegemonic curriculum arouses multiple emotions including self-doubt and frustration but when this combines with the deficit labels of schools the rate of damage is exponentially greater.

Adrienne's development of self-identity has been characterised by highly emotional events such as "grief, anger, emotional abandonment, hurt and hope" (Pals. 2006, p. 111) which leads to the ruminative processing of identity. Adrienne often seeks assistance to interpret and understand her lived experiences, *everyone's helping me through it* and her school psychologist would proactively help her *write it all down and get it out of my head.* However, some of her emotively challenging identity forming experiences, such as her *blackout rages*, have caused her to align herself with deficit rather than with capacity. She depicts herself as someone who needs others to *calm me down* and help her control unacceptable behaviours. The hegemonic affirmation of a middle-class status quo that is engendered in schools is nurtured when there is no resistance and Adrienne's passive acceptance of her deficit labels has meant that she has failed to develop a sociological imagination and recognise the negative forces impacting her life (Gatto, 2010; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Adrienne fell pray to the neoliberal "meritocratic myths that school are the great equaliser" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 136). Thompson (2011, p. 73) contends that non-dominant youth are "constructed as measurable objects and enmeshed within power games" that differentiate success and lack of success. High-stakes neoliberal accountability measures have promulgated the milieu and this has led to the reification of middle-class cultural capital as disproportionately high proportions of non-dominant youth are pathologised and shunted out of education so that schools can shore up data to meet mandated accountability measures such as the percentage of students who successfully graduate (Reay, 2004; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Valencia, 2010; Robinson, 2011). In Adrienne's case *they didn't give me any* options and refused her access to the *field* that had most protected her as soon as they

were legally able to because she *turned 18 at the start of the year*. Adrienne's experience at school expose meritocracy as myth, for her education was not the great equalizer but a "great regulator" (Kress, 2011, p. 268) that preordained failure and denied her access to an improved life trajectory.

Apple (2004, p. 35) contends that a "certain low level of achievement on the part of minority students can be tolerated" and the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels of schools are a form of social control that is used to divert attention away from systemic inadequacy. Neoliberal managerial accountability measures such as the statistical collection and monitoring of data (e.g. student attendance data, NAPLAN data etc.) and mandated neo-liberal technocratic procedures (e.g. exclusions and *at-risk* processes) are used to focus knowledge through deficit prisms; to contextually value cultural capital; and to govern lived experience (Robinson, 2011; Winkle-Wagner 2010). Adrienne's distance from the inculcated cultural capital pre-disposed her to the "realm of the low achiever" (Smyth. et al. 2009, p. 115) and to being shunted out of school education to join the other 35.9% of non-dominant working class youth who fail to complete year 12 (p. 116). Giroux (2006, p. 24) equates this process to the hollowing out of the social state where "entire groups of people become disposable, as the category of 'waste' includes no longer simply material goods but also human beings."

Adrienne's experience of her middle-school teachers was positive because she felt nurtured by them as they would *come and talk to me* and if she was being picked on by bullies they would *be there to stop it.* However, when Adrienne returned to school after the medical emergency only one teacher demonstrated any faith in her academic potential, *she sat me down with all of the work and helped me until I finished it all and passed English*. As a consequence Adrienne felt disempowered, marginalised and faulty and was left believing that she *was going to be like my mum* and become a drug affected nobody.

An outstanding feature of Adrienne's narrative is the role that non-educators have played in building her self-efficacy, agency and capacity. Adrienne is still in a state of flux but is becoming more than the sum of her labels. Jensen (2006, p. 270) argues that when we are "in a situation devoid of recognition we are denied access to humanity" and Adrienne has been given access to recognition via the youth-workers and psychologist that she has encountered. When she was in middle-school she developed a relationship with a youth-worker who would *just talk to me and calm me down* and she has since reconnected with him through the FLAME program. Her school psychologist worked with

her *everyday* when she was still attending school and has since become a mentor who *takes me to the movies or dinner and we have fun.* She is still actively helping her with *what I'm going through now* and has helped Adrienne to foster a belief that she can still attain her goals.

Adrienne has spent much of her life accepting the deficit labels that she has been allotted and they remain powerful (McNay, 1999). At times she still berates herself for being stupid but this belies her resilience. She has survived and continues to fight back in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Pals (2006) contends that constructing and maintaining a coherent, meaningful, and integrated story of who you are, how you came to be that person, and where you are headed in your imagined future is a central tenant of a rewarding and fulfilling life. Adrienne's difficult emotional experiences can challenge coherence and erode her quality of life; however, they also afford her the opportunity to narrate "a second chance in life" (p. 101). Adrienne's youth worker Niles, and psychologist are currently assisting her to navigate transformational possibilities that will assist her to re-construct self-identity and story a positive ending.

> *They are resilient, they've been through the wringer and they're still here. They attend every week so they obviously want to get something out of life, they haven't given up despite all of the shit they've gone through. They've such great stories to tell, great senses of humour. From all that negativity comes positivity. - Niles*

With their support she has obtained a long standing VRO (Violence Restraining Order) to protect her from her mother, *enrolled in TAFE to do a Cert III in community services* and *moved on with* her life. King and Hicks (2006, p. 128) note that "happiness is best predicted by investment in current goals and the capacity to relinquish goals that are not available". Ironically, the disequilibrium that was provoked when Adrienne was shunted out of school may be the very thing that helps her to acculturate the cultural and social capital to engage and succeed within her current *fields* (p. 131) and to envision herself as *at-promise* (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 126).

The analysis of Adrienne's narrative vignette illuminates the notion of the class injury that occurs when teachers do not take into account the complex lives of non-dominant students. When student's like Adrienne are given deficit labels their innate strengths and capacity are not recognised and they accept the dominant meta-narratives and construct self from notions of deficit. However, even when Adrienne's self-identity is characterised by debilitating deviant deficit prisms hope is engendered through the positive relational

spaces that she has co-created with ancillary professionals both within and out of school.

This chapter has revealed the narrative vignettes of Anakin and Adrienne, two non-dominant students who did not receive adequate support and assistance from their educators. Anakin's narrative was analysed from the perspective of the pedagogy of poverty and the negative impact that this can have on the lives of non-dominant youth. Adrienne's narrative was analysed from the perspective of the interrelationship between the complex young lives of non-dominant youth, deficit labelling, the impact on narrative identity and the ways in which Adrienne can be viewed as *at-promise.* In the next chapter I introduce the narrative vignettes of Aurora and Callisto, two non-dominant youth who are negatively impacted by the toxic cultures in their schools. Aurora's narrative is analysed to identify how toxic school cultures cause some students to catastrophically implode, whilst Callisto's is analysed to illuminate the ways in which some students aggressively explode after being been exposed to insidious toxic school cultures.

Chapter 6 Narrative vignette - they never do anything!

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter toxic school cultures are exposed and scrutinised through the narrative vignettes and analysis of Aurora and Callisto. Schools can be toxic places, particularly when they are characterised by bullying and peer victimisation. Students are individual selves that "merge in relation to, and through a moving between, other people, places, things and times" (Hemming, 2013, pp. 76-77) and when educational relational spaces are safe and effective "individual, singular beings - can reveal who they are, [and] can come into presence" (Bingham, 2004, p. 23). It stands to reason that the converse is also true, if educational spaces are toxic then the individual retreats and narrative identity of self corrodes. Both of the non-dominant youth (Aurora and Callisto) - whose narratives feature in this chapter - were exposed to toxic cultures within their schools and they both subsequently dropped out.

Longitudinal studies on the affects of bullying and peer aggression within schools have illuminated a direct correlation between bullying and eventual school drop out (Cornell, Gregoray, Huang & Fan, 2013). Bullying "generates a school climate of fear and insecurity, diminished motivation to attend school, and ultimately, poorer academic performance" (p. 139). Even though pervasive bullying contributes to a "noxious school climate that induces school avoidance, [and] disengagement" (p. 139) risk is mitigated if teachers use "proactive problem solving approaches in cases of bullying behavior" (Grumm & Hein, 2013, p. 306). Unfortunately, there were no teachers to protect either Aurora or Callisto or to try and re-establish a positive relational space. Nevertheless, their experiences were very different. Aurora's exposure to bullying led to her implosion and eventually, Callisto exploded.

6.2 Aurora's story - toxic schools (bullying, safety and wellbeing), implosion!

Tucker (et al., 2011, p. 310) contends that disconnection "is viewed as the primary source of human suffering", and in this section I examine how Aurora's ongoing exposure to bullying and peer victimisation led to her literal and emotional withdrawal from school. Peer victimisation is a "chronic stressor that has a traumatic impact on adolescent development, disrupting the individual's self-concept and trust in others" (Cornell, et al., 2013). Peer victimisation and bullying predispose young people, particularly girls, for internalizing mental health symptoms such as social anxiety and major depressive illness (Ghoul, et al., 2013).

Pryce and Frederickson (2013, p. 184) posit that bullying should be tackled "through consistent implementation of strategies at organisational, group and individual levels". Further, if preventative initiatives are implemented and identified by students they are positively received and it is suggestive that if bullying is to be appropriately tackled by educators 'that a stronger focus on staff listening to pupils, taking responsive action and following through could be required' (p. 197). However, when Aurora sought help for the bullying she was ignored by educators, who did not attempt to resolve the issue, and this left her feeling further isolated. As time passed, she socially withdrew and did her best to avoid attending school whatsoever (Cornell, et al. 2013). She fell into a pattern where she blocked herself from fully engaging with her educators and peers until she eventually became "stuck in a cycle of condemned isolation or 'locked out of the possibility of connection'"(Tucker, et al., p. 311).

6.2.1 Vignette - Aurora

Aurora's negative schooling experiences contributed to her decision to drop out of high school in year 11. *Teachers don't treat you like an individual. I used to love art but if you didn't do it in the way Miss wanted you didn't do it at all. You couldn't be creative or put your feelings into it so I left class. I don't do art anymore. Teachers don't explain anything. If you don't understand they say to look at the board or in a book, that's not helpful. They're getting paid to teach kids not to tell them to read books. They give you homework but they don't know what's going on in your life. We need extra money and mum works two jobs to get extra money. I have to look after my little brother, by the time dad's home I need to relax but no, I've got homework to do. If I don't do it I know that I'm going to get yelled at and shit, you can't tell them because they still expect it to be done. Our brain's already crammed we don't need to cram it again and again, you can only learn so much in a day. If you talk in class teachers make you stand up to answer questions, to humiliate you. I was sick of school, didn't want to learn anymore and went on my phone. One teacher took it and said I'd get it at the end of class. She changed her mind and said she was sending it up to the office. I was already having a bad day so I chucked everything from her desk onto the floor, flipped desks and chucked chairs. She could've given me my phone like she said she would, it was my last warning and the school would've kept it over the weekend and it's not theirs to have, I needed it.*

School bullying isolated Aurora and was compounded by teachers who failed to protect her. *I used to be a B average before I was bullied by the Kiwi's. They picked on everyone. I couldn't stand up for myself because a mob was waiting for me. My*

parents had to pick me up early. I was worried they'd be waiting and catch me on the way to the office. You can't learn when you know they'll be waiting for you. The teachers did nothing. I was suspended for fighting, dad said I didn't have to take shit from no one and the girl touched me first. Then the fucking government gets involved with your parents because you don't want to go because you're scared of bullying. Listening to music always helped. I'd put my iPod in my pocket and I'd know I wasn't the only person going through a tough time but the teachers were confrontational and wanted to take it from me. When I moved to Maiden Valley I didn't want to be that person that got bullied so I didn't do my work, they think you're pretty cool then.

Aurora's story is one of ongoing survival. *I listen to my funeral songs, I've already planned it. I've been in the family adolescent unit three times for trying to commit suicide. I'd always been strong and kept to myself but one day it got too much. Mum walked into my room and I was unconscious and from there I was self harming and trying to kill myself everyday. I didn't care if I got in trouble or the school called mum. I was there for 6 weeks, I spent my day leave in the local hospital, they had to flush everything out. I was only home for 15 minutes. I still try sometimes and I'm cutting everyday but I'm focused and I actually see myself having a future.*

Despite it all, Aurora has retained perspective and appreciates the efforts of those rare teachers *who actually care. When I was in classes with teachers that cared I wanted to go because it felt good when someone actually had hope and faith in you to do good. There are teachers that want to help every student but then there's teachers that have had so much crap from students they don't care anymore. The students choose not to learn, it's not a matter of not being able to learn. They're sick of school, you don't get a choice whether you want to go and it gets boring because you don't want to be there.* Aurora's sage advice for educators to *look into why kids are bullying, if it's their home life get them to counselling, if they're expelled they'll miss out on an education and get nowhere in life. Fix it, no one should have to be fucken scared going to school!*

6..2.2 Analysis

Aurora was insidiously bullied at West Waterfall. Research identifies that "bullying and peer victimization are highly associated with internalizing problems, including anxiety, depression, and reduced self-worth and self-esteem" (Ghoul, et al., 2013. p. 457). Once Aurora had been exposed to ongoing, progressive bullying she felt demoralised as *I couldn't stand up for myself because a mob was waiting for me*. Eventually Aurora unravelled, *I'd always been strong and kept to myself but one day it got too*

much. Mum walked into my room and I was unconscious and from there I was self harming and trying to kill myself everyday. Victimisation and co-morbid mental health illnesses - such as depression - cause reduced motivation and disengagement from learning, or as Aurora articulates, '*You can't learn when you know they'll be waiting for you.* Teasing and bullying is predictive of student dropout and non graduation and although Aurora originally tried relocating to a new school in the end she completely disengaged and dropped out of learning prior to her senior years of schooling (Cornell, et al., 2013). Aurora is profoundly impacted by her mental illness. Bullying and peer victimisation disrupted her self-concept and led to the abrasive corrosion of narrative self-identity. Since leaving school Aurora has spent time trying to emancipate herself by interpreting her lived-experience and looking for patterns (Pryor & Bright, 2008, p. 72; Freire, 1992; Cornell, et al., 2013). The one consistency she found was that *the teachers did nothing*. As a result, Aurora is bitter with her educators and the *fucking government [who] gets involved with your parents because you don't want to go because you're scared of bullying.*

Despite her experiences Aurora is circumspect in her appraisal of those students who bullied her *look into why kids are bullying, it it's their home life get them too counselling.* Cornell (et al., 2013, p. 139) link pervasive bullying to a noxious school culture and a "schoolwide impact on dropout rates." Aurora identified the perpetrators of her bullying as belonging to a particular racial group. Bullying behaviour is precipitated by fear, disrespect, anger, anxiety and negative peer networks' (Patton, et al. 2013, p. 254) and youth draw on stereotypical behaviours to gain acceptance and popularity (p. 254). Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008, p. 143) "believe that the hatred/rage/hostility/indignation that result from any group of people [including race] being denied their right[s]...and justice will ultimately cause a society to implode". Within schools this implosion manifests as rampant and violent bullying where non-dominant young people attempt to restore a sense of belonging and social capital via their memberships with subcultral groups such as gangs (Jensen, 2006). Violent gangs are characterised with non-dominant youth who attack in response to disempowerment. Windfield (2008, pp. 12-13) coins this process "secondary deviation [where] a person begins to create a new role of his own based on society's reaction to him."

Aurora's teachers took limited action to protect her from bullying and when it occurred she was the person who was removed and segregated *My parents had to pick me up early. I was worried that they'd be waiting and catch me on the way to the office.* The

normative hegemonic curriculum views conflict as detrimental to social life and educators do not reference it in academic curricula contexts. Although schools have punitive neoliberal procedural systems for bullying, in working-class schools, where students are depicted from deficit lenses, the issue is predominantly silenced by educators who ignore it (Apple, 2004). Hegemonic curriculum does not privilege conflict but it occurs regardless. When bullying is ignored by educators permanent damage and injury occurs to students like Aurora, *I still try sometimes* [suicide] *and I'm cutting everyday*.

Aurora's teachers abdicated their responsibility to provide a "safe and positive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation" (Dept. Ed, 2011b) and instead elected to depict her through the deficit prisms of low motivation, poor work ethic, disengaged, in short, as *at-risk* of educational failure. In reality, a toxic school culture led to Aurora's complete disengagement from school. Positive relational spaces are engendered when classroom climate and a sense of belonging is promoted by educators who are willing "to listen and take action when someone was being bullied" (Pryce & Frederickson, p. 193). When educators take proactive steps to interrupt and prevent bullying it improves the relational space and acts as a watershed because symbiotically "decreases in bullying and victimisation were associated with positive changes in sense of belonging and classroom climate" (p. 196). Hegemonic toxic school culture is repressive and Aurora was expected to maintain normalised social and pedagogical routines - *They give you homework but they don't know what's going on in your life* - as she toiled in the midst of pervasive misery that led to repeated hospitalisations, *I was there for 6 weeks*. Thompson (2011, p. 72) contends that the "soul of the individual has become one of the central sites through which the state has deployed power" and Aurora's tumultuous exposure to a toxic school culture progressed through despair, hopelessness, stagnation and finally complete abandonment (Friere, 1992).

Aurora passionately believes that *no one should have to be fuckin scared going to school* and Alisa agrees. Alisa is the SSPM at FLAME and has worked with *pointy end* youth, their case workers, schools, government and other service providers to build capacity and *better serve youth in our community.* She has a unique position as privileged observer and advocate for non-dominant youth. Her perspective on bullying and ES relational spaces is as follows:

I speak to young girls in here all the time who tell me "I survived". "I survived this week". Does every 16 year old not have a right to do a little more than survive the week? Surely that young person has the right to thrive the week through. Schools need to help young people work together. It's simple, if we're all going to attend in this classroom together lets create a contract. Some form of negotiated base line of how we're going to be. Schools don't do that they come in from a top down authoritarian point of view and young people can run amok underneath the rules. They're not invited to contribute to an actual agreement, a code of conduct that suits them, that is generated by them, that's enforceable by them. Peer control, not dictated but with an established norm. I believe that that's where the bullying culture has come, if you get more agreement then there'd be less violence.

Aurora's educators did not build effective relational spaces and she became reactive to the hegemonic expectations of her educators. She believes that *teachers don't treat you like an individual* and that they are *unhelpful* and challenges the power relations within schools. Aurora considers that *Teachers don't explain anything...they say look at the board or in a book, that's not helpful. They're getting paid to teach kids not to tell them to read books.* Aurora refuses to be *colonised* by the governing, regulating expectation of educators and when a teacher fastidiously followed the rules and threatened to send her phone to the office she *chucked everything from her desk onto the floor, flipped desks and chucked chairs* (Robinson, 2011). Aurora keenly rebuffs the deficit labels that were applied to her (Kalkhoff, et al. 2007) and calmly demands that educators take responsibility for what she perceives as unreasonable expectations - *Our brain's already crammed we don't need to cram it again and again, you can only learn so much in one day* - and their poor *practice*.

Shor (1992, p. 54) contends that "Students routinely hold back their voices as a means of resisting traditional classrooms where authority is unilateral" and curriculum uninspiring. Aurora would routinely withhold her voice from the classroom. Despite a keen interest in art - because of the potential to *be creative or put your feelings into it* - when her teacher prescriptively insisted that Aurora follow instructions she withdrew and doesn't *do art anymore.* Aurora has a desire to be autonomous and this engenders agency to resist the swarming disciplinary measures of the hegemonic covert curriculum (Giroux, 1983) that Foucault (in Thompson, 2011, p. 41) describes as, "punishing, coercing, controlling, measuring [and] knowing". She insists that teachers deliberately *humiliate you* if *you talk in class* and she actively chooses to disengage by subversively using her phone even though she is aware that "the cost of

that choice is educational marginalization" (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008, p. 7).

Aurora is held in high esteem in her familial *field* were both her cultural and social capital are highly valued. Her family are working class where *mum works two jobs to get extra money* and Aurora pitches in and looks after her *little brother* every day. However, her embodied cultural capital is neither understood nor valued by her educators in school, *By the time dad's home I need to relax, but no, I've got homework to do. If I don't do it I know that I'm going to get yelled at and shit, you can't tell them because they still expect it to be done.* Aurora's educators obscure the corporeal class barriers that obstruct her access to the hegemonic institutionalised cultural capital (Khalifa, 2010; Reay, 2004). Students like Aurora find themselves struggling against subjugation by the hegemonic hierarchical machinations of institutional *habitus.* Access to institutional cultural capital is representative of personal power but only accessible if you submit to the conditioning of the covert curriculum in a process that Foucault (1980, p. 159) describes as "power as a mutual and indefinite blackmail" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

In essence, Aurora's familial *habitus* is characterised by communal support, mutual respect and a strong work ethic. This is in stark contrast with the discordant *habitus* of West Waterfall where she is exposed to toxic practices and expected to reverently and diligently adopt the values of the institutionalised *habitus*, regardless of the detrimental effect this could have in her familial *field*. In order to access the institutionalised cultural capital she would likely need to forgo familial responsibilities to concentrate on doing additional reading, homework and assignments tasks (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Identity is formed in dialogue with larger cultural systems and meaningful social processes and is inextricably linked to student experiences and treatment within schools (Khalifa, 2010; Hammack, 2008). The habitus of Aurora's familial and school *field*s were often in conflict and one striking example was when her father encouraged her to defend herself because she *didn't have to take shit from no one*. Aurora followed his advice in the institutional *habitus* of the school *was suspended for fighting*. Unlike Adrienne and Anakin, Aurora joined the "30-40 per cent of young people who are making the active choice not to complete high school" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 1).The negative interaction between the dominant meta-narratives of the institutional *habitus* clashed with the counter-narratives of her familial *field* and persuaded her of the legitimacy of her exclusion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Johnson, 2005).

By and large schools do not actively create optimum learning environments that maximise the human agency of non-dominant youth and it is unsurprising that they decide not to continue to engage in schooling (Valencia, 2010; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Nevertheless, the "importance of at least one supportive adult is well recognized in research on...childhood trauma" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 156). Aurora has a dichotomous relationship with teachers. She will violently restore power to self when she thinks teacher are unfair but she has also been inspired by affirming educators who created safe relational spaces and placed a focus on listening to their students (Pryce & Frederickson, 2013). Freire (1992, p. 101) contends that dialogue becomes meaningful when the agents in the dialogue retain identity and grow together, "it implies a sincere, fundamental respect on the part of the subjects engaged in it" and is hampered by hegemonic authoritarianism. Aurora's agency and capacity was nurtured by those rare educators who fostered empowering dialogue - *When I was in classes with teachers that cared I wanted to go because it felt good when someone actually had hope and faith in you to do good.*

Aurora valued educators who developed effective relational spaces and this has afforded her insight and perspective into what causes some educators to give up - *there's teachers that have had so much crap from students they don't care anymore* (Pryce & Frederickson, 2013). Students are often an invaluable "source of information about what helps and hinders them" (Smyth, et al. 2010, p. 62) and Aurora could clearly envision the ways that schools should be organised (Apple, 2004). During the focus group interviews she was keen to pass on her insights:

- *When teachers don't give a fuck kids just don't want to be there. Less than twenty percent of your teachers give a fuck all the way from year eight to twelve;*
- *Teachers don't like kids being individuals;*
- *Kids choose not to learn, it's not a matter of them not being able to;*
- *Homework is stupid...you can only learn so much in one day;*
- *Banning phones and iPods just causes conflict!;*

And advice:

- *Tell kids they control their futures, it inspires them to do great things;*
- *Let kids use their phones to take photos of the whiteboard and we'll have more time to learn;*

- *If teachers are really bothered by phones have a box and make everyone put their phone in it when they're walking into class;*
- *Don't give suspensions, they don't work, they're just like a holiday;*
- *Don't expel kids, unless you absolutely have too, if they're expelled they'll miss out on an education and get nowhere in life; and*
- *Teachers need a new way of teaching not just from a book. If they make it more fun by letting the kids do some lessons outside that'd help. If you've got science go out and look at stuff. If you've got English let the students read a book outside. If kids are sitting in a classroom all day they're not going to do it. If we were to go outside to read a book I'd probably read it and I don't read!*

Although Aurora has been profoundly injured by the toxic school culture at West Waterfall she is developing a fledgling counter-narrative. The nurturing relational spaces of Workwise Academy and FLAME have been beneficial. Niles, the facilitator for the girls group, is a youth-worker with extensive experience in building efficacy and agency in non-dominant youth with serious mental health issues. Together he and the female FLAME participants co-constructed an affirming relational space:

> *It's a mature learning environment that really appeals to them. They refer to us on a first name basis, we take time to listen to them and give them control over their environment. They're empowered to make conscious decisions about what affects them and we let them guide us as individuals who work together. They come up with their own rules and the first rule that they came up with was "No Bullying!" Many of them have been constantly bullied at school and when they stick up for themselves they get in trouble. They feel that they've been left out in the cold and feel that the school does nothing about giving them the support they really do require. We treat them as unique individuals who can't be treated like the masses.*

Aurora's reprieve from the constant barrage at school and her affirming relationships in FLAME has helped her realise that she was not alone in her oppression (Yosso, 2005). She is no longer enmeshed within the power relations of school and has begun to examine her lived-experiences with a view to restorying herself from perspectives of capacity. Pals (2006, p. 101) contends that "our personal histories precede our explicit understandings and so, our lives need to be recounted in order to be understood." Identity threat and difficult emotional experiences afford non-dominant youth opportunities to have a second chance at constructing narrative identity. Second

chances emerge through lost or abandoned opportunities paving the way for transformation of self that incorporate opportunities to persevere and reconstruct from healthier capacity building perspectives that promote hope, purpose, competency and joy (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Pals, 2006; Kings & Hicks, 2006; Wellik & Kazemek, 2008). Smyth, et al. (2010) note that what "shines through in this body of work is the ways in which young people who are typically pathologized as 'at risk', 'abnormal', 'troublesome', 'deviant', 'non-academic' and so on learn to contest and re-write/right these disempowering and dehumanising labels...to envision themselves...[as] at promise". Aurora is currently doing just that, life is still tough but *I'm focused and I actually see myself having a future.*

This analysis has examined the relationship between Aurora's exposure to the toxic school culture - including pervasive bullying - at West Waterfall and her deteriorating mental health. The discordance between her familial and school *fields* was illuminated and Aurora's insights and advice for educators were presented. Finally, a fledgling glimmer of capacity, efficacy and hope was outline.

6.3 Callisto's story - toxic schools (bullying, safety and wellbeing), explosion!

Callisto's experience of bullying was characterised by a "marked power imbalance" (Cornell, et al., p. 138) between her and her aggressors. She was socially isolated from the moment she commenced high school and educator inaction meant that possible support was withheld. Patton, et al., (2013, p. 250) contend that peer relationships "are an important part of youth's microsystem, which involves youth interacting with, influencing and socializing with each other". Negative peer relationships - or in Callisto's case non-existent peer relationships - leave an indelible mark on narrative self-identity as victims feel isolated and somehow to blame (Cornell, et al., 2013). When students are involved in teasing and bullying they are more likely "to receive disciplinary consequences, including school suspension" (p. 146) and although it seems intuitively flawed that victims should fall into this category this is what occurred for Callisto. Downes (2013, p. 351) contends that the "unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger, with incidents related to teacher-pupil interaction ... more often perceived as a cause for anxiety and stress than as a resource for satisfaction and empowerment by the pupils" and this was Callisto's experience. Educators provided her with no support or assistance when she was being bullied; however, their dictatorial authoritarian hegemonic expectations caused Callisto great anxiety and led her to believe that she was being singled out and treated unfairly. Eventually she exploded.

6.3.1 Vignette - Callisto

Callisto left Boulder High during year 11 due to expulsion. She finally exploded after systematic insidious ongoing bullying.

I got my head slammed in a toilet. Into an actual toilet! I used to come home with bruises, black arms, broken wrists, broken fingers. I was teased about the steel plates in my knees because of the scars, a soda bottle was dropped on my head, rocks were thrown at me and my bike was stolen. They'd all join in, I was mobbed afterschool, and they make you feel smaller by getting more people onto you. My mum tried dobbing, telling the principal and stuff, but they just wouldn't listen to her. The teachers did nothing at all they'd say 'you're okay get over it! I think it's hard for people who are getting bullied, you just don't understand why you're getting bullied, all you hear are people saying shit about you and you can't do anything. I used to always put my headphones in so I didn't have to listen to what they were saying. I used music to block everything out; it was my release from what was happening. Music got everything out and was one of the reasons I stayed in school for as long as I did. But the teacher would just come and rip my earphones out and take my iPod off me. Once it got confiscated for a whole term. I've got scars all up my arms. I couldn't sleep and no one was doing anything about it. I ended up getting to the point where I was cutting my arms every night. It wasn't just to release anger; it was to feel pain instead of feeling like I was dead inside. I had no soul at one point. I hated school. Soon after I left school the cutting stopped.

In the end I did start rebelling. I dropped from being a straight A student and the teachers really don't care about you then. If you don't fit into a certain expectation of what the teacher wants they don't help you at all. As soon as my grades dropped they went, nah she's worthless and kept kicking me out. I didn't have to do anything, all I did was walk in the room and they'd be like, get out. I stopped going for a while but was forced back because of the fines and stuff. I hated everyone and rocked up in band shirts and black hair, I completely rebelled. I was tired of teachers doing nothing, I was suspended every other week, my file's full of them. My dad taught me that I should stand up for myself so I fought back. When the boys threw shit at me I'd run up to the balcony and kick them in the nuts. One day I totally flipped and got expelled. Some guy threw a really heavy dictionary at my head. He dared me to punch him so I did, in retaliation. He didn't even get in trouble for it. I did!

The best thing about going to school was coming home at the end of the day. I reckon all bullies should be given written warnings and then suspension. After that EXPULSION! Simple, it's not fair on the people that are getting bullied. No-one should have to feel that low that they don't want to be there. I'm going to bible school now and trying to figure out a different path through religion. When I dropped out and I went to TAFE everyone that used to bully me, actually sent me apologies on facebook.
Too little, too late!

6.3.2 Analysis

The protracted systemic bullying that Callisto endured at Boulder High shaped her lived-experience at Boulder High. Just a few of the injustices and indignities that she endured included having her *head slammed into a toilet...come[ing] home with bruises, black arms, broken wrists, broken fingers...I was teased about the steel plates in my knees...[had] a soda bottle dropped on my head...rocks were thrown at me...my bike stolen...[and being] mobbed afterschoo'*. Her injuries were not only physical they were psychological *I had no soul at one point.* Toxic relational practices were condoned by educators who would respond by saying *'you're okay, get over it* and forced her to dwell in the margins. When educators dismiss bullying it is in an endeavour to create 'social *equilibrium* and system *maintenance*...[by a] denial that there be conflict' (Apple, 2004, p. 87).

Boulder High services a working-class community and Smyth, et al. (2009, p. 113) contend that "public high schools in disadvantaged communities are being constructed 'as a residual place of last resort for those unable to exercise choice or flight'". Bullying has become more normalised and accepted in recent years. As Giroux (2009, p. 4) contends "public schools are increasingly viewed as a site of crime, warehouses or containment centers". The deviant deficit victim-blaming labels ascribed to non-dominant youth have brought about new social norms where there is a totalisation and expectation that working-class youth are violent and aggressive. This leads to lowered standards where brutality is accepted and nothing is done to prevent crimes against the person. These new dominant meta-narratives are foisted upon young people like Callisto and they are expected to both submit and accept this socially stratified status quo.

Bullies adopt the deviant labels assigned to them and often form subversive groups that utilise "antisocial ways of creating mutual respect among their peers" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 158). Subversive subcultural groups - or gangs of bullies - violently

reclaim relational spaces and reify their status or prestige within the subculture. Bullies generally demonstrate hedonic well-being and in their own way are displaying resistance to the schools that label and injure them. Callisto was unable to escape the bullies at Boulder High as subversive subcultural groups cannot be dismissed by those who choose not to accept them. Non-dominant youth who accept their deviant labels distance themself from non-labelled youth and throughout most of her time at Boulder High Callisto was *a straight A student* (Bauer, et al., 2008; Valencia, 2010; Giroux, 1983; Jensen, 2006; Bernburg, et al. 2006, Yosso, 2005).

Initially, Callisto had no trouble adjusting to the academic curriculum achieving high academic results and in her words was not *rebelling.* Stereotypically she met the student identified criteria of Thompson's (2011) *'Good Student'.* She was organised, completed all class and homework, was respectful to teachers and had good time-management skills. Labels within schools extend to students who conform to hegemonic norms and Callisto's label of the *'Good Student'* was in binary opposition to many of her peers and positioned her as *other. S*he became a target for ridicule, scorn and aggression. Further, her label of a *'Good Student'* was limited as it afforded her no social capital with those educators who had encouraged it in the first place. They not only failed to protect her from the perpetrators but in an act of psychological violence retrospectively labelled her from a deviant perspective (Windfield, 2008). Given the circumstances, it is unsurprising that Callisto became disillusioned and demoralized and *In the end I did start rebelling.* Windfield (2008, p. 18) argues that "This 'rereading' of an individual demonstrates how the labeling process 'creates' deviants". Callisto's lived-experiences within school debunks any notion of meritocratic success. She was aspirational, hardworking, respectful, diligently followed instructions and it all amounted to nothing (Thompson, 2011; Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Boulder High's toxic school culture led Callisto to "school avoidance, disengagement, and eventually contribute[d] to the decision to leave school prior to graduation" (Cornell et al. 2013, p. 139). Before expulsion, Callisto attempted to drop out of school and self exclude *but was forced back because of the fines and stuff.* She keenly felt the lack of adult support and during the focus group interviews spoke about *the one teacher I could go to if I had trouble;* however, in the end this relationship left her with a sense of abandonment because *All the good teachers ever did was leave.* Callisto's, adoption of non-conforming, confronting behaviours with educators signified a power struggle, an attempt to wrest back dignity and sense of self "against subjection, against forms of

subjectivity and submission" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 212). Callisto's resistance was in retaliation to teachers who *thought she was worthless* because she did not *fit into a certain expectation of what the teacher wants*. At times resistance can be positively transformative but in Callisto's case it eroded her positive self-identity because she depicted herself through a deviant deficit lens, *I'm a horrible person when you actually thing about it* - focus group interview (Smyth, et al. 2010; Pals, 2006).

Callisto's resistance school was tantamount to a push back against the machine-like machinations of schooling. Her previous docility converted to hostility and she *was suspended every other week.* She completely rejected the banking model of education and refused to be filled up with knowledge - *I didn't do English because I had no help from the teachers. Anyway it was always the same book every fricking single year* (Shor, 1992; Smyth, et al., 2010). Her opposition included symbolic resistance against the hegemonic normalised objectified cultural capital when she *rocked up in band shirts and black hair, I completely rebelled* (Giroux, 1983). Callisto's family relied on her income to provide additional support for the family and when she decided to rebel she refused to continue to acquiesce and give up her valued personal time - *I had to work. I'd finish school and it'd take me half an hour to get home. I'd jump in the shower straight away, get my uniform on and go. I wouldn't do homework at all. I don't see the point of doing homework. I used to do it but I had no time to relax.* Her experience with competing work and family priorities is indicative of a middle-class inability to identify true poverty and succumbing "to labelling people and treating them in condescending, patronizing, deficit, and victim blaming ways" (Smyth, et al., 2010; Windfield, 2008).

Giroux, (1983, p. 108) argues that the "notion of resistance points to the need to understand more thoroughly the complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the interface between their own lived experiences and structures of domination and constraint." The authoritative stances of educators lead to Callisto becoming increasingly belligerent. Her refusal to conform was driven in large part by self-preservation and a need to escape the chaotic complexities that had arisen in her life in response to the toxic school culture at Boulder (Robinson, 2011). The physical and psychological insecurities of Boulder's toxic relational spaces provoked identity threat in Callisto. In order to story a new identity she turned to music as a form of safe existential social regeneration and aligned self with removed subcultural genres - *Music...was my release from what was happening. Music got everything out and was one of the reasons I stayed in school for as long as I did* (Hammack, 2008). The

hegemonic hierarchical covert curricula of schools is necessarily corrective. Its express purpose is to narrow "the gap between the nonconforming and the conforming by making the nonconformist more like the conformist" (Thompson, 2011, p. 31). In this sense, Callisto's teachers responded predictably when they vehemently policed her iPod use but "Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 110). In Callisto's case, all they did was to re-victimise the victim - *all you hear is people saying shit about you and you can't do anything. I used to always put my headphones in so I didn't have to listen to what they were saying ... But the teacher would just come and rip my headphones out and take my iPod off me. Once I got it confiscated for a whole term.*

Freire (1992) contends that upheaval in the soul leads to hopelessness and schools use "strategies of power to infiltrate the interstices of the soul" (Thompson, 2011, p. 34). The identity threat invoked by Boulder's toxic school culture left Callisto psychologically shattered; in fact she *had no soul.* Young people who endure systemic ongoing bullying both physical and non physical (social exclusion, rumours, humiliation etc) typically develop low self-esteem, social anxiety, depressive symptoms, are lonely, isolate themselves and self-blame. Gender is a factor as females are more likely to develop internalizing behaviours (Ghoul, et al. 2013; & Patton, et al. 2013). The internal depressive affect that correlates with bullying erodes the individual's sense of self and can lead to increased regret and heightened distress (King & Hicks, 2006). Callisto felt like a complete social outcast and completely lost her 'self' and began mutilating - *I ended up getting to the point that I was just cutting my arms every night. It wasn't just to release anger it was to feel pain instead of feeling like I was dead inside.*

Ironically, Callisto's expulsion from school saved her, although she was deeply incensed at the injustice of it - *Some guy threw a heavy dictionary at my head. He dared me to punch him so I did, in retaliation. He didn't even get in trouble for it. I did!* When Callisto was expelled she began to positively restory her self-identity. She *went to TAFE* and is proud that she is *going to bible school now*. In an act of positive affirmation she has forgiven the perpetrators of the bullying after *everyone that used to bully me, actually sent me apologies on facebook.* Callisto and Aurora have found the relational space of FLAME affirming and healing as they have been able to and share their feelings and help one another move towards "self-understanding, personal growth, [and] generativity" (King & Hicks, 2006, p. 122).

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Alisa, the SSPM in the research site succinctly sums up the experiences and damage that is caused by toxic cultures in schools.

> *They've been ground down, ground down by the education system, ground down by lack of family support, ground down by their peers. They've been bullied, they've been ridiculed and the defence mechanisms they've built up are in contrast to all of that. When they come to us we can see they're struggling with low self-esteem and it makes sense that if we build up their self esteem several other barriers are going to disappear. The key that's going to unlock it is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If we take care of the primal needs [physiological, safety and sense of belonging] the rest will take care of itself. What schools are trying to do is higher level learning in the other tiers [self-esteem and self-actualisation]. They don't have the time patience or funding to take care of the base stuff. Sense of love and belonging, that whole section, the whole third tier, gone it doesn't exist. We need to change the language that we use because when people like us [the educator researcher and herself] in positions of authority talk about 'at-risk youth', at risk of what? At risk of running away, at risk of being beaten, at risk of being sexually abused, at risk of going without medication for a mental health issue that has not been clearly identified, at risk of being made homeless by a drunken FIFO parent that's not there. Yes they are at risk! Are they risky youths? No! It's about the language we, in terms of us the bureaucracy, use.*

The analysis of Callisto's narrative vignette illuminated the relationship between toxic school cultures and the failure of teachers to develop and nurture safe relational spaces. It further examines the correlation between toxic school culture, social isolation, indifferent educators and the reconstruction of self-identity to encompass the notion of the aggressive rebellion that lead Callisto to explode.

In this chapter the narrative vignettes of Aurora and Callisto were presented to illuminate the ways in which toxic school cultures - including rampant bullying - erode safety and wellbeing. Further, the subsequent interrelationship between Aurora's and Callisto's damaging mental health conditions is acknowledged and the corrosion of narrative self-identity outlined. In the next chapter Darth and Aurora's narrative vignettes illuminates the pitfalls of labelling students through deviant deficit prisms. Further, the analysis of the vignettes explores the relationships between devalued sub-cultural capital, deficit prisms and the co-construction of narrative identity.

Chapter 7 Narrative vignette - the dark side

7.1 Introduction

Valencia (2010, p. 18) argues that deviant deficit victim-blaming labels are a form of 'pseudoscience' and like the earlier eugenics movement it is deeply flawed and has an embedded negative bias towards non-dominant people including those of colour and the working-class. The deficit thinking model 'ignores the role of systemic factors in creating school failure, lacks empirical verification, relies more on ideology than science, grounds itself in classism, sexism, and racism, and offers counterproductive prescriptions for school success' (p. 7). Becker (cited in Windfield, 2008, p.14) posits that social constructs such as schools create deviance by defining 'the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance' and by applying those rules to particular groups of people and labelling them as outsiders in a process of *othering.*

The two research participants whose narrative vingettes are analysed in this chapter were publically labelled, singled out, and ultimately both of them accepted "the ascription of deviance" (Kalkhoff, et al., 2007, p. 494) as they viewed themselves through the "eyes of others" (Windfield, 2008, p. 9) to adopt expected roles as a component of the co-construction of narrative self-identity. Hammack (2008, p. 233) contends that the construction of personal narratives fuse elements of daily experience with the experiences of the collective and when non-dominant youth dialectically interact with the deficit models that they are depicted from they can adopt the dominant meta-narratives of the coloniser to reproduce the social order and maintain the stratified status quo by "blaming themselves for their own failures" (Shor. 1992, p. 110). *Otherised, colonised* non-dominant youth are disempowered and dehumanised within schools (Atkins, 2004; Johnson, 2005; McNay, 1999; Hammack 2008).

Darth and Maya's competencies and strengths were not acknowledged in the schools they attended; however, they both resisted the dominant meta-narratives with confrontation and in Maya's case with complete absentia. For Darth and Maya agency and capacity were undermined as they both dropped any semblance of learner identity thus restricting their future life trajectories (Smyth, et al., 2010; Valencia. 2010; Giroux. 1983).

7.2 Darth's story - destructive sub-cultural deficit prisms.

Darth's subcultural and familial capital was constructed through deficit prisms at West Waterfall. Kalkhoff, et al., (2007, p. 495) contend that "individuals do not passively succumb to deviant labels but rather actively select a response" and Darth readily

adopted the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that he was allotted. Although childhood had been difficult for Darth he was staunchly protective of his father and brother and the pathologising view of his family, from a "single exotic model of a family in poverty" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 21), likely explains his rapid alignment of self as deviant. Non-dominant young people have complex lives and Robinson (2011, p. 30) posits that there is a "tendency for schools to produce students who begin to participate in their own oppression". Darth viewed his educators as authoritative power mongers and he had no interest in subjugation. He violently and actively resisted the system but in so doing he participated in his own oppression as his active decision to attain no academic credentials resulted in him being stratified into intergenerational poverty because his access to paid employment or further education evaporated.

Darth's lived-experience within his school mirrors Smyth and Wrigley's (2013, pp. 36-37) depiction of stratified class reproduction:

> In the social and cultural workings of class, we find the complex and messy interweaving of class identification, dis-identification, and misidentification; consciousness and unconsciousness; habitus and reflection; lived experience on a day-to-day basis and through crises; collusion and resistance; struggles for short -and long-term goals; ethics and aesthetics; ideology and theory; structure and reproduction.

7.2.1 Vignette - Darth

Darth attended West Waterfall High through to the end of year 12 in 2012 but didn't graduate. He hated school, considers himself *an arsehole by force of birth* and is fiercely proud of his troublemaking reputation. *I was that annoying person who walks into random classrooms, stares at you and walk outs. We liked to break teachers in, break their spirits, anything for street cred. Suspensions are a holiday, I got them for biting, making fun of others, bringing alcohol, selling alcohol, you name it. I'd just go home, order pizza and play video games.*

At a young age Darth took a cleaver to the back of his head courtesy of mum. He remembers nothing of the assault other than waking in hospital. His parents divorced a few months later and he's done his best to avoid the *nagging toothless bitch* since. He's not seen his sister for five years because she moved to mums. He idolises his 21 year old brother who's currently serving a ten month sentence for a sex related crime. Darth shares a love of computers with most of his family. *Dad was a computer fixer, dad's brother owns a computer shop, my brother loves computers, my sister loves*

computers. Darth's close with dad but the *stubborn bastard* should've been dead years ago after a decade long battle with heart disease.

Sun Tzu is an ancient Chinese military tactician who is credited with writing *Art of War*. He is also Darth's idol. Darth always carries a weapon, (usually shivs - *just in case*) and normalises excessive violence. Darth had *all the really violent people swarm around me at school. I've been involved in big arsed punch ups or stab off and I put a guy in hospital because he pissed me off.* Torture fascinates him and consequently he self mutilates, *I've tried my fair share of different torture techniques on myself, bamboo hurts like a bitch but leaves no marks, I never used to be double jointed but that's what happens when you experiment with torture.*

Darth used *pre-emptive strikes* in response to school bullying and strongly believes that *violence makes you stronger, more adapted and able to learn. It's survival of the fittest if they came at me I beat the shit out of them. I always relied on a pre-emptive strike. It's easier to put them in hospital, they start it and I defend myself. Nasty words may start it but the hurtful part is the punch when it hits your face.* For Darth strategic pre-emptive attacks are justified because the teachers don't care, *so much shit happens in that school you get stabbed, no one gives a shit.* As far as he's concerned the teachers are too lax and *just turn the other way. It's the rules of the jungle. If you never lose a fight people know not to fight you.* He believes that bullies get away with it 90% of the time and that the victims *tend to do the most damage. The bullies aim for non-vital areas while the defenders aim for spots which will stop the fight all together, therefore causing more damage, making them look like the attacker.*

Darth sees school rules and behaviour management as tools of power and control. *Uniforms are like a symbol of the power that teachers try to have over students. It makes the teachers seem unified and for the student's it's a dictatorship. I got suspended for wearing random clothes, they never asked why. It was restrictive and itchy, bloody itchy. They make students go around at recess and lunch picking up rubbish, it's a humiliation thing. It doesn't work, people don't react to humiliation as much anymore. West Waterfall is basically a prison. They lock all the gates to keep people in. There's big arsed metal fences with spikes sticking out so if you try to climb them you're going to get stabbed.* He believes that students *intentionally piss off the teachers, it's a natural measure and is simply paybacks. It's a challenge in breaking rules. If you make a rule people want to break it, give them enough incentive and they'll break it.*

West Waterfall had 50 annoying teachers and only four or five good ones according to Darth. When he was in year 8 a teacher accused him of plagiarism. As an avid writer of fan fiction when he was given a task to write a fantasy story he tackled it with great enthusiasm. *I wrote 10, 000 words and handed it in two days after the task was handed out.* But the teacher was *too lazy to read* it and accused Darth of plagiarism, *it was so detailed they thought I copied it. That's when I started sleeping in every class. So really early on that was it, goodbye, you accuse me of doing something I didn't do and that's it.* Darth is passionate about history, particularly *the Ming Dynasty, Attila the Hun, Sun Tzu and Genghis Khan* but at West Waterfall he was forced to study *this modern shit.* His inability to study topics of interest led to him pursuing his own interests in an aggressive, confrontational way. *I just continued my own research and wrote on subjects that had nothing to do with what we were learning. I don't hate school I hate the teachers in school. Anyone who annoyed me and my study. If I'm sitting down doing my own thing don't disturb me.* Despite his negativity Darth valued teachers who tried to get him to learn through his interest areas, had a sense of humour and treated students equally. *Good teachers treat everyone fairly, if your work's late they don't bitch and they care about you. One teacher got me a new laptop to use when mine broke. Another was the comical type, he'd take control of all the computers through some system of his, one time he even posted a meme. Clever teachers use trickery to get me interested. They know I tend to stick around my usual thing but one teacher changed it and got me thinking about prisons, ships and the local area. Another teacher would give me the work for months down the track I did it whenever and when the test came I did better than most people.*

Darth's not very good with people. *I keep my emotions away because the human factor is difficult. Correction, humans are stupid, I gave up on them years ago, too confusing. I reference everything to a book, they're easier to understand than people.* But despite this he found friendships with 'The Outsiders' a West Waterfall gang. *We were nicknamed 'The Outsiders' because we mainly stuck to the corners off rooms and stuff. There were roughly 30 of us and most of us were smart in a specific subject we'd discuss war plans and shit like that. If you get into a gang then you tend to stay around them more and exclude anyone else. No one wanted our territory and if no one troubled us we didn't trouble them. We stood together like a little building and yeah be respectful otherwise you're going to get slaughtered. Once we got into a massive fight and it taught everyone not to fuck with us. Before that we were targets, everyone*

would move into our turf and kick us out but with that fight we carved ourselves out a nice big territory.

Darth has a well hidden dark secret, *most people just knew me as a lazy war mongerer* but he's an internet hacker. *I can bypass a few systems; I know what to look for when I need to look for it.* He was head hunted by an 'undernet' ringleader to join a hacking community whilst still at school. *The community I'm with has 426 hackers. I can give myself unlimited phone credit, free downloads, movies that haven't been released yet and any data I want. I've looked at 20 year old military code, it's the only stuff I can get my hands on without getting busted. We work in binary, it's easy to hide your tracks, so simple and finds you stuff really quickly. When someone releases a new virus they release the antivirus to the community so we don't get affected. That way if one hacker gets taken out the others can take his data away before he gets in trouble. The pros are free downloads and any data I want. The cons, you get busted, you get fucked over and massive fines. My community keeps ourselves up to date and we don't do anything major. Only the ones who are really cocky or really confident don't go anonymous. I know that so I stay anonymous.*

7.2.3 Analysis

Darth was "seen as aggressive; insubordinate; apathetic toward, and disengaged from, learning; and as being nonconformist toward school culture" (Khalifa, 2010, p. 626). He bears a striking resemblance to the hyperghettoized students that are described by Khalifa in his 2010 journal article "*Validating social and cultural capital of hyperghettoized at-risk students"*. This is noteworthy because Darth is non-dominant from class perspectives but he is white and the deviant deficit victim-blaming that he acquired are indicitave of the fact that no matter the circumstances, when it occurs, class injury is pervasive and devastating for all non-dominant youth.

Darth is an example of what can happen when non-dominant young people accept their labels and adopt the characteristics that they are assigned, he is *fiercely proud of his troublemaking reputation* and considers himself *an arsehole by force of birth*. The deviant labels that Darth acquired were endogenous and focussed on perceived failures that were predominately behaviours, emotional and educational. As Apple (2004, p. 128) notes, these labels diverted "attention from both the inadequacies of the educational institution itself and what bureaucratic, cultural, and economic conditions [that] caused the necessity of applying these constructs originally" (Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004; Windfield, 2008; Valencia, 2010).

People are born immature relying on others for survival and learning about our own capacities through our involvement with others, including physical touch and emotional support. It is through "the communicative processes of socialisation we come to acquire concepts, emotional schema and behavioural repertoires through which we develop our self-conceptions" (Atkins, 2004, p. 346). Darth's home environment has had a twofold effect on him, on the one hand, he has been emotionally disempowered and on the other hand, he has had his capacity built and felt affirmed. As a young child Darth's mother violently assaulted him when she *took a cleaver to the back of his head* and he has had virtually no contact since. He relies on his father for guidance and support; however, due to his father's chronic life threatening illness he has acted as his carer and been ground down and kept on the edge waiting for his imminent death, *the stubborn bastard should've been dead years ago.* When Darth entered West Waterfall he required support and assistance in a nurturing relational space to further develop the academic passions (historical, computers and writing) that his father had instilled in him - *Dad and I would watch documentaries together, you know usually about war and stuff. We'd chat and he'd always read my stories. He really helped with computers, before he got sick he invented a computer program for taxi booking systems, I've learnt a lot from him - focus group interview.* However, rather than acknowledging Darth's strengths and helping him build efficacy the school focused on his "irretrievable parental histories of failure and moral decay" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 74) and "construct[ed] a particular image around a range of pathological deficits that collectively add[ed] up to a picture of hopelessness" (p. 74).

Darth keenly felt the power and control struggles that manifested in West Waterfall - *Uniforms are like a symbol of the power that teachers try to have over students. It makes them seem unified and for the students it's a dictatorship.* He staunchly refused to buckle and subjugate. Darth was adamant that West Waterfall was deliberately constructed as *basically a prison* and contends that students knowingly retaliate to the domination by *intentionally piss[ing] off the teachers. It's a natural measure and is simply paybacks. It's a challenge in breaking rules. If you make a rule people want to break it, give them enough incentive and they'll break it.* Foucault (in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982) contends that disciplinary power seeks invisibility by focusing on the individual and ordering it and within schools this emerges as deviant deficit victim-blaming labels. Nevertheless, many students like Darth, do recognise disciplinary power for what it is, domination, and their defiance, oppositional behaviours and disengagement are a form of active resistance because they refuse to be *colonised*

into the hegemonic behavioural norms of the middle-class status quo - *Teachers try and get power and control over the students but have you seen what happened with William Wallace? They took away their swords so they made new ones! -focus group interview* (Giroux, 1983; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Bucholtz, 2002; Thompson, 2011; Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

The exhortations of power and control from educators at West Waterfall provoked Darth into depicting his own self-identity from violent, powerful and controlling perspectives he *always carries a weapon...normalises excessive violence and believes that he had 'all the really violent people swarm around him.* Darth thinks school is not for education but for learning to navigate dangerous social spaces. His response is to embark on what he terms pre-emptive strikes *I put a guy in hospital because he pissed me off...It's the rules of the jungle. If you never lose a fight people know not to fight you.* Hammack (2008, p. 231) posits that our ideological identification is based on the shared representations of a group or culture and the deviant labels that Darth adopted served a dual function. They served to resist the middle-class meta-narratives that were attempting to control him and they served to bolster his subcultural social capital as it afforded him a level of esteem and admiration from some of his peers (Valencia, 2010; Jensen, 2006).

Despite Darth's assertions that *the human factor is difficult...I gave up on them years ago [because they're] too confusing* identity forms in dialogue with others and "is a deep and meaningful social process" (Hammack, 2008, p. 235). Our dialogic conversations help us form our realities and the means from which to construct self. Non-dominant youth, like Darth, seek affirming relational spaces within schools and if they are not co-constructed with effective educators from perspectives of learner identity then the students stake their territories and make their own (Corcoran, 2007; Patton, et al. 2013; Pryce & Frederickson, 2013; Jensen, 2006). For Darth that was becoming a foundational member of *The Outsiders*:

> *I formed the 'The Outsiders,' we stayed to ourselves in our own secluded areas and stuck to the corners of the rooms. We'd discuss nerdy things like gaming, war plans and other interesting shit. Most of us are really smart but only about our specific subject. Strong gangs have thirty to sixty members and we had thirty. No one really made trouble with us but we didn't make trouble for others either, I guess you'd say we were neutral territory. As long as you didn't cause trouble we'd share but if you started with us we'd stand together like a little building. It's usually minor tensions that spark things off they kind of*

escalate. One time 'The Outsiders' got into a massive fight that taught everyone not to fuck with us. Before that we were targets. With that fight we carved ourselves a nice big chunk of territory.

Gangs hold certain territory, they control it and do whatever they want. At West Waterfall the 'Soceroos' control the football field. You don't screw with 'The Basketballers' because they'll come at you, you can play casually but if you start shit there's trouble. The 'Jocks' are sporty arsed people, they're really strong but everyone tries to take out their kingpins, the big arsed rugby players, then they scuttle. They know they can't win but it doesn't stop them from trying to get street cred. Another gang's the 'Thugs' because they're big muscly idiots. You can muck about and shit but if you get into a fight they'll gang up on you. People are more confident to fight in groups. 'The Hot Chics' and the 'Ugly Chicks' literally avoid each other like the plague. I was friends with this nice chick but as soon as she joined 'The Hot Chics' she literally dropped every other social group. If you get into a gang you tend to stick with them and exclude everyone else. The teachers just don't get it. They might know about major territory areas but they know nothing about mediocre ones and they don't realise that just about everyone's in some sort of gang. They can't do anything anyway, well they could but they only ever have a few teachers out at a time. Basically they'd need to have more surveillance - focus group interview.

Groups that are labelled as deviant provide social support for their members. Deviant labels can easily be applied to the gang that Darth was involved in; however, when we do we assume that the gang "is homogenous in their make up...[we] ignore that deviance is created by society'" (Windfield, 2008, p. 14). When educators depict gangs from deviant perspectives they are reinforcing hegemonic norms and actively sanctioning marginalisation. Gangs assist non-dominant youth to story identity in creative capacity building ways. Members form dialogic relationships to symbolically and physically work through challenging lived-experience. They give currency to subcultural social capital and their members scaffold one another in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to both problem solve and create affirming relational spaces (Bernburg, 2006; Corcoran, 2007; Bradbury & Miller, 2010; Jensen, 2006). Gangs exist in temporal physical spaces, they are contact zones in the cracks or fissures of the tension-filled midst of the milieu (Clandinin, et al., 2009). For students like Aurora these subcultural groups injure and erode narrative self-identity but for students like Darth they are potentially transformative. The familial social capital - an expanded notion of a family that includes our kin who share the same classed, gendered, racialised, identity as us (Yosso, 2005) - that is engendered in these subcultural groups has the potential to transform as non-dominant groups realise that others are

dealing with the same or similar issues. They feel less socially isolated and "identities can shift to accommodate new ways of being" (Hammack, 2008, p. 235)

Darth is confrontational and he aggressively disengaged from learning at West Waterfall almost as soon as he began. He effectively 'dropped out' in Year 8 because his English teacher was insistent on conformity and used disciplinary power to reinforce the hegemonic behavioural norms of the covert curriculum. She suspected him of plagiarism and he had *too many words,* so she refused to read or mark his work. Darth's response was instantaneous and enduring - *That's when I started sleeping in class. So really early on that was it*, *goodbye, you accuse me of doing something I didn't do and that's it.* From that time on Darth's reaction to any didactic pedagogy and the mandated curriculum was met with aggressive resistance. He would *walk into random classrooms* and *stare down* both teachers and students and walk out; when teachers tried to force him to study things he wasn't interested in he *just continued my own research and wrote notes on subjects that had nothing to do with what we were learning;* he continuously *ended up in detention because I was an arsehole;* and he was suspended on countless occasions. When his educators tried to cancel, crush and hinder his personal interests and creativity they cultivated "rebellious thinking" (Freire, 1992, p. 101). It was not that Darth was not a learner, he clearly was. It is just that he devolved himself of all learner identity within the school, as Aurora said *kids choose not to learn, it's not a matter of them not being able to!* (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013; Smyth, et al. 2010).

If "Teacher and peer labelling are predicators of general and serious delinquency" (Adams, et al. 2003, p. 182) then the converse is also true. Much of the time Darth was embracing and even celebrating his alienation as an emblem of his humanity (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 64); however, those teachers who chose to disregard Darth's deviant labels and invested the time to create an effective relational space were able to cut through and help him to expand his thinking and learning and concurrently his delinquent behaviours reduced.

> *There are some good teachers; they're just few and far between. They care about you as a person and help you out, even if you need food or money and stuff. I did pretty well in computing in middle school. The teacher was comical. When no one was paying any attention to him he'd slave our computers and make us watch what he was doing. It was pretty funny, he'd show us what had to be done and then let us go on with our own thing. The cooking teacher was good too. She'd actually take the time to get to know your point*

of view. I think good teachers are ones who'll take account of your personal shit, they'll let you hand in work late if you need to and still mark it. They don't let you get away with it but they play fair. Once I broke my laptop and a teacher went out the way to get me a temporary one, she cared. The way to be a good teacher is pretty simple really, don't be an arse! Good teachers are fair and don't technically teach, they give you a choice and let you learn for yourself. I didn't give shit to the good teachers. - focus group interview

The habitus of Darth's family is non-hegemonic, his brother is a sexual offender, his mother is violent with a co-morbid mental health diagnosis and his father is seriously ill, nevertheless, he was instilled with a great love of learning - when it is on his own terms. Learning is irreversible and the "habitus acquired within the family forms the reception and assimilation of the classroom message" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, pp. 43-44). The learning that Darth acquired within his family was spontaneous and based on passionate interest and it established an irreversible pattern of how he would best learn. This drove his negative reception and lowered "degree of assimilation of the messages produced and diffused" (p. 44) by the hegemonic covert and overt curricula from which "many withdraw from intellectual work because they are told so much and asked to think and do so little" (Shor, 1992, p.20). Thus, Darth continued to learn through passionate discovery learning - *I reference everything to a book and I have one for every scenario. I had Tun Sun and the book Art of War. He was the person who designed modern warfare, literally the evolution of war and we still use his tactics 1500 years later. He had theories for both peace and war times* - whilst resolutely refusing to attempt teacher driven tasks - *Teachers should let me study my ancient history instead of this modern shit. Once in English I was so bored that for six or seven lessons I just sat their reading the dictionary.*

Even when students have acquired the cognitive capabilities to succeed in schools often the *habitus* and *practice* of educators does not allow them to convert that into the cultural capital that is required to succeed academically within schools (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Resistant cultural capital manifests as oppositional behaviour and although Darth failed to graduate school he was acutely aware of his own subjugation at West Waterfall and he made a conscious effort to resist. His behaviours were not reactive but considered and definite political action, Darth was not going to permit education being 'done' to him (Shor, 1992). While at a superficial level teachers may seem to be in charge, and in a sense they are, at a more profound level it is students who "actually control, manage and shape the behavior of their teachers. As Smyth, et al. (2010, p. 58) argue "Students reward teachers by complying. They punish by

resisting" (Giroux, 1983; Yosso, 2005).

Interpersonal relationships are difficult for Darth and he prefers to remain aloof and removed - *Emotions make things difficult. The human factor is difficult. Emotions make you weaker where physical violence actually makes you stronger.* Khalifa (2010) contends that hyperghettoizzed youth are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture and that this causes them to become disconnected from school. Disconnection affects the construction of narrative identity particularly when it occurs over time (Pals, 2006). When identity is constructed in toxic school spaces that depicts self from totalising deficit perspectives and "has little regard for human sensibility" (Smyth, et al. 2010, p. 119) non-dominant youth can welcome and even covet their labels (Windfield, 2008; Robinson, 2011). For Darth, that meant adopting the dominant meta-narrative of the hypermasculine male where violence and domination reign (Paton, et al. 2013, & Klein, 2006). Although Darth claims that *he prefers not to start it,* it became apparent in the focus group interviews that he is an aggressive violent perpetrator - *on excursions you get to beat the shit out of someone when no one's looking, I broke his nose but didn't get in trouble because they didn't figure out I did it, We brawled and his arm got broken, It's easier to put them in hospital like I did, If I could I'd try and be better than Attila the Hun and end up in the history books.* He blames his pre-emptive stance on educators who do nothing about the bullying - *About ninety percent of the time the kids that start it get away with it. The teachers don't give a shit, there's no proof and no evidence, so they do nothing. I always just use the pre-emptive strike, it's easier that way.* Darth has some sage advice for educators - *The victims tend to do the most damage. Bullies aim for non-vital areas. The defenders aim for spots which will stop the fight altogether therefore causing more damage and making them look like the attacker.*

Although Darth stories himself as Gatto's (2010, p. 82) nightmare child with "no vital interests, creatures trained to organize their time around spasms of excitement and amusement" - *One time I actually pulled out a shiv out of my bag, I was randomly walking around with alcohol in my bag and only got caught when I started selling it, I made a Bunsen Burner blow up in science, my nickname is the terrorist - focus group interviews* - his narrative is more akin to enduring resilience or transgression practices with revolutionary potential" (Fleuri cited in Lund & Carr, 2008, pp. 103-104). McNay (1999) asserts that identity is not fixed and is contingent on the social relations of our lived experience. Since leaving West Waterfall Darth has spent more time *watching documentaries with dad, we talk about it and he's helping me with more computer stuff*

and has begun to build more affirming relations within the FLAME program. As Alisa explains:

> *What we try to do through programs like FLAME is to break that down to its smallest form. We have six to eight young people with a highly concentrated one on one case manager who says lets back up a minute, lets forget about educational outcomes and lets work on you! What exactly are you facing? It's very individual and personal to each young person. We celebrate their greatest success for the day. We help young people to create small achievable goals and our youth workers commend them and build up their self esteem all around that goal, no matter how small...We turn it around from deficit perspectives to empowerment. It's about empowerment, finding a young person with an issue or a barrier that they're always been told is a tremendous negative and allowing that young person to explore that barrier as a positive. It's turning that one thing, their weakness, like an inability to sit still in a classroom. But saying you are vibrant, you are energetic, you're busy. What can we do with that vibrancy, that business, that energy!*

Darth is beginning to reconstruct his narrative identity from within his new *field*. He has been provided support and encouragement to consider his subversive subcultural capital skills of illegal *'undernet'* computer hacking skills from a perspective of strength and has aspirational thoughts because *"ex-hackers sometimes work as IT consultants in security or even go to uni"* (Windfield, 2008; Jensen, 2006).

In this analysis I have explored Darth's aggressive adoption of the deviant labels given to him within schools and his refusal to be subjugated by educators in West Waterfall. The discordance between Darth's familial and school *fields* were illuminated and the affirming, transformative possibilities of subcultural capital explored.

7.3 Maya's story- deficit race relations

Within schools non-dominant labelling results in Indigenous Australians being depicted from perspectives of familial and cultural deficiency and the panacea that is offered in response to intergenerational class injury generally focuses on the cultural assimilation of assumed superior anglo-saxonised ways (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Within WA public schools all Indigenous Australians are subject to intervention - such as individual learning plans - but "official intervention in adolescence resulted in lower educational attainment and nonemployment (exclusion from conventional routines), which increased crime in early adulthood (secondary deviance)" (Kalkhoff, et al., 2007, p. 494).

Indigenous Australian's are automatically afforded deviant deficit victim-blaming labels at birth - because of an assumed cultural inferiority - and regardless of familial capital are subject to totalising lowered expectations within schools. Smyth, et al., (2010, p. 15) ask the question 'Whose view of poverty gets to be adopted' and the same query could be asked of Indigenous Australian culture. Tuck, et al., (2008, p. 63) posit that "exiles' views are frequently disparaged as deviant and in some cases, conspicuously silenced". In Australian schools, predominantly white voices are privileged. It is white politicians who make legislation pertaining to Indigenous welfare, white departmental heads create and enforce policy for Indigenous Australians and white educators insert these policies into the lived-experiences of non-dominant Indigenous youth. In Australia there is a long history of institutional (not personal) failure to improve the life trajectories for Indigenous Australians and in large part this can be attributed to the 'simplistic human capital versions of society' (Robinson, 2011, pp. 55-56) where the dominant middle-classes invoke an assumed cultural superiority.

7.3.1 Vignette - Maya

At 14, high school dropout Maya is a wise old Noongar woman. In year 8 she shifted from Maiden Valley High to Boulder High and within two weeks she'd dropped out of school altogether. Maya had once been *a one hundred percent attendance student*, *certificates and all.* Threats of fines from *the fucking Education Department* haven't deterred her and she steadfastly refuses to return to school. Instability has long been a feature of Maya's life. Her father's an alcoholic and her mother a drug user who cohabitated with a drug dealing uncle. They *were always off their heads on drugs* and consequently her step brothers were removed by DCP long ago. Maya's mum's *not a great mother* but Maya has a sense of obligation because *she carried her for nine months.* Maya's felt great *Shame* at school because her mother *was a staggering tripper* who used *all the time, she was always high.* Despite the 'Shame' Maya preferred it when drugs were in the household because it was *twice as good when he was selling the gear and shit. We always had money and when mums on the gear she'd love us kids because she had energy to get up and do stuff but when she was coming down she'd be a bitch.* Maya frequently shuffled through relatives houses and school was a safe haven until she experienced bullying and teacher indifference at Boulder High. In her view teachers have favourites and are mean. Consequently she feels that *school is boring and a waste of time. The teachers were just too worried about other stuff to even listen to me, they just ignored me. I reckon if I didn't move I'd still be at school.*

Maya's been a frequent victim of bullying that started through social media sites. *Face book starts shit somebody's always mouthing off.* She attributes much of the bullying to jealousy about friendships/relationships even though it often appeared racially motivated *girls always used to pick on me because I'm Aboriginal and stuff.* She was taught to stand up for herself, *my dad's always said to me don't let anybody stand over you* and as a consequence Maya fought back hard. *She started on me at the bus stop and I'm like fuck you man I'm not going to take that shit and I just flogged her. I never hit first but I've punched a girl in the face and slammed her head into a bike rack.* Maya firmly believes that bullies often get away with it and that teachers should just *kick them out!* She advises never *giving in* and *telling the truth* because one time at Maiden Valley High she *never got suspended for it because she was after me first.*

Maya blames getting into crime and smoking dope on leaving school and sees it as a family tradition *all my uncles and shit, it happened to them as well, they all left in year five or six. Like me they'd been straight A students up until then.* Her boyfriend, also 14 and a high school dropout, was a criminal but they're *working hard to stay off the dope and out of trouble.* When her father's on the grog he's a *fucking arsehole* but when he's not he acts as a productive *life coach*. She's adamant she's not returning to school and wants to *get a job where I can actually look forward to getting up and making money rather than sitting there for nothing and listening to teachers drivel shit.* Despite this at one stage during the interview she wistfully commented I *didn't get to graduate, or get a certificate.*

7.3.2 Analysis

Maya had a keen sense of learner identity when she attended Maiden Head middle-school. She had won awards for attendance, had high academic results and a keen sense of learner identity, even though she wished that there had been more Noongar girls there *-you never see Noongar girls really.* Part way through year eight Maya was forced to relocate to Boulder High due to a family members personal crisis. At this point, she completely disengaged from school and is currently steadfastly refusing to return - *I was only at Boulder a couple of weeks before I decided I was never going back.* Apple (2004, p.134) posits that as "children learn to accept as natural the social distinctions schools both reinforce and teach between important and unimportant knowledge, between normality and deviance...and the subtle ideological rules and norms" that govern them. In Maiden Head Maya had learnt that turning up to school, keeping out of trouble and getting good grades built your social capital and that your teachers would, in turn, support, talk to and value you. Relationships are paramount

for Maya but when she tried to create reciprocal relationships at Boulder the teachers *just ignored* her and she became a complete non-learner.

Giroux (1983) contends that to be voiceless is to be powerless and Maya felt disempowered in the relational spaces of Boulder. She found the work *boring* and when her educators did not take the time to value her contributions, or even answer her questions, she decided that they were *boring* and uncaring - *they don't even care about your personal problems* so she withdrew her own voice (Shor, 1992). At Maiden Head Maya had been given learning experiences that she'd found *interesting and fun* and she decided that Boulder's didactic teacher talk - *they just gave you worksheets* - was *dumb and just plain boring.* Although Maya wasn't sure, during the focus group interview she queried whether her educators had made racialised assumptions about her *Maybe it's because I'm Noongar?* When Maya couldn't form even one meaningful adult relationship at Boulder she completely dropped out of school (Smyth et al. 2010; Yosso, 2005; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

When non-dominant youth drop out of school it can be considered an act of resistance; however, in Maya's case it is largely symbolic and self-defeating. It is not a form of political action that strikes back at educators and makes them accountable for the toxic messy, contested spaces in school, rather, Maya's quiet withdrawal is self defeating and has a negative affect on her own life trajectory by limiting her options and continuing to reproduce her as working-class (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 3). Maya's story is familiar "with a large proportion of indigenous children in Australia experiencing high levels of disadvantage" (Smyth, et al. 2009, p. 20). Over sixty percent of Indigenous Australian's leave school before they are sixteen. Student success is "fostered by empowering students...[and] Empowering means actively teaching students how to help themselves, how to take responsibility for their work; how to get help: How to ask for help, whom to ask for help, and when to seek help" (DiGuiulio cited in Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004, p. 124) and this is entirely impossible when educators do not even respond to their students. If Australia's Indigenous peoples are to reclaim their narrative self-identities and break the intergenerational cycle of entrenched class injury and welfare dependency then morphological transformation must occur in the relational spaces of the milieu (Smyth, et al., 2009).

Prior to her move to Boulder Maya did not reject the hegemonic overt and covert curricula and even though she has forsaken her education goals she still celebrates her earlier success - *I used to be the best at school* (King & Hicks, 2006). Smyth and

Wrigley (2013, p. 148) contend that even if non-dominant young people are highly academically successful they "tend to be overtaken in the next stage of education by less successful children from more privileged backgrounds" and this has been Maya's lived-experience. The concept of *'Shame' is* a cultural construct that extends and magnifies when compared with white peoples use of the word. It extends to mean embarrassment and can occur when Indigenous students are asked to do things that would not necessarily bother white students (Leitner & Malcolm, 2007) Maya felt great *Shame* in many situations that involved educator *practice* at Boulder - *Shame, the teachers wouldn't talk to me, that's shame, It's shame when they make you answer questions in front of the class, Writing on the whiteboard, now that's Shame* - and this further polluted her learning experiences in classrooms.

The physical relational spaces that non-dominant youth from differing racial backgrounds occupy has a symbiotic relationship with culture and when educators within schools are not accustomed to the cultural customs or *habitus* of their Indigenous students they unwittingly cast them into conflict as their expectations undermine kin and cultural identity (Lund & Carr, 2008; Jensen, 2006; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Covert curriculum and hierarchical power structures silence Indigenous subcultural capital and as a consequence families 'drop out' intergenerationally. The negative and hostile views that Indigenous students have of schools is generationally linked to the experiences of their parents and other family members. Family experiences of school either form or contribute to the individual's understandings of the necessity or desire to complete schooling (Khalifa, 2010) and it predicts "the degree or probability or improbability of his still being within the system, at that stage and in that branch" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, pp. 159-160) Maya's uncles and other family members all 'dropped' out of high school - *it happened to them as well, they all left in year five or six. Like me they'd been straight A students up until then* - and it was effortless for her to align self with the notion of pre-ordained school failure.

Identity is co-constructed and Maya's depiction of self as a non-learner is shared by schools "[R]esearchers have found a positive relationship between racial minorities and devalued cultural capital" (Khalifa, 2010, p. 624) and Indigenous Australian's are given the disempowering deviant deficit victim-blaming label of *at-risk* from birth. When people are allotted negative labels they are automatically affiliated with stereotypical meta-narratives and for Indigenous Australians these narratives encompass notions of alcoholism, drug dependence, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, parental

incompetence, limited education and welfare dependency. For non-dominant Indigenous Australian's "all of these out-of school factors operate to construct a particular image around a range of pathological deficits that collectively add up to a picture of hopelessness" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 74). Indigenous Australian's are automatically considered as *at-risk* within all West Australian Public Schools, regardless of personal family history and the Department of Education (2011b) requires all Indigenous students to have targeted monitoring and individual learning plans to address perceived barriers.

The dominant deficit meta-narratives that bombard Indigenous youth from birth subtly trains them "to see themselves and others [of their race] as certain kinds of people" (Thompson, 2011, p. 65) and view themselves from deficit perspectives that have evolved from white normativity and this primes them to have negative self-concepts and become aligned with self defeating behaviours (Lund & Carr, 2008; Adams, et al., 2003). As Romero, Cammarota, Dominguez, Valde, Ramirez, and Hernandez (2008, p. 138) contend, when a culture has been literally and then metaphorically subjugated and *colonised* for many generations their non-dominant youth:

> *learn to accept the harassment, abuse, oppression, or failure they experience as something they deserve. They blame themselves because they have not learned how to develop a "sociological imagination" for the negative forces impacting their lives.'*

Indigenous Australian's are intergenerationally stuck in a cycle of "entrapment thinking" (Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 4) and their diminished agency has contributed to an ongoing cycle of perceived despair. As Freire (1992, p. 45) posits:

> *until they accept themselves as individuals and as a class, until they commit themselves, until they struggle—their need to deny the humiliating truth, a truth that humiliates them precisely because they introject the dominant ideology that sketches them as incompetent and guilty, the authors of their own failures.*

Non-dominant Indigenous young people do need empathy and sustained support to transform and improve aspirations, education outcomes and life trajectories but they also need to be depicted as *at-promise* and not as *at-risk* if the cycle of violent class injury is to be broken (Valencia, 2010; Smyth & Wrigley 2013).

The meanings that poverty has to Maya is different from the way that outsiders see it and Maya's currency is the relational spaces of her lived experiences (Smyth, et al., 2010). Maya's desire to have positive relational spaces drives her belief that it was better when her family were drug dealing - *it was twice as good when he was selling the gear and shit. We always had money and when mum's on the gear she'd love us kids because she had the energy to get up and do stuff but when she was coming down she'd be a bitch.* Relationships are evidence of agency and capacity for Maya and she feels empowered by her relationship with her boyfriend and they are *working hard to stay off the dope and out of trouble.* Hammack (2008, p. 235) contends that "engagement with a redemptive master narrative emphasises the trope of individual resilience, even in the face of struggle." If educators were better able to tap into the cultural importance of the machinations of family, kin and relationships for Indigenous Australian non-dominant youth they would be better able to see their culture and kin from *at-promise* perspectives and as subcultural narrative identity transformed so too could academic identity and educational outcomes.

The analysis of Maya's narrative vignette highlighted the importance of relationships - including family, kin and culture - for Indigenous Australian's and examined the totalising effects of deficit labels related to race. I further explored the notion of *shame* and the importance of Australian educators developing a deep understanding of the need to foster positive relational spaces for Indigenous Australian students.

In this chapter I have presented Darth and Maya's narrative vignettes and analysed the relationship between deficit labelling, narrative identity and subcultural capital. In the next chapter I will provide concluding comments and present an affirming alternative to toxic school cultures - i.e. a synopsis of John Smyth's (2004, 2013) *Socially Just School*. In addition I will present the recommendations that have been engendered from the research process.

Chapter 8 Research recommendations - *the Socially Just School*

This chapter concludes the research and provides an affirming alternative model to the toxic school cultures that were experienced by the research participants. John Smyth's notion of *the Socially Just School* is presented as an affirming model of schooling that promotes social justice and is the antithesis of schools that are corrosive to narrative self-identity. Finally, recommendations are made for how transformative practices can be incorporated into the pedagogical and relational spaces of schools.

8.1 Introduction

Neoliberal agendas promulgate contested school spaces and are inclusive of the hegemonic overt and covert curricula; the depiction of non-dominant youth from deficit prisms; high-stakes accountability measures; corporate managerial styles; and meritocratic mythology. The neoliberal agendas of schools reify a stratified capitalist middle-class status quo and further, have corroded their relational spaces. Neoliberal agendas have "narrowed the options and changed educational goals to the point where they are damaging not only the wellbeing of young people...but are having a detrimental effect on the overall economic and social health" (Smyth, et al., 2008, p. 18) of Australian society. The non-dominant research participants are no longer in school but they still bear the scars of their ordeals and this has infiltrated their lived-experiences outside of schools. When the focus group interviews were being conducted only one of the research participants had a low paid service job and the remaining participants were unemployed. All of the participants still required the intensive support of the youth-worker and were only beginning to take steps towards more fulfilling lives. Giroux (2006, p. 23) contends that bipartisan political commitments "have largely given up on the sanctity of human life for those populations rendered 'at risk' by global neoliberal economies" and the neoliberal government policies that manifest in schools was 'insufficiently concerned with how "children experience the realities of poverty and social exclusion" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 53).

In order to understand the lived experience of marginalised students it is essential that temporal spaces and places are examined from relational contexts. Relational epistemologies of knowing consider learning as the development of self-through-others in a process of social construction. Knowledge is attained through lived experience in relation to others as "we are all embedded and embodied within the world' (Thayer-Bacon, 2004, p. 175). Non-dominant youth are often disparaging of their educational

experiences and care little for the *right* knowledge that is thrust upon them. Sidorkin (2004, p. 55) asks why most students, in fact, actually listen to their teacher, bring books and complete the work that is asked of them. For non-dominant youth the answer is twofold:

1. They don't!
2. When they do, it is because of the relational spaces that are engendered through their-lived experiences.

It would be easy to become disheartened at the disempowering, dehumanising experiences of non-dominant youth in schools; however, the research participants in this thesis are demonstrative of the human capacity to survive, revive, reform, evolve and reinvent themselves. Freire, (cited in Canestrari & Marlowe, 2004) contends that "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it." Liberating non-dominant youth within the milieu of schools is not an impossibility, and all that it requires is a gradual but continual groundswell of critical transformative educator *practice*.

Smyth's (2004, 2013) notion of *the Socially Just School* provides a framework for transformative educator practice that, in the words of Kress, et al. (2013, p. 9) "offer[s] hope, faith, and fortitude by providing evidence of educational practices that validate the experiences of non-dominant communities and challenge oppressive, hegemonic ideologies and structures". The growing inequalities between non-dominant youth and their middle-class counterparts make "it imperative that schools reinvent themselves around the issue of social justice" (Smyth, 2004, p. 19). Non-dominant youth have complex lives that are "diverse, often fractured, and fragmented" (p. 23); however, despite intergenerational class injury they are generally resilient and value their non-dominant social capital networks - familial and sub-cultural capital *fields* (Bullen & Kenway, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Within schools educators depict non-dominant youth from entrenched deficit prisms (Smyth, et al. 2010; Valencia, 2010) and this perpetuates notions of academic incompetence and students are labelled as *at-risk*. The idea of *the Socially Just School* advocated by Smyth has the potential to redress class injury because it is "capabilities oriented" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 30) and refashions *at-risk* students to *at-promise* (Swadener and Lubek, 2005; Valencia, 2010)

The *Socially Just School* recognises that "students from complex and disadvantaged backgrounds do not have access to social capital...consistent with the middle-class values around which schools are constructed" (Smyth, 2004, p. 19) and socially just educators seek to remedy this by valuing non-dominant social and cultural capital not by attempting to imbue non-dominant youth with the norms and dispositions of the middle-classes (Yosso, 2005). They seek to develop relational spaces and pedagogical strategies that "foster collective, critical, democratic and socially just approaches that reveal their true learning potential and capacities" (Smyth, et al. 2009, p. 15). Lingard (cited in Smyth, 2013, p. 113) calls for a "new social democratic imagery" that surpasses neoliberal policies - such as top down hierarchical management and teaching styles; and the notion that improved high stakes testing results equate to an improved standard of schooling - to incorporate social justice perspectives.

8.2 *The Socially Just School*

The Socially Just School recognises that all who dwell within the educational milieu are responsible for student success - government, systems, schools, educators, communities, parents and students themselves. Smyth (2013, p.114) argues that the notion of *the Socially Just School* derives usefulness "from being an orienting philosophical or conceptual pedagogical approach." It attempts to create a more socially just world "that is less scarred by [the neoliberal frameworks of] individualism, inequality and unrestrained consumption" (p. 112). When educators work to create *the Socially Just School* they recognise the need to tackle poverty and acknowledge that learning should not be linked to high stakes neoliberal accountability measures - such as high-stakes testing - and alternatively learning should be democratic and "include students and their lives in authentic decision-decision making relating to their learning" (Smyth, 2013, p. 117). According to Smyth (2013) *the Socially Just School*:

- challenges deficit views;
- is community oriented;
- advances social justice;
- engages in deep learning,
- fosters a community of learners - for both young people and adults;
- clearly articulates objectives;
- is inward looking and critically reflects on practice;
- undertakes academically rigorous fulfilling learning experiences; and

- incorporates socially just democratic pedagogical strategies such as critical literacies, (Smyth, 2004; 2013; & Smyth, et al., 2010).

The Socially Just School cultivates a sense of collegiate solidarity where both educators and non-dominant youth develop a deep sense of learner identity and have a 'collective commitment to ideas' (Smyth, 2013, pp. 119-120) and they covert safe proactive relational spaces where *all* young people are able to access 'genuine educational opportunities' (115).

8.2.1 Socially just relational spaces

If non-dominant youth are to reach their full potential they need to have access to effective and supportive relational spaces. "School success depends on the existence of 'supportive ties'" (Smyth, 2004, p. 19) as positive relationships scaffold non-dominant others to "'overcome 'barriers', 'impediments' and 'entrapments'" (p. 21) of deviant deficit lenses and devalued imbued cultural and social capital. If social capital is to be useful for non-dominant youth it must be accepted by others and in schools this means educators. Educators must put aside hegemonic middle-class ideals and value their students for who they are, thereby affirming their imbued cultural capital (Winkle-Wagner, 2010; Smyth, 2004). *The Socially Just School* operates in relational ways where both educator and student input is valued and "Having a 'real say' in where the school was going was open to all- students as well as all adults" (Smyth, 2013, p. 118).

8.2.2 Socially just educators

Socially just educators are active agents who reframe capital to encompass non-dominant imbued social and cultural capital to counter the hegemonic dominant middle-class norms and dispositions that serve to *otherise* and *colonise* their students (Smyth, 2004; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). They reframe deficit prisms to *at-promise* and in so doing negate class injury and improve "the circumstances of disadvantage" (Smyth, 2004, p. 22). They are flexible, imaginative, address misunderstandings and are "consistent sources of emotional and social support" (Stanton-Salazar, cited in Smyth, 2004, p. 28). *Socially just educators* look beyond surface meanings and do not unwittingly blame their students, their families or communities when their pedagogical strategies are ineffective (Smyth, 2013, p. 116). They are prepared to think outside the box and confront old and ineffective ways of doing things. They challenge and question their own assumptions but most importantly they are educators "who love them [non-dominant youth] enough to push them to their

limits, to inspire in students the revolutionary and libratory outcomes they could not previously have imagined" (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008, p. 102). *Socially just educators* see student failure as their own and critically reflect on their practice to "determine more appropriate future actions. They never excused students from their responsibilities and they never let themselves slip into despair" (p. 189) and have an unwavering faith in the ability of their non-dominant students (Smyth, 2013).

8.2.3 Socially just pedagogies

Socially just pedagogies are "complex and multi-faceted, and coalescing around the idea of creating and sustaining a 'critical learning community'" (Smyth, 2013, p. 118). They are engaging, based in real life, foster optimism and are ‘strategic, empowering and network enhancing' (Stanton-Salazar cited in Smyth, 2004). *Socially just pedagogies* involve non-dominant youth exploring their sense of justice and engaging in critical literacies to examine the dominant discourses that surround them (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Non-dominant youth must be afforded opportunities to co-construct curriculum and learning must be engaging so that students are able to attain academic success (Smyth, 2004 & 2013).

Socially just pedagogies do not revolve around a static national curriculum but are about "firing young imaginations around big ideas" (Smyth, 2013, p. 119) because "Unless they feel they have a meaningful stake in their learning, then young people are going to continue to raise questions about the legitimacy of what is occurring in their schooling" (p. 117). If non-dominant youth are only exposed to neoliberal policies, curriculum and frameworks within the contested spaces of schools "then the results are likely to be alienation, sabotage, or outright rebellion...[as the] days of young people acquiescing and being compliant and silent are long gone" (p. 117). As Smyth, et al., (2010, p. 198) state:

> there is a need to break free from the debilitating and fatalistic effects of neoliberal discourses which have manufactured a particularly narrow and economistic version of what it means to be educated and to create a more critically engaged vision of the future based on the principles and values of democracy, social justice and liberation (Freire, 2007).

8.3 Research recommendations

Social, political and economic ideology manifests in temporal contexts and Smyth (2013, p. 111) contends that "conjuncture" manifests when contradictions -or fissures- occur due to historical events. In essence we lurch from one societal crisis to another

but these conjunctures also afford possibilities for "moments of potential change" (p. 112). However, they are ill-structured temporal problems where we hit a proverbial fork in the road and "the nature of their resolution is not given" (p. 112). Smyth (2013) contends that the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007/08 was one such moment. However, within the contested spaces WA schools since the GFC neoliberal managerial frameworks have even more of a stranglehold on both policy and educator practice. *The Melbourne Declaration* was authored, NAPLAN mandated, national curriculum written and implemented, and multiple neoliberal managerial policy frameworks have been introduced. These neo-liberal frameworks threaten *the Socially Just School* because competing agendas require educators to refocus their energies in to meeting neoliberal demands. "Although many teachers strive to implement elements of a socially just curriculum in their classroom, a whole school [no systems wide] approach is necessary to achieve more enduring change" (Smyth, et al. 2010, p. 188). The recommendations below have arisen from the research and offer insights on how to promote, rather than erode, the development of *the Socially Just School.*

1. A concerted effort needs to be made to develop policies and pedagogical practices that facilitate schools to validate non-dominant cultural capital and redefine non dominant youth as *at-promise* rather than as *at-risk*.

When schools set aside mythological neoliberal notions of meritocracy they can focus on the recognition and strengthening of their students imbued social and cultural capital. Khalifa (2010, p. 641) notes that non-dominant youth are generally not in a position to reinvent themselves in middle-class terms but that they "are in a position to add to existing identities", and in any case it is "better for them to maintain their authentic identities" (p. 641). Most often educators within schools do not validate the cultural and social capital of *at-risk* non-dominant youth (Khalifa, 2010, p. 631); however, when non-dominant youth have their social and cultural capital "contextually valued" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 29) within schools relational spaces improve and non-dominant youth begin to identify as learners who develop academic resilience by adopting aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005).

When non-dominant youth are depicted through deficit prisms they are likely to view themselves from perspectives of deviance and there is a high probability that their life trajectories will become a self-fulfilling prophecy along the lines of the deficit that they have been allotted (Windfield, 2008). Human agents - including non-dominant youth- mediate narrative self-identity through their histories and "class or gender related

subjectivities" (Giroux, 1983, p. 156) and if educators reframe deficit lenses to re-envision *at-risk* as *at-promise* then it is likely that non-dominant youth would transform and acquire self-fulfilling prophecies that built capacity and self-efficacy (Hammack, 2008).

2. **Further research should be undertaken to develop pedagogical strategies that support and provide opportunities for non-dominant youth to re-story their narrative identities.**

Transformational narrative re-storying affords injured non-dominant youth (i.e. youth who have experienced class injury; academic failure, have complex fractured lives; feel disenfranchised from schools etc.) opportunities to narrate "a second chance in life after an identity-challenging experience" (Pals, 2006, p. 101). When emotive difficult life circumstances are unpacked to seek differing perspectives it positively "embeds the client's [non-dominant youth] story in context, encourages flexibility, and produces distinctive meaning that enhances potential and aspiration" (McIlveen & Patton, 2007, p. 231). Transformative restorying facilitates intrinsic motivation and therefore academic resilience. Narrative re-storying has great potential to induce transformational aspirational academic resilience in non-dominant youth and I recommend that further research be undertaken to illuminate whether there is potential to develop effective pedagogical strategies from the pre-existing field of narrative counselling. As Gatto (2010, p. 96) asserts

> Some inner clock is ticking in every life, warning us we have appointments to keep with reality: real work to do, real skills to learn, real battles to fight, real risks to take, real ideas to wrestle with. And a desperate need to keep death present in your imagination, to never forget how short and inevitable the arc of your life.

3. **Schools should develop curriculum, pedagogical strategies and learning experiences that promote community engagement.**

The cultural and social capital of non-dominant youth is often valued and validated in familial and community contexts (Winkle-Wagner, 2010; & Yosso, 2005) and the "capacity developing school views the community as a significant educational resource that can complement and enhance learning for students" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 102). Community based education projects that are student driven engenders academically rigorous learning and "community trust in the school" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 204; Smyth, et al., 2009, p. 37). When a place based curriculum - that gives

the students first hand experiences of their local communities - is developed 'learning is enhanced when schools acknowledge and value the unique knowledge which parents and other members of the community can bring to bear in educating young people' (Smyth, et al. 2010, p. 85).

Schools have potential resources and expertise that can be utilised to develop capacity within the wider community. As Kress, et al. (2013, p. 9) argue "Such practices achieve a critical pedagogy where community members develop agency to renegotiate power arrangements and change circumstances of marginalization." Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 205) contend that "Schools of hope regard themselves as located in the immediate society and responsive to its needs" and as they have the physical resources, expertise and an inbuilt community connection there is potential for them to enhance the social capital of both their students and the wider community. I recommend that schools - particularly those with high proportions of non-dominant youth - develop place based curriculum to build learner and community capacity.

4. **Schools with large non-dominant populations should consider introducing critical pedagogies to facilitate the development of learner identities, self-efficacy and academic resilience in their 'at-risk' cohorts.**

I recommend that schools develop critical pedagogies that values non-dominant youths imbued social and cultural capital by linking multimodal critical literacies with the challenging of dominant discourses/meta narratives. Non-dominant youth are more likely to engage in learning if it taps into their everyday lives and the utilisation of multi-literacies from popular culture (songs, youtube, websites, movies etc.) can scaffold academically rigorous pedagogical strategies (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Critical pedagogies are humanising as "they value the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 123). Critical pedagogies incorporate autonomy; interest based knowledge; social relations; respect and recognition; aspiration/motivation; student voice; zero tolerance of bullying/harassment; and emotional integrity (pp. 16-17). Critical pedagogies afford non-dominant youth opportunities to consider important social issues and questions from creative and innovative contexts where "truly democratic and empowering education is committed to helping young people understand the ways in which their self has been constructed, by whom and in whose interests" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 107). Critical pedagogy privileges the experiences and perspectives of students and

"Students themselves are the foundation for the curriculum" (Nieto, cited in Shor & Pari, 1999, p. 17). It is dialogical and requires non-dominant students to draw from their own social contexts to prioritize "the needs and liberation of people who are suffering under various forms of oppression" (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008, p. 37). As Smyth and Wrigley (2013, p. 190) explain:

> Today's young people are thrown into a world where the "saturation of youth consciousness by the media" (McInerney, 2009, p. 28) constantly undermines the potential for active political engagement. Critical literacy is an essential means to challenge students to "build a critical understanding of their presence in the world" as "active critical investigators into their own lives and society

5. More critical ethnographic research that uses critical literacies and/or participatory action research (PAR) should be conducted with non-dominant youth to build efficacy and agency.

When non-dominant youth participate in critical ethnographic research it has the potential to be transformative. Dialogical conversations are a feature of critical ethnography and these conversations can interrupt dominant meta-narratives including the deviant deficit victim-blaming labels that non-dominant youth may have used to co-construct self-identity. The human agency of the research participants is enhanced as they transform from "Silent Witness to Active Agents" (Smyth & McInerney, cited in Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 85). Cammarota and Fine (2008, pp. 9-10) contend that critical ethnography can assist non-dominant youth to attain "knowledge for resistance and transformation, [and that] young people create their own sense of efficacy in the world and address the social conditions that impede liberation and positive, healthy development" when they are involved in research. I found that the use of multimodal critical literacies as stimulus invoked the research participants into having "the capacity and agency to analyze their social context, to engage critical research collectively, and to challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation" (p. 4).

Non-dominant youth in schools should be afforded opportunities to conduct Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR "is a powerful investment in young people as it encapsulates the principles of a humanizing education" (Smyth, et al., 2010, p. 128). Cannella (2008, pp. 190-191) contends that PAR gives research participants opportunities to *'unlearn'* the dominant narratives that subjugate them as "increasing

awareness of our own filters presents the chance to unlearn those [destructive paradigms] that dehumanize others and ourselves". Non-dominant youth have both the best vantage point and a vested interest in PAR and they are afforded opportunities to speak back to the deficit labels that they have been depicted from (Cahill, et al., 2008).

By way of summary, this thesis has attempted to better understand the way that *at-risk otherised* non-dominant students experience and respond to the neoliberal agendas that promulgate the contested spaces of schools. In pursuing this we have examined the theoretical constructs of cultural capital theory, critical education theories - including an examination of deficit labelling and hegemonic curriculum, narrative identity and the relational space. Further, the ways in which these theories coalesce - through neoliberal curricula and the lived-experience of the non-dominant research participants - were examined to better understand the contested spaces of schools.

The narrative vignettes of the research participants - and the accompanying analysis of their stories - have helped us gain a deeper and richer appreciation of the damage that neoliberal agendas can inflict on non-dominant youth. However, these narrative vignettes have also identified the ways in which non-dominant youth resisted in transformative ways. Above all, this thesis demonstrates the necessity of imaging an alternative *Socially Just School* (Smyth, 2004, 2013) that is capable of supporting young people to attain academically rigorous educational outcomes by building capacity, efficacy and agency.

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Appendix A

Questions	Field Notes -Introduction to students
1. Observations of students	
2. Notes from initial intro.	
3. Discuss anything they wish to know about me, the research	
4. Brainstorm their ideas of schooling/education	

Questions	The Simpsons - Lisa as a boy bully
1. Can you tell me what you think the video excerpts are saying about young people & schools	
2. Does this excerpt from the Simpsons relate to your experiences in schools?	
3. What do you feel about your experiences in schools (related to subject matter, e.g. bullying)	

Questions	The Simpsons - Blackboard
1. Is this video saying anything about schools?	
2. Have any of you shared similar school experiences?	

Questions	The Simpsons - Eating Kids
1. Is this video saying anything about schools or the teachers/principals etc that work in them?	
2. Have any of you shared similar school experiences?	
3. How do you feel about your experiences in schools?	

Questions	Coach Carter - Coach & Cruz
1. Is this video saying anything about schools?	

2. Have any of you shared similar school experiences?	
3. What do you think are the best things about schools?	
4. What things or who helps with your learning and what gets in the way?	
5. Have any teachers inspired you to do great things?	
Questions	**Three doors down - when were young**
1. What is this video saying about the relationship between young people and their elders, teachers, parents, etc...	
2. Have you every had any similar experiences or felt that way yourself before?	

Appendix B

Questions	Field Notes
5. Can you describe the fuels program?	
6. What are the intended outcomes of the program?	
7. What is the difference between mainstream schools and what the participants do here?	
8. Have the kids who attend the FUELLS program coped in mainstream education? Why do you think they have/haven't coped?	
9. How are the youth who attend the FUELLS program supported here?	
10. How do you see/view the young people that you work with in the program?	

11. What are the personal strengths of the participants?	
12. Are the young people expected to be responsible for their own learning/participation during the program?	
13. Do you think autonomy is important?	
14. What happens in this space for these young people?	