Patricia Lorna Thomson is the author of the thesis entitled:

‘Doing justice: Stories of everyday life in disadvantages schools and neighbourhoods’.

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'DOING JUSTICE':
STORIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN
DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS AND
NEIGHBOURHOODS

A THESIS
Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in the Faculty of Education
at Deakin University

By
Patricia Lorna Thomson

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

1999
I certify that the thesis entitled

Doing Justice: Stories of Everyday Life in Disadvantaged Schools and Neighbourhoods

submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award, including a higher degree, to any other university or institution.

Full Name: Patricia Lorna Thomson

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Date: 12/11/99
ABSTRACT

I worked as a school administrator in 'disadvantaged schools' for many years. In this study I asked colleagues from sixteen schools in the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide to co-theorise about changes in their neighbourhood, school populations and programs, now that their schools are no longer recognised by policy as 'disadvantaged'.

I explore the use of narrative method and arts based approaches by constructing a 'literary' research text that uses conventional sociological forms together with images, poetry and personal stories.

I use anthropological and geographical theoretical constructs to look at the changing material, economic, cultural and social landscapes and the mosaic of inequalities in the city of Adelaide. I suggest that this is not a simple binary polarisation, although large numbers of people are similarly positioned by de-industrialisation and the diminishing social wage. After examining the literature on poverty in Australia, I am eventually prepared to call this space class, understanding that this is a sociological metaphor.

Through a theorisation of each school as a 'place' within a specific neighbourhood, I look at the similarities and differences across sites. I suggest that 'disadvantaged schools' are similarly positioned as sites for the mediation of social inequalities, and that this can be readily seen in the time consuming 'housework' of discipline and welfare. I indicate how each school is differently able to 'do more with less', because of their unique neighbourhood and its narratives, knowledges, histories, teleologies and people. I show that the common coercive regimes of market devolution, new public management and the 'distributive curriculum' frame the work of teachers, students and administrators in ways that are not conducive to 'doing justice', despite the policy rhetoric of equity and community. I provide evidence that the neoliberal imaginary of context free schooling enshrined in effective schools literatures is utopian and irrational. I argue that the capacity of the school to 'generate context' is always paradoxically dependent on 'context derived'.

I discuss the notion of 'doing justice' and the benefits of 'disadvantaged schools' having a local set of principles that guide their decisions and actions and provide evidence that the school administrator's understandings of 'doing justice' are important. I also suggest that, despite being increasingly isolated and hindered by policy directions, the majority of the sixteen schools continue to work for and with principles of justice and equity, drawing on a range of emotional and intellectual resources and deep, longstanding commitments.

I conclude by speculating on the kinds of policy and research agendas that might take account of both the commonalities and differences amongst 'disadvantaged schools', and what might be included in a comprehensive and systematic approach to 'doing justice'.
Acknowledgements

The story that this research tells is, in part, in the words of my colleagues in
'disadvantaged schools', welfare and youth projects. Some of them are my very good
friends but must remain nameless in this text. I sincerely thank them for their
participation and interest in this study. I have enormous affection and respect for the
work that they do, knowing first hand what it involves and what it takes. While I was
doing this research, the mass media often carried stories of how badly public education
and 'disadvantaged schools' and staffs were doing. As I visited my colleagues in their
various locations I could see for myself that this was arrant nonsense, put about by
people who have no direct understanding of what actually is happening, put about by
people who are making decisions that make things harder and harder for families,
schools and entire neighbourhoods. I hope I have done justice to and for my colleagues
in this research, given the worsening conditions and public opprobrium with which they
live.

Without considerable sustenance and backing, this dissertation would never have
happened and there are several people to acknowledge. I am very grateful to Deakin
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middle aged activist with a chequered academic record, and then for supporting her
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walked, talked and watched hours of indifferent television with me whenever I
appeared. Her own output is awesome, and if she wasn't my friend I would be terrified
rather than inspired by her example.

My principal supervisor Richard Bates has been the supervisor I needed: not only was
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and continuous production of writings take me in the directions I wanted. He made few
interventions, but when he did they were intellectually challenging and strategic and
directed me to the gaps and faultlines in my argument. Jill Blackmore stepped in when
Richard went on leave and her experience helped me through the final stages of editing
and self doubt.

As a distance student I could have laboured on alone, but I have been extremely
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I have also to mention others who have been significant in this study. Alastair Dow's early advice, continued responses to writing and ongoing conversations have been both a pleasure and also very helpful. Donna Ferretti pointed me in the direction of feminist geographies and Pam Bartholomaeus commiserated about the woes of distance study. Bruce Burnett showed me his typographic approach to narrative at a crucial stage and Martin Thrupp his critique of 'effective schools' as I was wavering about directions of argument. The Department of Employment, Training and Education and its then Chief Executive Denis Ralph gave me leave and support to undertake this research and permission to work in schools.

There is of course a personal support system behind this manuscript. My mother has funded truckloads of the latest books, a new computer and fares to national and international conferences. She has been consistently positive about my career side turn, even though she always looks puzzled when I talk about what I am doing. My dogs adjusted quickly to having me home during their sleeping time and have provided comatose company during the long hours at the keyboard. The ladies who lunch, Jillian Dellit and Sandi Fuelop, have been an ongoing relief from drudgery at key times. My son Simon provided free CDs, a connection with youth cultures and the occasional distracting digital game. My partner, Randy Barber, has been unwaveringly supportive, listened for endless hours, read books beyond the call of duty and provided innumerable cups of tea and comfort. Without the foundation provided by his friendship and love I would have frenetically pirouetted off course many times.

And finally, a tribute. I worked for a decade with a large number of some of the most outstanding teachers in the game, teachers who needed little from me as their principal but positive regard, time and space to risk changes, and advocacy on their behalf. I therefore want to dedicate this text to the Paralowie mob, who appear as traces in my stories but who are written deep in my understandings of what it is that 'disadvantaged schools', teachers, parents and students can really do.
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I begin with a sepia print so faded that only its barest outline is discernible.

An historical snapshot

The history of public schooling in Australia is inextricably linked to concerns about making the unruly children of the working class into obedient citizens of good moral character - productive male breadwinners and thrifty wives. The provision of compulsory primary schooling, legislated across the country by the Education Acts of the 1870s, was the product of a complex mixture of colonial desires. Working people struggled to ensure that their children had an education; philanthropic colonial fathers were moved to provide education as an intrinsically worthwhile public good to all children; entrepreneurs and aspiring antipodean liberal elites committed to the principles of the Enlightenment linked the provision of school education with progress, and thus of benefit to an emerging nation state and their self interests. The pressure to extend the franchise to all adults\(^1\) produced not only demands for a literate population but also concerns that social order would only be maintained by ensuring a well disciplined working class (Connell, 1989; P. Miller, 1986; Spaull, 1998).

The extension of state education from primary into secondary schooling was associated with the demands for vocational education to meet the rising requirements of industrialisation, demands that the private schools were unwilling to accommodate (Spaull, 1998). Primary schooling was, as a consequence, allowed to develop more of a focus on the 'whole child' as the public secondary system took on vocationalism. The state secondary and primary education that took shape in the period up until the second world war was dominated by a belief in meritocratic progress, the belief that all children could, and would, have the opportunity for advancement through schooling if they met common criteria. Systems of selection - testing, public examinations, IQ based entry to selective high schools - ensured that some working class young people were able to change their social location for the 'better', by virtue of their educational capital.

The post-war population boom saw rapid increases in enrolment in all schools, and both the state and the Catholic school system appealed to the Commonwealth Government for assistance. The federal government responded with funding for secondary scholarships that enabled many more working class young people to stay on at school for longer, and for school libraries and science laboratories. This largesse was clearly and explicitly related to the national economic policy goals of increasing the skills levels of the workforce and increasing the number of people able to meet the demands, from industry and the public sector, for tertiary qualified employees. But despite the relative prosperity of the sixties, the tidal wave of public opinion was mounting against meritocracy and liberalism. The conservative federal government came under increasing attack on many fronts, one of which was their incapacity and/or unwillingness to do

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\(^1\) That is, all adults excepting Aboriginal people. In South Australia, national franchise effectively removed voting rights to indigenous people granted earlier by the state.
anything to redress social inequities generally (R. Henderson, Harcourt, & Harper, 1970), and specifically, inequities in educational provision (Fensham, 1970; Roper, 1970).

The legacies of history

Schools now exist as a palimpsest on which this history and contemporary stories collide and dissolve into one another. Debates which rage today - about the degree to which compulsory education is utilitarian and how much it fosters individuals, how much it contributes to the public good and whether it should be free - have been discussed and enacted in policy settlements since last century. Schools then and now deal with a mixed and conflicting set of expectations. They are expected to fulfil the potential of each child; ensure that all children are active, tolerant citizens and productive workers; sort and select for higher education and employment; keep children safe and occupied while their parents are at work; improve standards; deliver a hierarchy of credentials; discipline the disruptive and prevent future social mayhem; assist the national economy..... the list seems never ending. In significant ways, the mandates and expectations pull in different directions. Consider how it is really possible to simultaneously achieve high standards, educate all children to their fullest, at the same time as giving out credentials, the value of which depends at least in part on their scarcity and their capacity to rank and create hierarchy (Dorn, 1996). The trajectories of each move in different directions.

Sorting and selecting seem to always have the upper hand. All over the English speaking world, schooling provides educational advantage to those who are already privileged (e.g. Foster, Gomm, & Hammersley, 1996; G. Marshall, Swift, & Roberts, 1997; Welch, 1996). Schooling has particular raced, classed and gendered outcomes. There are of course exceptions, those individual students who become upwardly or downwardly mobile by virtue of their schooling capital. Schools, including the 'disadvantaged schools' where I have worked, all have such success stories to tell. However, chances are that the competitive curriculum, school practices and pedagogies will not work for many students. The correlation of income, qualifications, health, housing and employment with school completion and outcomes (Lamb, 1996), continues as the dominant pattern (ABS, 1997a; Mukherjee, 1996).

The role of the working class school has been, and is still, strongly directed towards the processes of schooling both citizens and workers. However, the tasks of sorting and selecting, of differentiating between children and young people so that each proceeds on to a vocation and civil life appropriately skilled and shaped, not only makes up everyday life in working class schools, but also forms the basis for the push and shove of policy politics. Furthermore, because schools do not simply reproduce existing inequities but are implicated as active agents in the process, the search for understanding how this happens has preoccupied educational scholarship from time to time. Policymakers have also searched for various problematisations and interventions. At the times when there has been a greater push for the state to intervene to redress social divisions, education is inevitably involved. The education provision of the nation
state is strongly linked to its legitimation and in Australia, in particular, with our national imaginary of the fair go and the classless society, this is particularly the case.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) sat in this particular crucible - linked to ongoing activities of the nation state, to debates about social division, to scholarship that seeks to understand, to the continuation of an unequal society and to schools that must meet mixed mandates and conflicting expectations. This mix continues to shapes everyday life in the 'disadvantaged schools' in very profound ways, ways in which there is both continuity and change. That everyday, with its dynamics and its continuities, is the focus of my research.

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCHER

In this section I turn the focus to this text, which is both personal and parochial. It is also 'post' - poststructuralist in its orientation and post in its focus, because this is a post-policy study. Before I continue discussing the specific history of the Disadvantaged Schools Program we are now 'post', I want to make clear my own positioning.

The researcher's place

I was born and raised in the western suburbs of Adelaide, the post-war child of a returned serviceman. My mother and father were also born and raised in Adelaide, as were my grandparents and all but one of my great grandparents. My primary school was next to the state's main migrant hostel. I went to the selective state high school in the western suburbs and then on to university as a bonded teaching student. At university I was actively involved in the antiwar movement and the beginnings of the women's movement and I edited the university newspaper. My first job was as the administrator of a community development project, funded by Whitlam government largesse, located in those inner western suburbs that were the focus of the Henderson Poverty Report in South Australia - Hindmarsh, Bowden and Brompton. When the Schools Commission funded the alternative community school we proposed for the area, I became the first administrator of the Bowden Brompton Community School. During that time I was a member of a reference committee for a national research project in which one of my close friends was involved: that research was later to emerge as The Book on education and social class in Australia - Making the Difference (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982).

After some years of dealing with the casualties of the social and education system, I went on to be Deputy Principal at another western suburbs high school in another very poor area, located in a one stop shop of government services that was the pride of the South Australian Dunstan government - The Parks High School. After a brief stint in Equal Opportunities work, I won the position of principal of Paralowie, a large R-12

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2 The bonding system was a response to the post war teacher shortage. In exchange for the government giving a small fortnightly 'wage' and paying all university fees, 'bonded' students were required to teach in state schools for three years in any location in the state. This was the way many working class young people, girls in particular, gained access to tertiary education.
school in the northern suburbs. I became more and more involved in state and national policy bodies. I was part of the development of the Participation and Equity Program in South Australia and part of the ongoing management of the Disadvantaged Schools Program. I spent some five years on the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Schools Council, and was involved, or perhaps I should say implicated, in many of the human capital policies that were the hallmark of the Dawkins era and the Keating federal Labor government.

I have lived in the educational, political, social and cultural changes of the post war period, lived in the struggles for equity and the permanent improvement of schooling for working class children and young people. I have not been the central figure in these events, but I have been there. My identity, my sense of self, is therefore strongly connected with the location of this research text, not only geographically but also in its politics. This is no disinterested piece of scholarship, but rather is another phase in an ongoing career. This research grows from my commitment to social justice and an abiding anger at the ways in which particular classed, raced and gendered students do not benefit from their schooling, whereas other students who are already privileged seem to gain even greater advantages.

While I am unequivocal about the axiological positioning of this research, I am also alert to the dangers that such a 'will to truth' and insider solipsism might bring. Even in this brief introduction I have used terms that are hardly innocent bystanders - words such as class, gender, race, advantage, justice and education. Both my story, and the troubled lexicon of sociology, are subtexts in this research.

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH: A POST POLICY STUDY

This is a post-policy study. In this first chapter of the research text I look at the policy³ that was called the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP), at its origins and demise, and its representations and problematisations in scholarly literature. I look briefly at the DSP in the context of South Australian education policies, in order to establish some of the dimensions of this research, and then I (equally briefly) consider some aspects of the new Commonwealth Literacy Program (CLP). I discuss why this research, and why this research now. I introduce some of the specific research questions and consider what it is that this research might have to contribute both to the ongoing politics around justice and schooling, as well as to scholarship and new ways of theorising about educationally just schooling. I discuss the epistemological basis for the research and conclude by summarising the research focus and research question.

I now take up the story again, and begin by looking at the policy that is 'post' - the DSP.

³ I do not discuss the question 'What is policy?' I take the view that it is discursive, that is it is text, and is also relational and material, after Ball (1993). There is debate about this position, e.g. Hatcher & Troyna (1994); Lingard (1996); Taylor (1997); but I do not support the tenor of those critiques. I have started to consider policy as a "narrative technology" (Thomson 1997), that uses imaginaries to create desire: it is this which helps to bring policy into being, no matter how negative. There are traces of this undone theorisation lurking throughout this research text. I am afraid however that working further on it is a post (PhD) project.
The life cycle of the Disadvantaged Schools Program

I will look at the DSP as a specific policy intervention.

In the immediate post war period, there was some agreement about the macro purposes of schooling. Education was seen as an integral part of nation building; it shaped and passed on collective social, cultural and economic stories from one generation to the next. The nation state’s major contradictory tasks, to protect the interests of capital, and to guarantee the collective interests of all members of society, often lead to failure of policy, which leads in turn to crisis management through policy adjustment (Codd, 1988; James, 1996; Jessop, 1982; Offe, 1985, 1996). One such adjustment occurred when the rigid processes of sorting through a divided system of schooling (technical and high schools), of selecting the brightest working class students through streaming and testing processes, were challenged during the post Vietnam war period, and efforts were made to examine ways in which working class schools could become more equitable, less involved in producing social difference.

The newly elected Whitlam government, committed to a more progressive socially oriented politics, initiated a broad and integrated strategy to attack social inequities, overhauling the social welfare and income support systems and embarking on an ambitious project of regional and urban regeneration programmes. It established a series of Commissions to carry forward this agenda, and the Schools Commission was charged with the responsibility of dealing with the concerns and pressure coming from states, the Catholic Church school system, independent schools, community based organisations and the academy. The Karmel Report (1973) into schooling was part of this broader government attack on poverty, linked with and influenced by similar projects in Europe, Britain and the United States. The Karmel Report proposed that there be financial assistance to private schools, intensive funding of state primary and secondary schools and the introduction of compensatory financial provisions to targeted groups of students who suffered deprivation and disadvantage. This latter recommendation gave rise to the Disadvantaged Schools Program.

At the same time, there was a non government inquiry into poverty initially commissioned by the conservative McMahon government in 1972 and subsequently greatly expanded and empowered by the Whitlam government in 1973. Dr Ronald Fitzgerald was responsible for the report (1976) on poverty and schooling. In a summary of the first two years of the DSP, in words that eloquently show the discursive dilemmas of the program, he said:

By 1975 the Schools Commission had declared a total of 1023 schools to be disadvantaged. These schools had a population of about 370,000 students or 13% of all primary and secondary students in Australia. Financial aid has included special grants to improve buildings and supply equipment as well as to encourage experimentation with new approaches. The work of the Schools Commission has made an important impact on schools previously starved of resources, both in terms of providing an improved environment for learning and in giving schools staffs practical encouragement to develop

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4 Karmel was appointed the Chair of the Interim Schools Commission in 1973.
programs and techniques aimed at the needs of disadvantaged students. Yet... powerful factors both within the schools and within our society still operate to impose severe handicaps on poor families. So long as the schooling system fails to take account of the particular needs of poor people there can be no real equality of opportunity. The outcomes of schooling show the injustice inherent in Australian education. (p. 3)

The program was to be both redistributive (ameliorate the effects of poverty) and transformative (produce a better society) (Fraser, 1997). It "targeted schools", "poor families" with "needs" and "disadvantaged" students. It was to provide "buildings and equipment", encourage "school staffs" to develop "programs" and to promote particular new teaching "techniques". It was to compensate and remediate to achieve "equality of opportunity", "equality" and to end "injustice" and change the "outcomes of schooling" which were socially caused and also caused by the schools. The contradictions around whether the program was compensatory, aimed at deficient individuals, cultures and families and/or at the deficient curriculum; whether it was about changing an unequal society or achieving a fairer distribution of credentials; the balance between teacher professional development, school reform and better infrastructure, all rippled throughout the program and continue even now to wash through the schools that were involved.

This policy "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 1981) created room for states to provide their own particular interpretations of the program.⁵ There was also space for schools who, for the first time, received disposable and discretionary funds about which they had some decision making power.⁶ The policy intent, to create new knowledge and practices that would better serve the interests of the poor, produced a heady whirlpool of theorisations about class, equity and education, and the funds promoted and supported a veritable tsunami of school based curriculum reforms. However, increased educational privatisation, the extension of schooling into the private world of the family, the professionalisation of teachers and the undermining of the 'competitive academic curriculum', the label subsequently given to the university entrance curriculum pathway by Connell and colleagues (1982), were also all fostered by the Schools Commission and state DSP committees under the imprimatur of the Karmel report (1973).

The DSP was a policy contrivance that tended to homogenise differences amongst schools and students while allowing for local differences in projects.⁷ It created a

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⁵ Different states used different allocative mechanisms which created different issues for data requirements at different levels - federal and state (Quin, Ashenden & Milligan 1994).
⁶ Connell (1989) argues that the focus on schools was important because it "tied the program to social processes and networks among teachers" and enabled the program to work as a teacher educator.
⁷ The proliferation of school activities throughout the program can be seen in the two volumes of case studies entitled Doing Something About It 1978-79 (Commonwealth Schools Commission & Disadvantaged Schools Program, 1979) and the Priority Projects Fact Sheets (1989). This can be compared with the policy statements which clearly suggest all 'disadvantaged schools' (and not others) have school-community relations 'problems', need to change their organisation and focus on literacy and numeracy (Beacham, 1980; Commonwealth Schools Commission & Disadvantaged Schools Program, 1978; Education Department Victoria, 1976; O'Neill, 1978). This
mythology about the nature of working class schools, in which the schools themselves were actively involved. Early theorisations about equity were dominated by a humanist-liberal poverty discourse and by reproduction theories (I deal with this in the next section). Because the range of explanations about educational and social inequity were various, and because the program required school based DSP committees, there was much discussion about equity and disadvantage in the schools themselves, supported by state wide professional development and an infrastructure of equity advisers. The result was that, even though the words 'disadvantaged school' quickly meant a commonality of students, issues and problems, a diversity of theorisations about educational disadvantage were adopted variously within schools, and by individuals.

The DSP provided much wanted and needed additional funding to the schools serving Australia's poor and working class, but not at enormous levels. Nor did it keep pace with growing costs. As little as three years after its inception there were recommendations that the program needed to be dramatically strengthened to be effective (Fitzgerald, 1976). In effect the funding was around $100 per capita, less than the current cost of two pairs of Dunlop Volleys per head, a point often lost on schools outside the program, who noted, somewhat enviously, the provision of additional staffing and professional development to their colleagues. The arbitrary cut off points for funding often meant that neighbouring schools with only marginal differences in populations were differently funded, some in and some out. There were communication and organisational difficulties between the program and other functions of the state systems which led to counter accusations of 'double dipping' and marginalisation. The lack of policy clarity about the reasons for funding schools as institutions and not individuals in poverty, and the arbitrary and often secretive use of funding formulae, created ongoing difficulties for the program, as did the rigid submission basis for funding, with some state committees deciding what schools could and could not do in minute detail, going against the rhetoric favouring school based curriculum development and decision making.

The development of specific identity based politics in the late 70s and 80s brought gender, Aboriginality, ethnicity, physical and intellectual 'ability', and language

sole focus on 'disadvantaged schools' was echoed again in the later Schools Council publication Getting It Right (1990).

8 From this point, I use the convention of putting 'disadvantaged school' in quotation marks to signify its participation in the former DSP and to show it still operates as a category of schools.

9 It had been worth four pairs at the outset of the program, see Connell and colleagues (Connell, Johnston, & White, 1990b).

10 A graphic summary of the benefits and difficulties of the DSP in South Australia can be found in a commissioned Critical Review by Beasley (1988), which highlighted the un 'mainstream' nature of DSP activities within the state system and canvassed the idea of a more holistic approach to social justice.

11 Even Victoria and South Australia were relatively prescriptive in the beginning. See for example the Victorian Handbooks to schools (e.g. Supplementary Grants Program, 1978) and complaints tactfully documented in Beasley (1998) - and the South Australian decision to move away from submissions to encourage longer term and more broadly based school planning in Tomlian (1998).
'background' to the foreground. These were manifest in the DSP and in a proliferation of Commonwealth Special Purpose programmes. While the theories underpinning the DSP were subject to debate and policy scholarship, questions of identity overtook the concerns with poverty and class. How class, poverty and the various categorisations of identity politics worked together were problematic, and were subject to considerable discussion among policy activists. These debates were generally not reflected in national and state program guidelines, although some documents did place identity or class categories as subsets of one dominant frame. Major policy texts focussed more and more on general (broad-banded) questions of equity and the measurement of 'progress', as they applied across the board to the range of categories.

Efforts to move away from the meritocratic view of schooling led to strategic mappings of the inequitable and dis-aggregated distribution of educational benefits among the Australian population. The demand was for equity of outcomes linked to differential inputs and processes across all 'categories'. These questions of outcome and efficient 'targeting' of differential inputs came to dominate DSP program discussions, rather than the questions of power and the debates about the causes of social inequality (which tended to be the norm in development of gender equity school policy). DSP policy was controlled through the "textual practices" (D. Smith, 1990) of the national programmatic guidelines. Shifts in emphasis over time were not explained but were framed by larger policy changes; one set of guidelines merely replaced another. Continued threats of funding cutbacks, which began in the early 80s, also meant that program evaluations were as much a defence of the program as a critical examination (e.g. Connell et al., 1990b).

The abolition of the Schools Commission in the late 80s marked the end of any efforts to coordinate nationally the policy intention of the DSP, and the program continued for some years without substantial macro theoretical development or coordination, although its funding base and allocative formulae were regularly reviewed by states and

12 See for example the national conference publications, Poverty and Education (Disadvantaged Schools Program (SA), 1989) and Promoting Gender Equity Conference (Gender Equity Taskforce, 1995), the South Australian publication 'Equals' (Education of Girls Unit & South Australian Education Department, 1987/88) and various publications emanating from the Participation and Equity Program (e.g. K. McRae & Hebenstreit, 1987; PEP Inclusive Curriculum Program, undated; PEP Victoria, 1985; Thomson & Turner, 1989; Warrender, Clarke, & Forest, 1988), all of which placed the class and identity dialogues in proximity and talked of double disadvantage, multiple disadvantage, intersecting disadvantage and so on.

13 See for example the National Action Plan for Girls (Australian Education Council, 1993) and the South Australian Social Justice Plan (Curriculum Division & South Australian Education Department, 1993)

14 See the lineage of evaluation to indicators and outcomes from Standards for Australian Schools (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1984a) to Quality and Equality (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985), work by consultancies in how to use indicators e.g. (Ashenden, 1987; 1988) and then the policy of outcomes as the focus of the National Equity Strategy for Schools (MCEETYA, 1994; Schools Council, 1992) The same lineage occurred in states with the same growing focus on the collection of outcomes data found in their Social Justice plans (e.g. Curriculum Division & Department of Education and Children's Services, 1995; State Board of Education, 1990).
the Commonwealth bureaucracy. At the same time, education policy became strongly focussed on human capital formation (I take this story up in Chapter 4). The abandonment of the Australian welfare assistance state 'settlement' – signified in education and training by *Australia Reconstructed* (Australian Council of Trade Unions/Trade Department, 1985) and the subsequent translation of its implications for schooling (Dawkins, 1988) - marks a significant shift that is no mere policy adjustment. Since the late 80s, education is no longer primarily to do with nation building, but has become an integral part of the armory of the State used to support economic 'recovery'. Questions of poverty and justice remained on the agenda for the Hawke-Keating Labor government because a Labor government partly gets legitimacy from its expressed concern for social inequities - but these were now framed entirely by the economic imperative, corporatist technologies of government and competition state philosophies (Chapter 3 covers this in more detail).

The boom in school retention in the early 1990s perhaps made it seem as if significant gains had been made in reducing the effects of social class as a predictor of school success, but the decline in numbers since that time has brought a concern with social factors back into play (Lamb, 1996). Teese (1995, p. 78) argues that:

while there was rapid growth in opportunities for extended secondary and higher education, there was also being established a structure which would tend, in time, to check the social effects of growth and to maintain relative social advantages, even though from a higher platform, of general educational levels.

The result, according to Teese, is that particular student populations are advantaged, not by teaching or organisational efficacy, but because the schools serving the advantaged have been able to exploit the cultural demands of the curriculum and to profit from assessment technologies, at the same time as wielding more power with decision makers and amassing more resources. (This is a theme to which I return in Chapter 7.)

In 1996, the newly elected federal Liberal government headed by John Howard, running on a platform of neoliberalist individualism and marketisation, ended a number of equity school projects, those known as the Special Purpose Programs. Among these was the DSP, one of the longest running Commonwealth programs. The abrupt demise of the DSP signalled no significant public outcry, but merely added another dimension to the roll back of public welfare provision and, it is argued, the further marginalisation of the least well off in Australia (Rogan, 1996; Stilwell, 1994; Webber & Crooks, 1996; Welch, 1996).

**The Disadvantaged Schools Program in South Australia**

Because Australia is a federation of states and the provision of education is constitutionally allocated to states, the development of Commonwealth involvement in school education has always been subject to delicate manoeuvres. Each state was involved in negotiations around the program's goals and guidelines and a degree of

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15 Details of the various views, issues and a bibliography can be found in Quin, Ashenden and Milligan (1994). I have in my personal records the minutes of five DSP index review processes held in South Australia and another is currently underway.
autonomy was built into the program administration from the outset. This meant that the DSP took different turns in each state, regardless of how much the Commonwealth reports and evaluations sought to represent it as a coherent national project with variations only at the level of schools.

South Australian education took a profoundly liberal progressive course in the 1970s. Under the aegis of the reforming Dunstan Labor government, the state school system was 'comprehensivised', and the old technical-high school division obliterated. The production of central subject syllabi and mandated text books was abandoned in favour of broader 'subject' policies and school based curriculum development; school principals were given relative autonomy and funds for equipment and curriculum materials; and School Councils - with a majority of parent representatives - were established. School Councils were responsible for the financial management of the school and the maintenance of its grounds. This was also the case in Victoria, the only other state in the country to embrace such local decision making.\(^\text{16}\)

This decentralisation was expressed in a democratic lexicon. Innovation was actively encouraged and promoted and a bevy of advisory staff supported professional development and 'good practice', and school based reforms were extensively documented. Schools abandoned the extreme versions of tracking and streaming. They experimented with school organisation, and adopted structures such as sub-schools, annexes, and 'alternative' schools. New schools were built using open plan layouts. In South Australia, where the Director General of Education was a member of the Schools Commission, there was a wholehearted embrace of Schools Commission programs and 'disadvantaged schools' were identified and classified on the basis of the concentration of students living in poverty as measured by 'free books',\(^\text{17}\) a means tested measure through which school fees were waived and basic school supplies issued free of charge.

There were still tight central controls over student enrolments through zoning mechanisms, and over teacher appointments, transfers and promotions. The notion of the 'Principal A', a specific selection process for the heads of the schools that were the most complex in the system, was initiated in the mid 70s. These schools were DSP schools, large schools or those with particular philosophies such as sub-schooling. By the late 70s, there were also 'female only' deputy principal positions allowed for, under Section 47 of the state Equal Opportunity legislation.

DSP schools were often the first to get the latest variation in staffing, and the DSP state funding allowed for submissions for new school specific positions - such as community liaison officers, literacy support teachers - and teachers to support particular groups of students - such as girls, Aboriginal students and so on. Many of these positions were

\(^\text{16}\) See the consolidation of democratic decision making, School Councils, school planning and equity in Victoria in the 1983 Ministerial Papers (Minister of Education, 1983).

\(^\text{17}\) This support for individual children in impoverished circumstances changed its name from 'free books' - literally a supply to stationery and texts - to (late 70s) 'government assistance', a sum of money paid to the school to support a child's needs, to (mid 80s) 'School Card', a system of credit held for the child in each school.
advertised state wide and selected at the school level. The DSP also allocated specific teacher release time for professional development to schools. These allocations, and the development of school based staffing positions, meant that the central staffing procedures had to change. In South Australia at least, the DSP can be seen to have developed and/or trialed many of the mechanisms that are more often seen as the hallmarks of devolution - flexible use of funds, school based selection of staff with specific jobs to do, School Councils, and school based management of school oriented professional development.

The DSP at the state level spoke of whole school reform in democratic terms, as did the state policy approach within which it was framed. The state committee of the DSP was most sympathetic to those submissions that were able to articulate a theory of disadvantage and show how particular projects would redress not only the current issues in the school, but also change the long term production of disadvantage. The orthodoxy in this state was of difference. Schools needed to recognise how the knowledges, experiences, and skills of poor and working class children were different and change their curriculum and school practices accordingly. The involvement of parents was crucial to understanding difference. This emphasis received a further fillip with the short lived Participation and Equity Program (PEP) which nationally polemised about whole school change and the need to improve not only learning, but also the sheer numbers of students staying on at secondary schools - which were generally regarded as being more sluggish in taking to the equity and whole school reform agendas.

In South Australia, PEP was targeted at schools in much the same way as the DSP, and so all DSP secondary schools were involved. But there were also additional schools, those above the DSP cut off points. PEP introduced a new kind of submission process. Competitive funding via submissions as practiced in the DSP meant that some schools could get large amounts of funding while others got only a little, based on their proposed projects. PEP used 'notional per capita funding', a scheme where schools were assured an amount relative to their population. All they needed to do was to come up with an 'appropriate' whole school development plan which indicated how they would improve the participation of particular groups of students. PEP therefore was ahead of the DSP in the secondary school popularity poll on two counts - it was seen to be more equitable in both process and also in the spread of funding. PEP provided the avenue for theorisations of the "socially critical school" (Kemmis, Cole, & Suggett, 1983) and the "democratic curriculum" (Ashenden, Blackburn, Hannan, & White, 1984) to permeate professional development activities, and these particular problematisations were reflected in many school projects.

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18 See articles on difference by the DSP Coordinator in South Australia when the program began viz. Haden (1974, 1975).
19 One publication in South Australia (Paterson, 1989) ventured that the impact of Priority Projects on secondary schools had not been as great as in primary and junior primary, arguing that the size of secondary schools perhaps meant that one program could only "touch some aspects of the school" (p. 3).
The DSP submission process provoked much disputation in South Australia. The committee required at the school, consisting of parents, teachers and students, was increasingly doubling up on the work of other school committees (Beasley, 1988). The DSP process was compared unfavourably with that required by PEP. In response, by the beginning of the 90s the South Australian DSP had trialled and implemented a new approach.\textsuperscript{20} All schools would be given a per capita grant provided they submitted a triennial school development plan and an annual evaluation. Additional funds would be available on a competitive basis only for exceptional projects. It was the DSP schools in South Australia which led the way in whole school strategic planning, and who were able to take most advantage of the increasing number of school based promotion and special purpose teacher positions allowed through new industrial agreements between the teacher union and the state system.

In the last years of the DSP, the state committee was almost dissolved, reduced to a small group with monitoring power, and school based DSP committees were subsumed into the regular school structures. Per capita funding arrived at the targeted school and was allocated entirely in line with school priorities with a small amount reserved for cluster based innovative social justice projects. This was quite a different picture from some other Australian states where there was still a submission based process and a prescription of priorities for funding.\textsuperscript{21}

The DSP has been a program whose meanings have been variously interpreted by school communities, groups of teachers and individuals. School administrators have been key agents of policy interpretation and of the invention of 'bottom up' programs and professional knowledge. Nevertheless, despite these apparent differences between states and schools, it is still the case that significant amounts of DSP money in each state were spent on camps and excursions and literacy.

The Commonwealth Literacy Program and the Disadvantaged Schools Program

At the end of the 80s, Connell (1989) took a prophetic stance and suggested that the worst case scenario for the future was one where:

we might see a reactionary shift towards the commodification of education, and the re-stratification of the education system. If we go down this track, governments will increase dollars to private schools and reinforce their social prestige. There will be increased regulation and regimentation of mainstream public education, which will increasingly become the residual system for the working class, held in shape by programs such as Basic Skills Testing. Universities will be gradually privatised with rising fees. Class gaps will widen. We could return, in a decade or so, to the levels of social stratification in education which characterised the 1940s.

This is the future that is now coming to fruition. The replacement for the DSP, the Commonwealth Literacy Program (CLP), and the neoliberal attack on all special interest

\textsuperscript{20} See Tomlian (1998) for a record of the decision.

\textsuperscript{21} See for example the New South Wales DSP handbook (Equity Programs Unit, 1994) which combines data collection, action research within a whole school planning and submission framework.
groups, has left educational and welfare groups to ponder how best to raise questions about equity and justice in the national arena. One can hardly argue that literacy is not important, nor that the DSP was not very concerned to improve literacy. The simultaneous deregulation of the non-government schooling sector means that it is increasingly difficult to know which 'front' to strategically defend or how to work on all 'fronts' at once - public education, educational justice, the DSP, and/or public education.

It has been argued that the DSP failed working class students. The evidence produced for the assertion that the DSP has failed is the alleged poor literacy standards of the Australian population and children. Each national literacy survey has produced renewed moral panic about alarming levels of child and adult illiteracy (Comber, Green, Lingard, & Luke, A., 1998). This 'politics of ill/literacy' is now endemic and might be said to constitute an ongoing manufactured 'risk anxiety' (Beck, 1992; Scott, Jackson, & Backett-Milburn, 1998). The stubborn refusal of the literacy achievement of Australian children to rise significantly is argued by the current conservative federal government as the indication of the complete lack of success of the DSP, and the reason why an inputs based approaches to school improvement 'does not work'. What is needed instead, they say, is a focus on 'outcomes'.

The abolition of the DSP does significant ideological work for the conservative government, for it makes possible a continued focus on literacy, but removes from consideration the social context - that was the 'unsuccessful' focus of the DSP. As well, it supports a rejection of the teaching approaches that were most associated with the DSP, and opens up the way for the promotion of 'back to basics' approaches to literacy teaching. Furthermore, it paves the way for reductions in funding because inputs are said to be unimportant. The coming to prominence of the 'effective schools' paradigm which focuses on the outputs produced within the black box of schooling was never far from the centre of policy in the 70s and 80s, and gained steady ground together with the stalking horse discourse of 'quality', which was launched in 1985 into federal policy by the Quality of Education Review Committee Report (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985). It has now moved to centre stage, and one of the major disruptions to its story, talk of disadvantage, has been sent to the wings. (I take up the 'effective schools' policy approach in Chapter 6.)

There is considerable anecdotal, and a little formal research (Townsend, 1997a) evidence to suggest that the now abandoned Commonwealth equity grant funds to the poorest state schools, the DSP, did not equate to the amount of funds available to their more wealthy counterparts from parents and other curriculum grants. The decision whether to continue to allocate Commonwealth literacy funds to targeted schools, on a per capita basis, or on Basic Skills Test results is now left to each state. A substantial redistribution away from targeted schools will mean that the income level of schools serving the working class will fall significantly, and some comparatively well off schools will

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22 See footnote 11 for the trail.
benefit. The gap between schools may actually increase. In South Australia, the CLP funds are allocated to targeted schools and include those formerly targeted by the DSP. A survey by Joint Principals Associations in South Australia (Thomson & Wilkins, 1997) suggests that these Commonwealth poverty funds make up somewhere between 25 and 35% of the total disposable income available to the targeted school. Much of this funding goes towards additional staffing and other luxuries such as subsidies for excursions, liaison with parents, computers and library books.

The project of schooling the working class will continue despite the abolition of the DSP. The broad free market direction of national government policy, the particular responses of state government systems, and the absence of a sanctioned national policy for social justice and equity, means that it will be entirely up to individual schools, administrators and teachers to determine how they will carry on progressive agendas in face of increasing social fragmentation. The intransigence of unemployment and the widening gap between rich and poor creates the spectre of a new juvenile underclass educated for the casual labour market and a tenuous life on the social margins. This is the context for my research and also its prime motivation.

This research asks what is happening to 'disadvantaged schools' now that the DSP has been abolished. It seeks to develop a partial understanding of what schooling the working class looks like at this particular time, a time which as Foucault (1983, p. 206, in Hoy, p.23 ) says:

is a time like any other, or rather, a time which is never quite like any other.

STORIES OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY: LITERATURES SURROUNDING THE DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM

My research looks at some 'disadvantaged schools' that are no longer part of the DSP and at how they are affected by the demise of the policy. It also engages with the ongoing contradictory mandates of schooling the working class. Before I detail my research question and discuss its importance, I want to revisit the story of the DSP. In this re-telling I want to focus more on the representations of the DSP schools and the theorisations of their social purposes, and touch on the vexed questions that surround the terms class and poverty. I do this for two reasons - firstly to establish the influences that have been, and still are, at work in the 'disadvantaged schools' that I researched, and secondly, to locate this research in the literature.

International stories

In the early days, the DSP was officially a liberal humanist narrative about poverty and the need to ameliorate its effects. This was influenced by the literatures emerging from

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23 This is the case in the USA, where Title 1 school funds distributed on a per capita basis benefits wealthy counties more than poor inner urban locations - see Hoff (1997).
24 I have used my own bookshelf as an example. Comprised largely of battered Penguin paperbacks, American free press editions and the occasional hardcover, it represents as much as any others' would, the general reading diet of the young DSP activist. A relatively comprehensive
England and America (e.g. Coleman, 1966; Jencks, 1972; Jensen, 1976; Karabel & Halsey, 1977; Rutter, Mortimore, & Maughan, 1979) but there were also other stories to be found in scholarly literature. The ideas of de-schooling and alternative schooling powered attacks on the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of school organisation (e.g. Illich, 1973; Kozol, 1968; Postman & Weingartner, 1971; Reimer, 1971) and teacher 'expectations' were challenged (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). The 'new' sociology of education was highly influential. Theories of reproduction and resistance were prominent, particularly among teacher activists, with Bowles and Gintis (1975), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Apple (1979), and Willis (1977) being especially significant. Their works described how the organisation of (male) working class labour in blue collar factories corresponded to the organisation of schooling which, through its selection and sorting processes, ensured that social class was reproduced (Anyon, 1980; Giroux, 1983; Sharp & Green, 1975). Acts of (male) individual and group resistance to the inexorable process of making class society, often worked to produce the same ends (Corrigan, 1977; S. Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Robins & Cohen, 1978; Searle, 1975; Willis, 1977). There were theorisations of the culture of the working class (e.g. B. Jackson, 1972; P. Jackson & Marsden, 1966; Sennet & Cobb, 1972), ethnographies of working class and ghetto schools (e.g. B. Jackson, 1960; McNeil, 1988; Woods, 1979), discussions of critical pedagogies (e.g. Giroux, 1988; Shor, 1987) and the production of analyses about the role of literacy in the reproduction and production of class (e.g. Bernstein, 1971; Everhart, 1983; Heath, 1983; Hoggart, 1958; Holt, 1972; Kohl, 1971; Stubbs & Hillier, 1983).

Local readings and writings

Theories of reproduction were hotly debated within the DSP (Sharp, 1980) and the scholarly community. In the 80s there sprang up a number of home grown approaches that used critical theories to examine questions of social class (Connell et al., 1982; Connell, White, & Johnston, 1991; K. Johnston, 1993; J. Smyth, 1993) and these came to prominence in and around the DSP. The seminal ethnographic study, Making the Difference (Connell et al., 1982), highlighted the ways that schooling actively produced class and gender differences rather than the school being a site where social relations that corresponded to those in the economy (the determinant) were simply mirrored or resisted. The focus of this work was on the ways in which families and children from blue collar and privileged backgrounds experienced their schooling. The authors sought to find a generalisable theory of social class and/in education and argued that ruling class schools were "organic to their class", producing the knowledges and gendered social relations useful to, and considered valuable by, their socially and economically advantaged families. By contrast, the working class school was positioned antithetically, valuing the knowledge in the "competitive academic curriculum" and producing gender relations and a hierarchy of academic/social positions that actively worked against "class solidarities". Nevertheless, parents of working class students were strongly

bibliography on educational disadvantage was issued by the Schools Commission in the late 70s (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1979a).

committed to education, not indifferent or actively hostile as the welfarist and deficit stories of schooling the poor would have it.

This research was highly influential then, and is still, because it provided a basis for action. If the school produced inequity, it could equally work to lessen difference, to work for greater equity. Within DSP policy circles, people discussed the idea of schools as 'organic to their class' and generated projects directed towards the 'working class curriculum', that is, a curriculum that served the needs of the working class in the ways that ruling class school curriculum served the 'interests' of the ruling class.26 There was a changed emphasis on parent-school relations, and some shift from compensation for the home cultures of poverty27 towards attempts to create partnerships between schools and their parent communities (Pettit, 1980; Tannock, 1975; Thomson, 1983). The 'competitive academic curriculum' came under increasing attack, with attempts to find more democratic approaches to knowledge production rubbing up against the demands of university selection. This was (and remains) a hot topic, with ongoing unsettled arguments about the degree to which a common, or a separate curriculum might be equitable, or conversely, might work to continue the production of profound and unacceptable differences.

In DSP schools, many heated debates about the working class curriculum occurred in staffrooms and conferences. They/we also took up ideas such as student resistance to the dominant hegemony of schools (Brougham, 1994; Hawkins, 1982), a renewed interest in teachers' work (Connell, 1985), the "inclusive curriculum" (Blackburn 1986), "negotiated curriculum" (Boomer, 1982) and "work based assessment" (B. Johnston & Dowdy, 1988). Inspired and encouraged by the liberation theories of Paulo Freire (1972; 1974; The Schoolboys of Barbiana, 1970), two other directions geared towards emancipatory ends were promulgated. They were the notion of the "socially critical school" (Kemmis et al., 1983) and "participatory action research" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1993; McTaggart, 1993). Action research encouraged democratic and reflective activity at the school level to change curricula, school policies and practices by focussing on the interests of the marginalised and disadvantaged. Action research was often conducted with the involvement of university based teachers and addressed issues such as the privileging of the researcher's knowledge over that of practitioners (R. Smith, 1994).28

In what is perhaps characteristic of schools and teachers, these ideas were usually put together in a pragmatic pastiche. The 'socially critical' and 'counter hegemonic' approach to curriculum produced new approaches to schooling and to specific aspects of curriculum - e.g. the literacy genre materials (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993); it found its way into post compulsory courses - e.g. the now abandoned STC (Victoria) and Community Studies (South Australia) programs; and recently informed a major Australian

26 New South Wales DSP staff and schools worked on 'essential learnings' based on this theorisation of a counter hegemonic curriculum.

27 For the classic arguments of cultural deprivation and cultures of poverty see O. Lewis (1962), Jordan (1974) and the reply from Keddie (1973).

28 The need to generate a genuine theory - practice praxis that would lead to 'reflective teacher practitioners' also found its place in preservice and inservice teacher education (J. Smyth, 1995b).
Education Union (AEU) backed project to develop socially critical key competencies (L. Hall, 1998). These ideas still have considerable currency.

The most significant research work on the DSP was undertaken by the Macquarie University team from 1987 to 1990, led by Connell. The team produced a series of reports (summarised in Connell, White, & Johnston, 1990a), and two publications (Connell et al., 1990b, 1991). This work was precariously positioned. On the one hand it was meant to provide an evaluation of policy for government and thus had little scope for new theorisations. On the other hand, it was commissioned at a time when the program was considered by activists to be under threat and so the scope for a critical, 'warts and all' documentation had to be balanced against the need to defend and document the DSP achievements. That one volume was published by Deakin University, and the other only had a limited print run under the auspices of the National Board for Employment, Education and Training, speaks to the degree to which government officers and politicians were committed to the continuation of the program. The subsequent national policy efforts in the early 90s to 'broadband' equity programs foundered on the opposition of key (Labor support) groups such as parents, teacher unions and some states.

Throughout the 70s and 80s there was also the growth of identity based politics. This was accompanied by the introduction of feminist and cultural studies perspectives into Commonwealth policy making and into the schools. Initially feminist standpoint theories were used to support and justify affirmative action programs in schools. The

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A clutch of books describing Australian schools, including some that were DSP supported, were produced during the life of the Schools Commission (e.g. Embling, 1986; B. Hill, 1977; Humphreys & Newcombe, 1975; Pettit, 1980). There was also government sponsored investigation around the DSP which, however, did little to advance understanding of the broader theoretical issues of schooling in the production of 'educational disadvantage', although it did provide both a picture of the state of the art thinking in schools (Griffin & Batten, 1991; D. McRae, 1990; R. Smith, 1993b) and also the current distribution of the benefits of schooling across the population according to gender, class, race, parent education level and region (e.g. Mukherjee, 1996; Teese, Davies, Charlton, & Polaschek, 1995). There were a number of teacher education resources produced during the life of the program, and some practitioner writings (e.g. Ryan, 1988; Thomson, 1992; Thomson & Turner, 1989). There was also more scholarly work that documented school reform efforts (e.g. Comber, 1996; Hatton, Munns, & Dent, 1995; Lingard 1997), that explained the impact of schooling on young people 'at risk' (Batten & Russell, 1995) and that presented the debates around social justice for a wider audience (e.g. Knight, 1994; Lingard & Garrick, 1997; Lingard, Knight, & Porter, 1993). Even in the last year of the program some impressive materials were published (e.g. S. Hill, Nixon, Comber, Badger, & Wilkinson, 1996; Kavanagh, 1996; Queensland Department of Education & Special Program Support scheme, 1996).

I had a somewhat dubious role in this, having been part of the national consultations. In the end I hoped that the possibilities of broadbanding would be greater than considerable downside (Rivzi, 1995). But no matter, the recommendations were so tied up in administrative guidelines that any hope turned out to be extreme naivete.

Dale Spender was an early influence in all Australian states. Her polemics about 'air time' were replicated in countless classroom research projects. For an elegant explication of the development of gender policies from this starting point, see Gilbert (1996).
reversion of the hierarchical binary of male/female supported the development of 'girl friendly' approaches to curriculum, those which built on and used 'female knowledges and skills'. In the late 80s and 90s, there was an emphasis on how it was that gender relations were produced through schooling and how subjectivities were constructed. While there were ongoing attempts to put together theorisations about race, gender and class, these were most often discussed as complex intersections or as particular categorisations, such as homeless girls, girls living in poverty and so on. Such ideas rapidly found their way into DSP schools, and funds were used to support a range of girls', boys', Aboriginal and language background projects.

Literacy programmes were always a feature of the DSP and a range of theorisations about literacy were supported in various states. "Whole language" (e.g. Cambourne, 1988; Graves, 1983; F. Smith, 1988; Walshe, 1981), "genre" approaches (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Kalantzis & Cope, 1989) and "critical literacy" (e.g. Comber, 1994; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; A. Luke, & Gilbert, 1993), were (and remain) the most popular with practitioners, and in the 80s these provided the rationale for rejecting standardised testing and a variety of direct instruction methods. There are very strong links between universities and schools built around literacy teaching and there has been considerable translation of literacy theories into professional development programmes (e.g. Campagna et al., 1989; Education Department of South Australia, 1984, 1991). DSP schools in South Australia have been eclectic in their use of theorisations of literacy but share a suspicion of 'back to basics' and are articulate about the limitations of such approaches.

The idea of the 'inclusive school', popularised initially in relation to the education of girls (Blackburn, 1986), found its way into school and systems thinking such that it has now reached taken for granted status and is a standard part of the policy lexicon. In recent times, theories of social justice were made explicit in government policies and

32 The policy trail of girls to gender can be seen moving through the years of education of girls policy reports and policies, from Girls, Schools and Society (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1975) to Girls and Tomorrow (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1984a), the national policy on the education of girls (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987) and then to the National Action Plan for Girls (Australian Education Council, 1993) which, importantly, spoke of the construction of gender.
33 See Footnote 9.
34 There are a number of studies of the implementation of gender equity policy. Such work was commissioned by the Commonwealth government, following on from critical policy implementation and evaluation work in the 80s, such as that around the Participation and Equity Program (D. McRae, 1988; Rivzi & Kemmis, 1987). There was also a substantial body of work generated around the national policy and action plan for the education of girls. Feminist researchers were commissioned to undertake empirical work to document, for example, 'post school options' (Kenway, Willis, & The Education of Girls Unit, 1993), gender equity research (Yates, 1993), sexual harassment (Council, 1992), girls' success in Commerce (S. Johnston, Taylor, & Watson, 1993), a study of terminology (Gilbert, 1996), and primary school affirmative action programs (Large, 1993).
35 In the 90s the work on social justice varied from quantitative work that documented the unequal distribution of educational benefits among the school population (e.g. Teese et al., 1995), to critical historical accounts of the processes of social structuration that resulted in the current
have also been used to generate ideas around "curricular justice" (Connell, 1993): its commonplace use has been critiqued as being at best a liberal progressive interpretation of social justice (Starr, 1991). The demise of the DSP has been accompanied by the end of social justice policies but the language of justice and inclusivity is still widely spoken, particularly in 'disadvantaged schools'.

The abolition of the DSP represents a partial severing of critical and postcritical scholarship from the schooling sector, as the 'social' is no longer recognised in policy. It is in the areas of literacy, information technology, leadership and vocational education that the connections are easily made. In this climate, there is also considerable potential for the work of progressive academics in the university to be steered towards utilitarian projects (Lankshear & Knobel, 1997). However, there are also renewed demands created by progressive teachers' and parents' organisations and schools, for a more sharply (post)critical theory that once again focuses directly on how it is that schooling is complicit and active in the production of social divisions.

In the next section I detail what contribution I hope to make to meet those demands.

POSITIONING THIS RESEARCH

It is to the literatures on disadvantage, difference and justice, as well as to current policy and policy makers, that I want to speak. To conclude this chapter I provide some detail about my research focus and approach.

Filling a gap in the research

Research focussed on the DSP and 'disadvantaged schools' in Australia is arguably scant and this is surprising given the program's duration and scope. In 'Running Twice As Hard' (Connell et al., 1991), possibly the last major published piece on the DSP, Connell and colleagues identified a series of areas for further research (p. 75). They noted that there was little in the way of studies of the workings of 'disadvantaged schools' as institutions, and suggested that one 'decent ethnography' would tell more than the plethora of surveys of pupil attainment. They suggested that there was almost nothing that looked at the impact of the functioning of the school systems as institutions and the implication of this for 'disadvantaged schools'. The authors pointed out that, while:

'Making the Difference' points to this question, it was set up as a study of families not of the system. (p. 75)

The authors also suggested that there are theoretical problems that need to be addressed: the interplay between home and school; the interplay of class, ethnicity and gender; the nature of class, particularly in the context of transience; the impact of structural unemployment and the creation of youth based cultural forms. The research area identified constitutes a large space in which a modest doctoral research project can

conservative push for education reform (Welch, 1996), to critiques of social justice as an administrative practice that supports market individualism (Taylor, Rivzi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997).
hardly hope to make much impact. However, this research does concern itself with some of the issues delineated by Connell and his associates.

This research finds a small place in one of the gaps identified. I look at how some formerly classified 'disadvantaged schools' are responding to the abandonment of the DSP and the switch to literacy, in the context of the new conservative 'settlement'.\textsuperscript{36}\textsuperscript{38} In order to do that, I have chosen to look at the institutional unit of 'the school' as articulated by school administrators. The role of school administrators is now seen to be pivotal to successful system reform and the 'delivery' of educational services. The relationship between 'school' and 'system' has changed. Schooling now means highly regulated state systems of devolved policy implementation. In the 90s, decision making and management responsibilities given to schools have come to be the object of educational policy in renewed and new ways. Devolution of management and implementation of (state) centrally developed policies and nationally agreed goals and curriculum combine with New Public Management (NPM) and a focus on effective schools and quality assurance (I investigate these in some detail in Chapter 5).

As the school system became more decentralised in this state, overt supervision of principals was replaced by a series of measures designed to ensure their loyalty and adherence to policy. Attention in the policy literature is often paid to appraisal and other performative measures, and the effects of the introduction of salary packaging, and incentives to leave the teacher union.\textsuperscript{37} In South Australia, school administrators have remained inside the union and have received only the salary increases that are part of the overall industrial negotiations. Despite the explicit allocation of supervisory line management of principals to District Superintendents and an increase in their surveillance, one of the major ways of ensuring their compliance to policy in this state has been the ownership and responsibility generated through direct principal involvement in the policy production process.\textsuperscript{38} School administrators (that is principals, deputies and assistant principals), are now heavily implicated in central state and national policy making. Their professional associations have direct access to ministers and senior executives. In South Australia, all Departmental state wide policy and program committees have principal association nominees as members, and principal associations Presidents are sought after by the media for comment on policy developments. However, representation on policy bodies is extended only to associations, which is no guarantee that the views of principals of 'disadvantaged schools' will be taken into account. One of the issues that this research points towards is how this might matter.

\textsuperscript{36} The idea of 'settlement' is one I also query in Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{37} See for example, Blackmore (1996; 1997); Blackmore & Sachs (1996); Dow (1996); Limerick & Lingard (1995); and Starr (1998).
\textsuperscript{38} I was commissioned to produce a document for secondary principals that they could use as the basis of policy negotiation with the employer (Thomson, 1998).
The research focus

Because there is abroad a widespread belief that poverty is worsening (e.g. Gazzard, 1996; Gunn, 1997; Rodda, 1997), and that macro global economic and social changes and microeconomic reform have combined in particular and vicious ways in Australia to create ghettos in which an underclass is emerging (e.g. Gregory & Hunter, 1995; Towers, 1997), I chose to situate my research in two geographical locations in the city of Adelaide, regions which statistically fit this picture of 'sink' localities. I pick up the vexed questions of class, location, structural unemployment and transience by attempting to flesh out the statistical pictures and maps of the northern and western suburbs. To do this, I engaged several of my colleague 'ex-DSP' school administrators in conversations about their schools and student populations. I attempted to establish a situation of co-theorisation around the questions of worsening poverty, and the effects of declining public services and vanishing jobs, particularly for young people. I asked my colleagues to talk with me about what the abolition of the DSP meant for them, what it is like to be administering a 'disadvantaged school' now, and what it is that they would want from policy.

I have chosen to look at a number of schools, rather than just at one or two. This is so that I can get some idea of the 'systemic' workings of the post DSP policy environment. This 'sample' also enables me to get some ideas about the two regions involved, as they appear to the DSP school administrators. I selected sixteen schools as the focus of my research. In looking at this number of sites I understood that I could not collect the kind of detailed information about each school that would be gained from a series of case studies, or better still, a series of ethnographies. However, looking at a modest collection of schools, rather than a larger national sample, as has been the dominant mode of government sponsored DSP school research, does allow me to collect information about each 'whole school' and its neighbourhood, together with the administrators' views on the overall impact of current government policy. This is what I will call a 'mid point policy analysis', situated at the 'top' of a number of schools, looking upward at the locus of policy formation and promulgation, outward to the neighbourhoods and other agencies in the vicinity of the schools, and downward to the staff, students and parents, the communities that make up the schools.

This research is in many ways a speculative venture. I was not confident what could be learnt from speaking with this number of school administrators and initially thought that all I would do was to invite my colleagues to have a conversation about policy. After two 'trial runs' (which I have not included in the research group of sixteen), I realised that there was some point in pursuing conversations in which administrators discussed their particular school, its neighbourhood, and the students in relation to the broad policy and social and economic context. It was possible to establish some stories about changing poverty and systemic policy responses.

39 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the literatures relating to poverty and inequality in which I conclude that inequality might be a more appropriate term to describe the statistics produced by qualitative sociological scholarship.
While this research does not enable me to say what is happening to 'disadvantaged schools' from the perspective of teachers, students and parents, it does enable me to suggest how those people who are in designated leadership positions, a position of increased responsibility and power, represented the current situation. As it has transpired, the particular size of the group of schools has raised a number of questions and possibilities for further research, and I deal with these in the concluding chapter. At the outset, the decision to select this number of school administrators was serendipitous and guided as much by my time limitations as from an understanding about what looking at a number of sites might yield in the way of information.

From the outset I was sure that there had not been a body of research on 'disadvantaged schools' that worked from this systemic 'midpoint'. I read most of the research into 'disadvantaged schools' in Australia while I was a principal of one. Indeed my school had been the object of much research attention. None of the research fitted my understanding of ongoing life in the 'disadvantaged schools' in Australia. None of it captured the everyday routines, demands, tensions and crises, because the researchers generally wanted to focus on particular programmes, successes and failures of particular kinds of interventions, on particular groups of students. I was determined that my research would include some of this untold story and would attempt to represent the micro interactions on which I had spent most of my time. I was also sure, from some of the finely focussed classroom observation research, that much can be learned about the ways in which schools produce educational privilege and disadvantage in the small and routine (e.g., S. Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid, & Rivalland, 1998). Although I realised I could probably not achieve any more in this research than to get some hints about what to look for and how this might work, the 'everyday' became another focus for conversation with my colleagues.

The final issue I wanted to investigate was related to the puzzle about the local. The devolution policy now being considered for implementation in South Australia is qualitatively different from the democratic de-centralisation supported by the DSP, and yet the two are strongly connected, certainly in South Australia, in ways that are not transparent. One of my intentions in this research was to enable some aspects of this shift to be illuminated. Given the renewed progressive interest in issues of 'community' social capital, and regional development, which are all being promoted and discussed within Australia and are already the objects of public policy in Britain (e.g., Social Exclusion Unit, 1998) how schools and other government agencies work with and within the local is a key issue for future policy development.

A NOTE ON THE RESEARCH EPISODE

Most Australian research into educational disadvantage, class and poverty has worked from critical theory perspectives and within the academic discipline of sociology. I will deal with each of them in turn to make explicit the particular epistemological position that is the basis of my research.
The post in postcritical

Much of the Australian research into 'disadvantaged schools' has been influenced by critical theory. Critical theory is based on a series of assumptions about truth, identity and society that have been rendered somewhat problematic by recent poststructural and feminist understandings. Critical theory draws on the traditions of Marxism and the desire for liberation and emancipation from oppression. Critical theory however does not equate to Marxism having abandoned the base-superstructure theorisation of society, giving instead prominence to culture, and broad notions of identity and social agency. The capacity of (neo) Marxisms to continue to stretch like elastic to cover all circumstances, places and a rapidly changing world has created a miniature crisis in some parts of the academy. Critical theory has been touched by some of the same critiques. The notion of class itself is under attack40 and its capacities to describe a political movement and material reality are under fire. However, it was not, and is not, just Marxism and critical theory that have much to explain.

Any piece of scholarship or research carries with it a story that tells a tale of the world, our 'reality' and how it functions. Lyotard (1984) argued that modern science constructed a 'grand narrative' that sought to exclude all other stories, thereby legitimating its own position as the sole source of knowledge and truth. It was a story of epic proportions that aligned the disciplines and practices of the sciences to the growth of the modern state. Together they stood for progress and the path to happiness and prosperity. The story is now undermined from within and without the scientific community.41 Science as a grand narrative of emancipation and freedom is frayed and worn thin, just as surely as is Marxism. Lyotard (1984) argues that all theorisations that claim to find the universal laws, systems and structures that govern the human and natural world, work in the same way - they offer themselves as The Story, rather than a story. Their grandiose claims are now found wanting.42

40 Sociologists produce books with provocative titles like The Death of Class (Pakulski & Waters, 1996), which is answered by assertions like Class Counts (E.O. Wright, 1997), and they disaggregate population data into ever increasing numbers of social strata, interpreting class as a material entity.

41 Within the scientific community notions of deduction and induction have been critiqued, the systematic basis of scientific thought queried by theorisations of paradigm shifts, and the new physics of chaos theory and subatomic events have produced illustrations of non predictable and irregular occurrences in the natural world (Connole, 1993).

42 Positivist sciences make claims to be 'legitimate' knowledge on the basis of their 'objectivity' and standardised processes to 'verify' findings. This is undermined by the postmodern condition and poststructuralist critique. Lyotard (1984) argued that this did not mean that the practices of sciences were therefore doomed, and that there could be no possibility of maintaining standards of practice within the scientific community. He argued that legitimation - the claim to be valid - was a matter of winning the acceptance of the community of experts. In other words, the community of scientists, recognising their inability to find The or even A 'truth', should agree on what constitutes legitimate scientific processes, language, and explanations. The rejection of objectivity in favour of socially negotiated standards of practice is often seen as relativist. S. Harding (1993) argues to the contrary, suggesting that an understanding of the limitations of science encourages what she calls 'strong objectivity'. Far from closing down debate as do truth claims, this lays the basis for continued work on 'less false' understandings, because "the
Lyotard warns against trying to find causal explanations for this disruption. We are bound to be disappointed, he says, so it's better to practice a state of incredulity towards universal truth claims. What positivist science, both quantitative and qualitative, declared to be total and universal truths, turns out to be partial. What was alleged to be unitary, turns out to be multiple. What was asserted as fixed, turns out to be shifting and changing. The big narratives have been replaced by more self conscious and humble small stories - "petites histoires" (Hassan, 1993), unable to master all that they survey. Researchers from many disciplines have taken these understandings - that it is a risky business to make theorisations that attempt to be universal and totalising - to mean that they should approach their research more modestly, acknowledging what they and it can and cannot do.

Critical theory challenges the notion that research, the public and systematic production of knowledge through inquiry, is a neutral activity. Critical theorists suggest that we need to always ask in whose interests research is being conducted, whose voices are being heard and whose are not, and who is involved in designing research, collecting information and deciding on its interpretation. Some critical theorists positioned people as dupes needing to be enlightened (Britzman, 1995), others privileged the voices of the oppressed as if they spoke truths (Game, 1991), some acted gender blind. Foucault points to the particular dangers facing critical researchers - the 'will to truth and freedom' that lurks just beneath the surface of constructions such as oppression/liberation and ignorance/consciousness (Gore, 1993). White (1995), a psychotherapist, literally faces these questions daily and he suggests that:

When we speak of freedom or liberation...we take the ethical responsibility to explore questions like: "What are the practices of liberty that are being proposed here?" "How might we monitor the real effects of these practices of liberty?" "What might assist us to explore, the horizons of, the limitations of, and the possible dangers of, these practices of liberty?" "What responsibility might we take in the imagination and generation of alternative practices of liberty?" (M. White, 1995, p. 62)

The extended family of postcritical research approaches takes this position, and then takes it further. Postcritical research shares with critical research a commitment to justice, fairness and equality, and postcritical researchers use that language while making it clear at the same time that the meanings of justice, fairness and equality are very slippery and contested, and that the processes of achieving them are very complex. But there are some very real difficulties in dealing with the 'post' that accepts nothing on face value, and the critical, that argues from an ethical standpoint about broad social issues. Many postcritical researchers still have an eye on bigger issues and questions, while at the same time recognising the situatedness and partiality of their own research.

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procedures of the sciences (at their best) do generate claims that are validly and usefully regarded as "less false" in a limited (not absolute) but meaningful way: the hypothesis passing empirical and theoretical tests is less false than all (and only) the alternatives considered, though that judgement too, must be held provisionally". (S. Harding, 1998, p. 144-45)
Postcritical researchers are wary of universal categories such as class, gender, and race that homogenise, essentialise and universalise experiences (e.g. B. Davies & Banks, 1992; Game, 1991; Lather, 1991; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Explanations of society and change that propose 'emancipation' are also suspect because they speak in essentialised terms on behalf of many who have not been asked if they wish to be included, and/or are based on a notion of material reality that does not exist (Lyotard, 1984; Young, 1990, 1996).

Postcritical researchers therefore consider several moves to deal with these difficulties. They often work from the local and the empirical. They self consciously use contested terms such as class and justice working from the view that, as Blackmore (1995, p. 54) suggests:

While postmodernity is associated with fragmentation, plurality, chaos, arbitrariness and change, it is still a system because it still produces systematic difference.

They make themselves visible in the research: the 'invisible researcher' (Game, 1991; Gough, 1996a; Lather, 1992; Roman, 1992; D. Smith, 1987) is replaced by a tangible presence. They also often argue that what is required is a more 'provisional politics' that recognises difference, but nevertheless works for justice (E. Ellsworth & Miller, 1996; C. Luke, 1995; Mouffe, 1993; Weeks, 1993; Yeatman, 1994; Young, 1993), combined with a research practice that uses theories of postmodernity to begin to place a new spin on social justice and equity in schooling (Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993; Kenway, 1995a).

My research is informed by these understandings. Because I am concerned with justice and equity I invoke a set of values and an epistemology that supports such a view. However my research is also informed by poststructuralist and feminist understandings. It is therefore self consciously situated and limited in its goals, and I understand (only too well) that I cannot know everything, nor can I arrive at the solution to social inequality. I may however make a contribution.

43 Educational researchers concerned with gender and race, with the environment, with new technologies and society in new times, and with literacies have been keen to take up feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist theories (e.g. Fitzclarence, Green, & Bigum, 1995; B. Green & Bigum, 1993; Kenway et al., 1993; A. Luke & Gilbert, 1993; A. Luke, Nakata, Singh, & Smith, 1993).

44 Yeatman (1994) has suggested that 'post' positioned feminist epistemology, research practice and politics might include the following:

- a deconstructive relationship to the modernist tradition of theorising
- a post universalistic approach to theorising
- an insistence of the ambiguous nature of the border which constitutes difference
- a perspectivalist (situated) theory of knowledge
- an approach to theorising as an historically specific and contingent activity
- making explicit the significance of the theorist's positioning in respect of the institutional bases of intellectual authority
- the explicit significance of the embodied subject for feminist theorising
- an awareness of the significance of language (pp. 16-26)

45 My position is enunciated in greater detail in my co-authored monograph on critical and postcritical approaches to research (Thomson & Wellard, 1999).
Sociology and Cultural Studies

Sociology is a discipline that is concerned to generalise, to make some sense out of patterns of social events, to move beyond the individual and unique. It has typically been concerned with big pictures. Sociology moved from the micro to the macro and found the workings of class, gender and race. Feminist, postcritical, poststructural and postcolonial critiques have pointed out that the connections between the micro and the big picture structures are often far from material reality.

Reading accounts of the fetid slums and dark unhealthy sweatshops of industrial England it is easy to imagine the resonance between the harsh realities of the lives of the working poor and the Marxist theorisations. However, while there is some connection between the theory and the pictures of the reality, there is also some disjuncture, some aspects of Victorian life which do not fit. How to explain the domestic violence meted out by the noble male proletariat on his wife and family? How to comprehend those benevolent industrialists who built houses and hospitals? How to categorise those who were denied any work because of the colour of their skin? While these questions may not have raised significant concern at the time, they have certainly been on the agenda in the recent past. These are questions that will vex my research which focuses on class but wants to avoid glossing over difference.

The more recent scholarly discipline of Cultural Studies focuses on semiotic practices rather than structures so that easy structural explanations are no longer possible. Cultural Studies research considers the popular, the local, people and cultures. It engages with social theory and is influenced by it, but...explores the actual practices of daily life under conditions of modernity and postmodernity (Humphery, 1998, p.9).

Scholars in the Cultural Studies genre often (but certainly not exclusively) focus on local and everyday issues and behaviours. This makes it meaningful for my consideration of the 'everyday' of 'disadvantaged schools'. However this approach is criticised for failing to reveal anything beyond the microscopic and particular, and failing to attend to the material, a result of its 'undue' emphasis on representation and the symbolic production of meaning. However, there are similar critiques of Sociology. Furlong and Cartmel

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46 See for example Mayhew (1861); Webb (1926).
47 I continue to capitalise these words to draw attention to their institutional status.
48 The distinction between Sociology and Cultural Studies does not just or even uniformly rest on difference. Some Cultural Studies, such as the work of Stuart Hall and his associates in Birmingham focuses firmly on class, and some structuralist Sociology, such as that of LeFebvre and Castoriadis, addresses the local and everyday. Nor is there a simple division between studies of the relations of production (sociology) and consumption (cultural studies).
49 See for example, Australian debates in cultural geography Badcock (1997) v Dunn (1997) and in youth studies Wyn and White (1998) v Bessant and Cook (1998). These centre on arguments as to whether the sociologically-inclined are ignorant of their own position in the generation of power-knowledge and the Cultural Studies-inclined fail to ensure that their analyses are interrogated by the material lives of those for whom they purport to speak and fail to intervene in policy debates that might alter the material conditions they purport to deplore.
(1997) for example argue that there has been a tendency to exaggerate the breadth and extent of the changes of late/post/high modernity, to rely overly much on the failure of Marxist working class politics and the reluctance of people to claim class affiliations, to highlight the increasing importance of consumption and lifestyle and increasing individuation and thus to "understate many significant sources of continuity" (p. 10). They suggest that sociological scholars who focus on "individuation", such as Giddens (1991, 1994) are victim to an "epistemological fallacy", in that they mistake the effects of social processes for the processes itself, which they argue are still heavily bound up in class, gender and race. A similar point is made by Bauman (1998a, p. 65) who argues that the focus on "identity troubles" is an example of "mistaken diagnosis" that "takes the phenomenon clamouring to be explained to be the explanation."

My research rests on both Sociology and Cultural Studies, interpreted within a postcritical frame. I draw on the notions of the local, the everyday and the notion of social relations as social practices. However I also use the concepts of class, gender and race, knowing that are sociological terms under duress and that they constantly work to generalise and essentialise. I do not pretend to have resolved the tensions that exist between the two disciplines of Sociology and Cultural Studies. I adopt the categorisations of sociology with the knowledge that class, gender and race are "non synchronous" (McCarthy, 1998), and do not neatly map onto one another (Bradley, 1996; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994) Nevertheless, I start from the position that class is "a difference that makes a difference" (Coole, 1996) even thought it may be "second best theory" (Taylor-Gooby, 1997). I have used approaches from a variety of cognate disciplines within an overall postcritical frame that does seek to pay attention to both the material conditions of people's lives and the processes of the economy, society, culture, and politics, without ascribing an hierarchy of attribution of causality.

I have been influenced in this endeavour by the work of Bourdieu who argues that both society and class are metaphorical concepts. He says:

I wanted to get away from the realist definition of class, which sees class as a clearly defined group that exists there in the real world as a compact and sharply delineated entity....My work consists in saying the people are located in a social space, that they aren't just anywhere, in other words, interchangeable, as those people claim who deny the existence of 'social classes', and that according to the position they occupy in this highly complex space, you can understand the logic of their practices and determine, inter alia, how they will classify themselves and others, and should the case arise, think of themselves as members of a class. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 51)

He writes that class is both an act of will and of representation by sociologists, and suggests:

These 'classes on paper', these 'theoretical classes', constructed for explanatory purposes are not 'realities', groups which would exist as a reality. In as much as they correspond to classes of material condition of living, and this to classes of similar conditionings, they bring together agents who have in common dispositional properties (habitus), hence a certain propensity to come together in reality, to constitute themselves as real

50 Furlong and Cartmel also argue that young people are victims of the fallacy known in Marxist theorisations as false consciousness. They lose me at this point.
groups...classes become real groups only at the cost of political work. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 115-16)

Classes for Bourdieu are not 'classes' in the 'classic Marxist' sense, not able to be mobilised into one big proletarian opposition, but rather a way of predicting with some degree of certainty the social and cultural practices of particular people who have some proximity in social space and who inhabit some of the same overlapping fields. This is a social and cultural model that tends to "define distances", that relates to "encounters, affinities, sympathies ....even desires" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 10). Because this research relies not only on the notion of class but also on the accompanying terms advantage or privilege and disadvantage, the idea of class as one that is about distance, taste, bodily dispositions and interests, as well as about politics and economics, is one that has most purchase on the multiplicity of issues to which I will refer throughout this research. I thus tend to use the terms class and disadvantage somewhat loosely and interchangeably but in general, I use the term disadvantage when I want to call attention to the hierarchical nature of things, and class when I mean to refer to broader social circumstances. I follow Lash (1994, p. 166), who explains that that Bourdieu's 'classes' are not about structures at all:

It is class as a collective habitus, as a set of routine activities, as a form of life. It is not class as an organised actor with conscious goals. Instead of a logic of consciousness it is a 'logic of practice', and it takes place not through institutional organisation but through the force of shared meanings and habits. At issue it is finally not a question of the 'structures' being present in the practices, and that is because these shared meanings...are not structures at all.51

While Bourdieu is not the dominant theorist that I rely on to analyse my empirical findings, his position informs what I am attempting to do in significant ways. I use his notion of the social as a broad space consisting of overlapping sets of 'fields', and his conception of theoretical classes, 'classes on paper' as the cloth on which I do my embroidery. His notion of 'habitus' underpins my assumption of the agency of the school administrators with whom I have spoken. Without such a sociological language it is very difficult to discuss social inequity and questions of social polarisation(s). Using these ideas within a postcritical frame means I use these ideas with suspicion, but nevertheless use them. What is most significant about Bourdieu for my work is that he refuses the split between the social and the cultural, and through his theorisations of habitus, fields, dispositions and interests and the notion of practices, he makes the two inseparable.

The disciplines of Sociology and Cultural Studies may be uneasy bedfellows, but Bourdieu would suggest that this is as much to do with their positioning within the academic field and the search by scholars with specific 'interests' of status and recognition, as it is to do with the ideas embodied in each 'discipline' and the situated methodological difficulties in putting together the social and the cultural. Bolstered by this argument, I have searched for theoretical "tools" (Foucault, 1989, p. 149), to help me in this research, "tools" that have not been so caught up in the perceived theoretical

51 Lash argues that this is why information flows are now so significant because the information circulating is the raw material from which meanings are made.
tensions between the macro and the micro, the social and the cultural. Accordingly I have gone not only to Foucault to assist with analysis of institutional practices but also to anthropology and geography to work on questions of the local and the global.

Rather than present these as a 'toolbox' at the outset, I will introduce theorisations as I need them to advance my argument within the broad postructuralist and Bourdieuan frame.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD.

In this introductory chapter I have introduced myself as researcher, the background to my research, the literatures to which my research speaks and the epistemological basis on which the research is conducted. In conclusion, I synthesise these matters into a research question.

The research question summarised

In what are often described as risky and uncertain times, 'disadvantaged schools' have been cast adrift from national policy amid stormy attacks on the public education system and teachers. 'Disadvantaged schools' face reform demands to increase vocational education, literacy and student retention. The communities they serve are reeling from the effects of economic restructuring and globalisation: there is a widening gap between rich and poor, increasing youth alienation and increased social welfare demands made on school staff.

Economic rationalism and market managerialism have lead to more responsibility at the local level combined with increased regulation, scrutiny and competition. Top down requirements to take up communication and information technologies, citizenship, and national data production all skew the educational work and place pressure upon collegial relations within and between 'disadvantaged schools' and the public education system.

It is in the day to day that administrators make decisions about how best to manage these pressures. My research question is based on a theorisation of the 'everyday' and the moves made by school administrators of 'disadvantaged schools' to accommodate the dominant educational agenda, meet the daily demands of staff, students and wider community and to advance educational justice. Everyday life in the 'disadvantaged school' is about keeping social order, maintaining some kind of caring culture, trying to see the students learn something and are not merely sitting there passively - the never ending DSP 'housework'.

Principals are increasingly responsible for meeting system demands, yet in DSP schools most were also selected because of their commitment to and experience in equity programmes. Through conversation with my colleague 'disadvantaged school' principals I will attempt an answer to the questions:

- what is happening to disadvantage and to 'disadvantaged schools' in the current social, economic and policy contexts?

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• what is everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', how has it changed and how is it the same as it always was?
• what moves can and do 'disadvantaged school' administrators make in the current context to advance an educational justice agenda? What policy do they want to see in the future?

There is also a subtext which asks:
• what can a 'mid point post policy analysis' do? What does this particular 'sample' allow me to 'see'?

This research rests on a Bourdieuan and postcritical frame which allows both the social and the cultural to be combined, and the notions of class and agency to be utilised as 'tools on paper' to advance the research. These perspectives also influence the choice of method that I use in this research, and it is to questions of method that the next chapter turns.
Chapter 2

Writing(s) From Betwixt and Between
CONCERNS ABOUT RESEARCH

This chapter takes up questions of the research method that shapes this particular research study but, congruent with my postcritical concerns to 'place' the researcher and position the research, I begin by explaining myself.

A personal story

For eleven years I was principal of a school that was always being researched. Much of my exposure to research activities was a product of where I worked, in schools classified as disadvantaged, those serving the poorest 15 percent of Australia's children and young people. In its heyday the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) stimulated national conversations about theory/practice, produced discussion papers, ran conferences, commissioned, supported and stimulated a range of research activities. In my last school, we (a whole staff) adopted the notion of action research as a means of working on the curriculum, as The Process that would allow us to find ways of teaching, assessing and organising. This, we were sure, would eventually result in more children and young people benefiting from schooling. Our ideas about research were pretty loose and we used a variety of locally produced questionnaires, interviews, observations, problem solving approaches and discussion to generate a wide range of projects and programmes.

At various stages one or other of us would try to do some reading about, for example, current thinking on participatory research (McTaggart, 1993). What was in the literature and what was our experience often didn't fit. We found that the structures and processes we had in the school were not easily or quickly bent into the 'right' shape, parents needed all kinds of support before they felt comfortable being in curriculum debates with teachers, and teachers often agreed and compromised rather than deal with the unpleasantness of a major philosophical falling out with the colleagues on whom they emotionally and physically depended (Little, 1996). There was often not the time to investigate to the depth that we wanted, and many of us felt a bit at sea trying to work out the meanings of what we were seeing and being told. As the designated leader in the school I often felt that I didn't have enough expertise to really push the boundaries of either our research methods or how we might interpret the data we collected.

At the same time I was very sure that people in universities weren't going to do any better. This dogmatic opinion was based on my experiences with university research and researchers, as well as on my prejudices. Frequently an external researcher, commissioned by a funding body or engaged in some socially worthy intellectual pursuit, would arrive at the school, tape recorder in hand. Interviews, observations, photographs would be made/taken and the researcher would depart. Generally (but not always), many months later, (in some cases years), a tome would arrive. A brief scan that day was usually sufficient to find the one or two page case study, or the one or two direct quotations, sandwiched in between slabs of the researcher's analysis. In the holidays I read the whole publication and was often stimulated by new ideas, interested in the ways that the research showed where my perspectives fitted, and our school interpretations of worthwhile directions affirmed. But I was also disappointed,
sometimes enraged. My understandings of the way that school worked and was done were different from what was in the research report. They were absent from the text, at best a shadow presence lurking behind the omnipotent commentary.

Desire for different research approaches

I wanted studies of 'effective schools' and 'best practice principals/principles' to break open the black box that separated schools from politics, the community, other government policies, the media, and the world that seemed to impact on my day to day work setting. Abstracted formulaic descriptions, checklists derived from the deeds of the good and great and prescriptions of neat linear pathways to educational nirvana did not match the messy, chaotic and frustratingly slow processes of educational change in which I was involved.

I wanted policy analyses and Big Sociology about class, gender, race and age to connect the big picture to my everyday world - how could one school and a few teachers make a difference when everything seemed so overwhelming and immutable? Did it all have to be struggle and resistance and opposition? Was working with flawed policies always about weak, flabby, reformist capitulation? Didn't some of these critical writers understand that we had to adopt government policies and that we did our best to make the best of them?

I wanted studies of students 'at risk' and 'disadvantaged schools' that didn't romanticise, valorise, demonise, and/or pathologise either students and their families and/or teachers and their schools. I searched in vain for the body of work that described that complex and paradoxical mix of socialisation, social control and knowledge production that is the everyday reality for classroom teachers in 'disadvantaged schools' and the educational 'housework' of administrivia, discipline, complaints, rubbish bins and late forms that was my lot as the principal of a 'disadvantaged school'.

Why didn't these researchers see things as I did? Were they blind? Didn't they listen?

The Schylla and Charybdis of my research are the determination to present the everyday of 'disadvantaged schools' in ways that will make policy makers take notice and to represent that everyday in ways that are unmistakably recognisable to my colleagues who still work within them, that resonate with their/our experiences. This chapter focuses on the particular research method that I chose.

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1 One of the comments made by a principal in a research conversation about the activities of another researcher was, "I thought I'd provided this person with a snapshot of some of the issues we were dealing with around discipline, some of the issues with the kids, and what came back was a piece that demonised and pathologised - if that's the right word - the kids, their parents, the community, everything, and all the behaviour surrounding that, and painted us as noble but failed warriors and I didn't think I'd done that. And it took an immense amount of correction and rewriting by us of the material before it was in any sort of form that we'd be prepared to have the school's name attached to". (Transcript 8)
CONCERNING RESEARCH

I firstly look at my own positioning as a researcher in relation to the schools and some of the concerns that arise from this. I then go on to consider arts based and narrative methodologies and their possibilities and implications for my research. My use of images as well as conversational data will be discussed. This forms the basis for a further research question - that of the capacity of these methods to meet my desires for a representation of 'disadvantaged schools' that has verisimilitude. I conclude by explaining how the research text itself will be organised and presented for the reader. I begin by discussing the concerns that led me to the choice of arts based research method.

Concern one: University/school research

Looking back on my experiences of university-school research projects I think I can partially explain some of what I saw as the lack of 'fit'. First of all, there was a difference between the research "interests" (Bourdieu, 1991)2 of schools and universities. Our school looked not for theoretical sophistication and intertextual relationships (adding to the body of disciplinary knowledge), but utility - the question for us was whether this way of thinking, this categorisation, this label might help us get a better purchase on what seemed to be going badly for students and, therefore, might help us do things differently. While university researchers got prestige from publication, documentation of theoretical contributions to the fields of knowledge and take-up of their ideas, schools got funding and reputation based on their capacity to put the ideas into practice, 'talk the talk' in submissions and professional and bureaucratic arenas, and get written up in 'best practice' publications.3

The way the relationship of schools and universities is conceptualised is also significant. One common view often held in schools is that differences between universities and schools constitute a theory/practice binary. Universities are theoretical (this word can assume the status of a curse in the mouths of some school people), whereas schools are practical. Another way of conceptualising the relationship is to think of schools and universities as partners in mutual activity. One of the strengths of the DSP, and subsequent programs such as the National Professional Development Program (NPDP) and the National Schools Network (NSN), was that they challenged the hierarchical nature of the knowledge work of schools and universities and worked towards partnerships. The notion of partnership, and collaborative research, rests on an understanding that the universities and schools are separate 'fields' that come together in order to undertake a specific project. Sachs (1997) for example, writing about the NPDP, talks of such projects as tightropes that cross the chasm between two worlds. The work of schools and universities are thus able to be alternatively framed - universities are places engaged in theory production in which practice is always present - and

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2 Bourdieu (1990) notes that an interest is not utilitarian but strongly connected to habitus, the "feel for the game". An interest is what feels reasonable. Specific fields produce and call up specific forms of interest (p 108-10).

3 Based on Bourdieu's theorisation of distinction in social fields, see Bourdieu's seminal work Distinction (1984) and Ladwig (1994; 1996) for a Bourdieu inspired exploration of distinction at work in the American academy.
schools are engaged in educational practice in which theory is always present. Projects based on collaboration attempt to find topics of common concern and thus open the way for more equal relationships.

But the recognition that different knowledges arise from the different standpoints and 'interests' within and between tertiary and school based teacher/researchers, and that there is much to gain from putting them together in projects of mutual interest and benefit, is now off the national school, but not the national research funding agenda. This automatically places universities in the position of senior partner in collaborative ventures that attract national funding. Collaboration also lives on in current state supported projects which are also often discursively arranged as market relations. What is telling is that the final product of many of these partnership projects is, more often than not, one where the meta-analysis is written by the university researchers, and where the 'voices' of the schools are sandwiched in snippets in between researcher prose. Far from an equal partnership, the university still has the upper hand in a knowledge-practice hierarchy and binary.

Feminist and (post) critical research attempts to move beyond the separation of schools and universities and the conceptualisation of two worlds, to one where the interests and concerns of research participants and researchers are explicitly problematised before, and during the research. Following this line of thinking, another way of approaching the relationship of universities and schools might be to think of them as overlapping, not separate, fields. The question then becomes what research in the fold, the overlap between the two fields, might be. One possible approach is to think of university-school research projects that practice reciprocity. Such projects would be directed towards common goals where there was an equal but different 'payoff' for both school and university, built upon negotiation around both the common and different concerns of each.

Much of the research that I experienced while at school was neither in partnership nor reciprocal. It was firmly hierarchical and largely served the interests of the university researchers. One university project that achieved reciprocity was a video series on literacy and social justice (Comber, Nixon, Badger, & Hill, 1996; Hill et al., 1996) which demonstrated to me that reciprocity, something beyond partnership between university and school teachers was possible. The common 'interests' of university researchers, who were keen to improve their own teaching by basing the curriculum on and in 'disadvantaged schools', coincided with the 'interests' of four 'disadvantaged schools', who were committed to the notion of preservice education producing teachers who understood about equity and social justice and pedagogy.

Some government commissioned research met our school 'interests' - we were written up as 'best practice' (e.g. Batten & Russell, 1995; Batten, Withers, Thomas, & McCurry, 1996).

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4 See for example the South Australian Literacy, Information Technology and Educational Disadvantage research project, a tendered research project of University of South Australia, University of New England and Department of Employment, Training and Education (DETE) schools.
undated; Coopers Lybrand & Ashenden Milligan, 1992; Kruse, 1995; Schools Council, 1993) - but the research also commented on the wider political agenda because it showed that equity funding was not only necessary, but also produced change. Such research was often used as the basis for further government policy development and, certainly in our school, and in many other 'disadvantaged schools', there was a strong commitment to ensuring that our needs and reform practices and processes were not left out of policy making. Indeed DSP school staffs have often claimed that the Disadvantaged Schools Program, that is the schools, generated many innovations that were to become system wide practice. This was often made possible by the documentation and research processes and practices of university colleagues.

However, none of these situations precisely correlates with my research, although there are lessons for me in each circumstance. Questions of power, knowledge hierarchy, problematising my own 'interests' and how they might differ from those in the 'disadvantaged schools' where I researched, and finding and then meeting shared agendas, have been central to my research methods and processes. I go on to address these in the next section.

Concern two: Inside/outside researching

I decided at the outset that this was not to be a piece of dis-passionate research, that my own history would not only compel me to take an overt position from which to look, read and speak but also that I would have to try to express that position. There is little way I could pretend that I do not care about 'disadvantaged schools' and the students and their families, nor that the disregard for their welfare by current government policy fills me with anything but despair/rage. However, this does not equate to already knowing what I would 'find' in the research, other than the broad dimensions of social and educational injustice that have been an ongoing feature of Australian life.

I decided therefore that what I needed to do was to take this passion and the political intent, the shared 'interest' between myself as researcher and those to whom I directed my researcher attention, and put it to work. I decided to speak with my colleagues whom I knew to have a similar commitment, those whom I knew to have 'got their hands dirty' with equity politics, who understood in their own ways what 'disadvantaged schools' were about. I asked them to help me understand what was happening in their schools and locations, to describe the effects of current policies, and to speculate about what kinds of policies they would want to see instead of what they now have. (The research questions and procedures are detailed in Chapter 3). I hoped that they would care enough about the politics of my research to want to join in and that

5 This usually refers to approaches to literacy, integrated welfare systems, experience based learning and democratic decision making practices e.g. this claim was made in writing by Paterson (1989).

6 The bulk of this research was carried out by Connell and colleagues and has been described in Chapter 1. The importance of university researchers documenting school projects as part of their research practice can be seen in a wide range of areas - from school planning (Logan, Sachs, & Dempster, 1996) to the situation of homeless youth (Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 1998) to the uses of digital technologies (DEETYA, 1997).
far from this being a piece of 'outsider' research it would somehow straddle inside/ outside and would be reciprocal. (And in order to ensure that I was "fighting familiarity" (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995), I also spoke to colleagues in different schools, in other locations and to workers in welfare and youth organisations.)

This turned out to be needless fretting on my part. Almost everyone with whom I spoke told me that they were really busy, and that they were participating in the research only because of the politics, which were not just general, but embodied. Many of them said things like "I trust you to...", "You know what this is like and you will...", "I'm only doing this because it's you asking and I want you to...". What followed on from this beginning was invariably an exhortation to 'do something' with the results, to continue to write and speak about social justice, to make some intervention in the policy process, to make visible what they felt was being rendered invisible in the current context. In addition, while it was always going to be me who got the credential, they wanted any articles I wrote, and any information that I found that I thought they would find useful. In some cases I also provided specific assistance and contacts.

The position of insider has both its ethical and research hazards. How much would my colleagues tailor what they said to what they thought I wanted to hear? They knew my general position on justice and school reform. Some of them had worked with me and knew my obsessions in even more detail. The fact that I was on the other side of the tape recorder would produce a particular kind of story. What was equally a problem was what wouldn't be said - and indeed this happened.

"Oh you know this stuff," a colleague said to me today as she broke off in the middle of a description of everyday interruptions. She was telling me that some of the girls in her school were being particularly nasty to each other. I found myself saying, "Oh you mean, slut, rag, mole stuff?" "Yes, that stuff," she replied and we each knew what the other meant without any detail. I realise how much 'we' principals speak to each other in code, in insider language. Field notes, February 1998.

There are therefore the kinds of blanks and lacunae that I anticipated in the tapes of conversations, some of them punctuated with invitations for me to add my experience rather than go through the conversationally unnatural exercise of saying everything just for 'the record'.

The expectation from my colleagues was that my insider status gave me privileges, not only in terms of their time, but also in access to information that they would not reveal to others. As an insider I was also able to pass on information, network and participate in collegial activities such as principals' associations policy development. But there were also obligations that I must take up as an outsider, able to comment from the distance of the university research community on the positioning of 'disadvantaged schools' by policy. The notion of 'researcher as conduit' is not uncommon, but in this particular case I was not expected to pass on information to a supervisor, other colleagues, or any particular person. What I was expected to do, in return for information, was to engage in the public debate about public schooling and to use my research for more than my own purposes.
I take these matters up again in the last chapter but suffice it to say at the outset that my experiences and the broader politics cannot be divorced from my research in many and complex ways. I have sought ways to give this expression, to make the reader as aware as I could of how this inside/outside process was happening. But there was still one more factor at work in my choice of methodology.

**Concern three: Writing back**

My response at the time to the research on 'disadvantaged schools', on what I perceived as the incapacity to represent the 'disadvantaged school' as I knew it, was to take to writing. A lot of writing. I wrote with the authority of the 'chalkie' at a time when not many wrote for publication. I didn't do much more than describe what was happening to kids and teachers and my school and do a bit of polemicsising and a bit of unreferenced theorising about school change. My starting point was always about making sense of my experience, finding out about the bigger picture that engulfed my experience and that of my colleagues. My writing voice was from the field, answering back not only to policy but also to all those pieces of research in which I could find neither my perspective nor my words.

I modelled myself on books that resonated, that rang true, to the ways that I understood and lived my work. Mike Rose (1989) told the story of his own learning about teaching and learning, from Catholic schoolboy in the Italian working class neighbourhood in Los Angeles to Director of the Learning Support services at UCLA helping working class adults 'crack the codes' of university discourses. Johnathon Kozol (1991) railed against the injustices perpetrated against inner city American schools and their children, demonstrating that passion and policy analysis are not mutually exclusive. Tracey Kidder (1989) sat for a year in a primary classroom and conveyed the sense and feeling of what it means to teach, to be responsible for the lives and futures of a class of small, vulnerable individuals with competing needs and personalities.

As a result of this writing, I learnt about the power of story and metaphor and the place of direct first person composition. I understood that the pieces I wrote were fictions, crafted, based on one interpretation, but written with integrity, a determination to represent 'reality' in the most powerful way I could. I knew from responses from readers and editors that I had developed a particular and idiosyncratic style that was both direct and evocative. I looked for a way to continue with this kind of writing through my research, since it was the way I had learnt to put my experiences into words.

**MY RESPONSE - ARTS BASED RESEARCH**

I can now articulate, in the discourse of research, that the concerns I had were with 'voices' - my own and that of my colleagues - as well as with the connections of the micro and macro analyses of schools, with the representation of the 'disadvantaged

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7 A term I query later in the chapter.

8 Garman (1994) nomates, as one aspect of validity, whether a work has "verite", that is, whether it "rings true".
school(s)\(^9\) and its community of staff, students and families, and with the ways that researchers selected and presented data.\(^9\) I also had concerns about dead sociological prose with its battalions of bracketed citations,\(^10\) and wanted an approach that was more lively, complex and more experimental. These were concerns that moved me to investigate arts based methods, and narrative and image based methodologies in particular.

The way that I have approached research methodology has been strongly influenced by postcritical concerns with language and ways of making meaning. I take as my starting point that we understand the world through languages (Saussure, 1959; Wittgenstein, 1976), our actions are shaped by our discursive understandings (Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1980a, 1981; S. Hall, 1997), and our social relations operate through negotiations of meanings (Foucault, 1978, 1982). The ways we understand our world and our subjectivity(ies) are based on words and images, words and images that express ideas whose specific meanings are produced in the context in which they are used (Barthes, 1972, 1975; Tagg, 1988), but which bear the "heteroglossic" (Bakhtin, 1981) traces of previous stories that cannot be closed down (Derrida, 1976).

However, because I understand research to also be about the de-construction of discursive practices, including texts made up of words and images (Cherryholmes, 1993; Game, 1991; Lather, 1992; Rosaldo, 1989), and about the re-construction of meaning through writing and image production as acts of representation (Chaplin, 1994; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Fine, 1992; Geertz, 1988; McWilliam, Lather, & Morgan, 1997), the method I have adopted is best placed in the arts based research genre.\(^11\) Barone and Eisner (1997, p. 73) offer a definition:

> arts based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities of design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing. Although these aesthetic elements are in evidence to some degree in all educational research activity, the more pronounced they are, they more the research may be characterised as arts based.

They list the characteristics of arts based research as the creation of a virtual reality, the presence of ambiguity, the use of expressive language, the use of contextualised and vernacular language, the promotion of empathy, the presence of the personal signature of the researcher/writer and the presence of the aesthetic form (pp. 74 - 78). I have actively tried to take up these qualities in my research.

Barone and Eisner suggest that one of the most common forms of arts based research is narrative research and story telling. In the next section I detail the specific approach I

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\(^9\) Barone (1992b) argues that the self portraits of the social scientist as autonomous or as deprofessionalised can be disrupted by educational researchers who move to gain control over their research agendas by creating accessible, compelling, morally responsible stories that increase support for school people.

\(^10\) I have spectacularly failed to avoid this, and have opted to use footnotes where-ever I can to move the brackets below the main narrative.

\(^11\) See also P. Willis (1998) and Diamond (1998; Diamond & Mullen, 1999) and for inspiration, Greene (1995).
have taken to my research, that of postcritical narrative research, which combines a conventional sociological prose story with personal writing, poetic treatments of transcript conversations and photographic and other graphic images. In this approach the process of writing is as much part of the research process as is the design of the text, its typography and layout. But before I get onto that, I will briefly sketch the narrative research field.

Narrative research

Narrative research is about the collection, reading and writing of stories, and narrative researchers have developed a range of approaches to stories. There is no precise method or recipe in narrative research (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992), but there is a recognisable focus and a common range of research issues to be considered (K. Casey, 1995). Questions about narrators and the narrated often come to the fore in narrative research (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998).

Issues that narrative researchers generally consider include:

- being conscious of and making explicit the process of communication, selection, and interpretation of stories, and making explicit the place of their own subjectivity and personal biography (Grumet, 1987; A. Jones, 1992; Packwood & Sikes, 1996; Riessman, 1993). This includes articulating the degree to which the author should be present in the text (A. Jones, 1992), and making clear where the researcher has decided to use textual devices to act on the voice of the researched (Lather, 1996)

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12 See Brodkey (1996) Chapter 1 on poststructuralism and narrative, for a fuller account.
13 These include critical storytelling, the writing of the lives of subjects so that the reader cannot avoid empathy and understanding (Barone, 1992a); fictionalised personal experiences that can be scrutinised, and rewritten as understanding about the situation develops through reflection (Breischke, 1993; Kamler, 1995); autoethnography (Reed-Danahey, 1997), biography (Kridel, 1998), memory work (Haug, 1987; Personal Narratives Group, 1989) and autobiography that generates personal understanding and social learnings (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Dalley, 1992a; Dalley, 1992b; Ladson-Billings, 1994); collective biographies (B. Davies, 1992) and life histories (Kuhn, 1995) that illuminate the recurring themes and social structures at work in the lives of individuals (K. Casey, 1993; Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997; Mahony & Zmroczek, 1997; Polakow, 1993) and that can become a form of social action (Adams, 1998); oral history that brings previously unheard perspectives about events into the public arena (Hayden, 1996; Nias & Aspinwall, 1995; Peters & Lankshear, 1996; Weiler, 1992); fictional-critical writing (R. Winter, 1988) and telling stories as an inservice method to allow teachers to gain new understandings of unresolved events (Bishop, 1997; Carter, 1993; J. King, 1991; McEwen & Egan, 1993; Nespor & Barylks, 1991); collecting teachers' narratives as a means of researching common practices (Cortazzi, 1993) and experiences (Middleton, 1993); dramatisation that illustrates and explores relationships and organisational performances (Czarniawska, 1997; Grumet, 1987); dream study that brings forward underlying metaphors that shape behaviour (Mullen, 1994); collections of stories that are exemplars of particular practices or events, rather than those that focus on the unique and individual (Conle, 1997; Mishler, 1990) and the collection and production of stories that are unresolved and/or which expose the contingent nature of professional decision making and the power relations involved (Cooper & Heck, 1995; Goodson, 1995; Tripp, 1994).
14 Mishler (1995) attempts a typology arguing that narratives can be categorised by examining psychological, cultural and social contexts and functions.
• considering the position of the researcher - whether similar 'positioning' of the researcher and the researched is helpful or muddying (Adams-St Pierre, 1996), making clear how much the researcher should be and is 'detached' from the researched (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993), and if necessary, negotiating mutually acceptable but possibly different goals for the research (Robinson, 1992)

• attending to the contingent nature of the research process - avoiding the trap of valorising the subject, which arises from treating the subject’s stories as 'truths' and not interrogating the other’s 'voice'. The researcher also recognises that what is spoken is the way that the speaker explains their world to that researcher at that time within the particular knowledge-power relationship that is constructed (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; J. Miller, & Glassner, 1997; Robinson, 1992). The telling is dependent on audience and context, and the same event may be told and retold at different times and in different places in different ways (Elbaz, 1991). This requires the researcher to adopt a "double vision" that allows 'subjugated knowledges' and the 'analysing subjects' of the research to be taken seriously (Rosaldo, 1989)

• paying heed to questions of representation implicit in the conduct and writing of research - not allowing themselves or their research subjects to lapse into narcissism and solipsism (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Heshusius, 1994); focussing on how the researched are to be represented, whether they are to be named, embodied, presented as people through the use of extraneous details, what adjectives are used to describe or denote attributes (Lather, 1992); and respecting the subject's story and working to not distort it as it becomes part of the researcher's own story and then becomes available to readers. As Grumet (1987, p. 323) puts it:

Telling is an alienation. Its otherness, a form not derived from me, makes it accessible to other people. If story telling requires giving oneself away, then we are obligated to devise a method of receiving stories that mediates the space between the self that tells, the self that told, and the self that listens, a method that returns the story to the teller that is both hers and not hers, that contains herself in good company.

Postcritical narrative research positions researchers in particular ways in response to these issues.

**Postcritical narrative research**

Postcritical narrative research carves out for itself a distinctive space within the narrative research field. Much narrative research is phenomenological in nature and works to find the stories that people tell about their lives, claiming that humans are 'essentially' storied beings, who understand and make their identities and lives through stories. Postcritical narrative research takes these understandings, but places them within a different epistemological framework that rejects essentialities and claims to universalism. "Post" perspectives suggest that all research, regardless of whether it is written from an empiricist, hermeneutic, critical or postcritical perspective, is narrative15 - the researcher

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15 See Nash (1990) who has collected a series of essays about narrative in a range of disciplines. Taking a postcritical narrative research position suggests that positivist scientific research, which claims to be free of 'subjective' vagaries, is dependent on language and the narrative for its interpretation even though there is an expressed binary relationship between narrative and scientific models of research (Mishler, 1990). This particular formation arises from the
uses language to construct a story or series of stories that connect and make 'sensible' a set of understandings about an aspect of the life world. This may or may not be acknowledged by the researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; B. Davies, 1996; de Certeau, 1988; Fine, 1994; Game & Metcalfe, 1996; Gough, 1996b; Lather, 1991a; Rhedding- Jones, 1996; Weller, 1992). Similarly, all research is 'subjective' in that it is written from the subjectivity of the researcher (Packwood & Sikes, 1996) which is socially and discursively constructed (Game, 1991; Lather, 1991a; Lyotard, 1984). There is nowhere else from which research can come. In this sense, it can be said that all research and all narrative is auto/biographical (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; A. Jones, 1992).

Therefore, postcritical research:

- queries the notion of a narrative as a knowable or specifiable entity and the researcher as a unified subject with one 'voice', instead regarding these as modernist conceptions (Bloom, 1998; J. Miller, 1998; Prain, 1997). Indeterminacy and provisionality, situatedness and partiality\textsuperscript{16} are the hallmarks of postcritical narrative research - the telling of one story among many
- rejects the notion that the collection of narratives has some essential, teleological tendency towards an ideal of joint construction of meaning. Rather, they are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a movable feast of differences disrupting differences
- makes specific demands of the researcher to 'come clean'. The researcher functions within a discursive formation, that of the academy. She therefore needs to identify the baggage brought to the process through disciplinary and epistemological training, social positionality and institutional imperatives (Scheurich, 1995).

'Post' perspectives can also make problematic the critical notion of research being empowering. Narrative research in particular has been adopted by critical, postcolonial and feminist researchers as a means of giving 'voice'\textsuperscript{17} to those whose points of view have previously been marginalised. It is argued that people positioned as 'other' have been 'other'ed by conventional research methods where the researcher collects data from subjects and then dismembers it through analysis and writing (Fine, 1994; Hargreaves, 1996; Lather, 1991a; Nias & Aspinwall, 1995). C. Marshall (1997 p. 17) for example suggests narrative research as method to be used in feminist critical policy analysis because:

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Enlightenment, the separation of science from philosophy and religion, a separation that is currently challenged by contemporary meta/physics (Haraway, 1990). The positivist paradigm is a specific discourse, rather than a practice separate from language and narrativity (Foucault, 1980).
\end{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{16} This kind of language is an orthodoxy of the post genre and its orthodox nature is one with which I feel considerable discomfort - is this just a new canon?

\textsuperscript{17} The notion of 'voice' is somewhat problematic (Lensmire, 1998), emanating as it does from standpoint theories (e.g. S. Harding, 1987; D. Smith, 1987) that suggest that there is a singular essential voice belonging to a particular group that may arise from a consensus (e.g. S. Harding, 1993). Indeed some argue that a person does not have one voice but many (e.g. Bloom, 1998; Prain, 1997).
feminists recognise the importance of grounding narratives within the contexts of the lives of individuals in order to connect public discourse on policy issues to their ever evolving complexities.

Narrative research might allow the 'voice(s)' of the subjects to emerge more clearly but the researcher is still the more powerful because it is she who writes the research, who gets the academic rewards from it, and who often provides the impetus for the research itself (Game & Metcalfe, 1996). Questions of power and the relationship of researcher and research subject, while problematised by narrative research, are not able to be resolved, and indeed, the representation of voice and story in narrative research texts may well act as if they are. The representation of chunks, rather than fragments, of research subject speech, certainly presents itself with an air of authenticity and truthfulness. This dilemma is something that postcritical research seeks to make apparent.

This research.

I have dealt with these matters in the following ways:

- I use the first person when writing stories from my own experience. This is imbued with understandings that research is not impartial and truthful but always imperfect and developed through and beyond the researcher's subjectivity/ies (Adams-St Pierre, 1998; Barone, 1992c; Breischke, 1992; Jones, 1992; Prain, 1997). As I use the first person voice, I also reflect upon the research process and work towards making that part of the research, connecting this to wider issues (Behar, 1996; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Grumet, 1988; Haug, 1992; L. Richardson, 1997).

- I have rejected the notion of the research interview.¹⁸ The research method has involved me as researcher, with my views and experiences, inviting my colleagues, with their views and experiences, to participate in dialogue, in a specific situation where we both attempt to make sense of the current educational policy context and the situation of 'disadvantaged schools'. Each conversation was unique and particular to its time and place - what was happening for each of my colleagues at the time, what I was thinking about, what was happening in the media, what official memo had just come over the principal's desk. This was not an exercise in collecting stories as truths, nor one of me as researcher only asking questions (Gudsmundottir, 1996). Neither was it an attempt to deal with questions of subjectivity and biography, although these indelibly shaped the responses of my colleagues. In a sense, in this research the narratives of my colleagues are distanced from the bodies who produced them. This may be seen as a missed opportunity to explore the connections between biography and policy interpretation, but I chose nevertheless to focus on my colleagues as active makers of theories about the world and their work (cf. McLaughlin, 1996) and to

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¹⁸ Holstein and Gubrium (1997) work from a similar epistemological position but instead talk of active interviewing as a special form of conversation. Bloom (1998) argues that the distinction between interview and conversation may be a false one and the interview may be better thought of in terms of the epistemology of research practices that are held by researcher and informants.
foreground the school administrator as an interpreter of policy and interpreter of her/his school and its neighbourhood (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Dow, 1996; Grace, 1995; Louis & Miles, 1990; Thomson, 1998a).

- I have adopted a consciously literary approach to the questions of representation. My research was an attempt to engage in some collective narrativisation about the effects of changes in public policy and in the wider social and cultural contexts, in which my role was to assist in the production of multiple stories and to take on an editorial function. This brings the questions of selection of information, interpretation, categorisation and representation firmly into my ambit. As an editor, I was concerned to present a coherent narrative but one which was nevertheless multi-voiced and multifaceted, that allowed indeterminacy and tensions and irresolutions to stand.

Postcritical research, as I adopt it, then has one further spin - that of the production, construction and reception of text.

RESEARCH AS WRITING, RESEARCH AS TEXT - THE LITERARY TURN

If, as I have argued, the research process is a set of experiences that are expressed in words, and narratives in order to make it firstly comprehensible to the researcher, and then able to be communicated, and if all research involves the practice of writing (L. Richardson, 1994) then it is also the case that writing is not something that is done post field work (Mishler, 1990; Riessman, 1993) but occurs constantly. Research involves reading and noting, summarising, jotting down ideas, writing short papers, keeping a journal. This is more that a mere recording process. This research writing is a process of mediation in which the act of writing creates the opportunity for the writer to consider the nature of the text that is and can be produced. Researchers can thus make conscious choices about what kind of writing they will adopt (Richardson, 1990).

Writings

Research writing varies in styles and tone. Scientific representational writing is (a) matter of fact. It uses the present tense and aims to be abstract, devoid of people, clinical, procedural, 'fact'-ual. This has also been the dominant convention of the social sciences which is characterised by texts heavily sandbagged with citations, brackets resolutely connecting to existing research knowledges, simultaneously inside and outside, since

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19 See B. Davies (1994) on 'collective biographies' for a similar notion of research practice and the researcher as editor.

20 Writing externalises words/thoughts. As they are put onto a page that is literally separate from the writer, they can be examined, changed from the distance created by writing (Riessman, 1993). The words are not fixed. Writing is a process of distantiation and objectification, not to be confused with objectivity which presupposes an external world and truth separate from language and the subject (Game & Metcalfe, 1996).

21 There is considerable irony in feeling compelled, by virtue of this being the 'methods chapter', to argue against prose full of citations while using the genre under criticism. I note that others have experienced this too (Comber, 1998c). Bourdieu (1990, p. 29) admonishes me calling such writing a "fetishistic relationship to authors and texts".
research seeks to start from what is and move off to create new knowledge. Furthermore, some social science texts make a virtue out of difficult and obscure language and syntax. However, this prose style is under pressure.

A new more playful and consciously literary approach is emerging (Denzin, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997; Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1997; Jipson & Paley, 1997; Stronach & MacLure, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). Game and Metcalfe (1996, p. 105) for example argue that:

Writing....is conscious of itself as writing - as a creative material activity that enlivens, that is life-enhancing. Embodied writing allows us to experience language's potential for transmitting the quality of lived experience. Most importantly, passionate writing moves us, through its images, metaphors rhythms.

Such sociological writing focuses directly on questions of genre, plots, characterisations, voices and language. It draws on literary processes - the use of synecdoche, metaphor, textual manipulation, textual presentation, metonymy, dramatisation - which heighten explanation and understanding, increase empathy and resonance (Barone, 1992a; Game & Metcalfe, 1996; Hamilton, 1996; Zolkower, 1996). It reveals in the uses of the 'heteroglossic' processes of literature to create complex, multiple and partial realisations of a story (Bakhtin, 1981; Breischke, 1992) that enhance the capacity of the researcher-writer to better explain herself and others:

Dialogically constructed texts allow us to recognise our lives in the mimicry of stories and conversational anecdotes - they allow for a certain space, a voice, which teaches by its textuality what the sheer content of the text only manages to make problematic. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 144)

This new, playful approach to sociological writing looks to literature for inspiration. Whereas modernist research shares with other modernist writing a linear plot, moral point, a truth that is told (Gough, 1996a); this can be contrasted with the profound complexities of some contemporary novels that use their literary capacity of storying to create some coherence, but also heteroglossic counterpoints and rejoinders, approximations and partial realisations. Postcritical narrative research-as-writing, with its self conscious author who deliberately constructs the text, writes with the reader in mind. Postcritical narrative research stories invite not just reading, but readings. The reader becomes part of the creation of the next version of the story (de Certeau, 1988; 22)

22 See for example Lather (1996) for a justification of deliberately complex prose, and Bourdieu (1990, p. 51) for a discussion of his use of a syntax that causes readers to pause to consider. He states that producing an "oversimplified and oversimplifying discourse about the social world means inevitably that you are providing weapons that can be used to manipulate the world in dangerous ways" (p 52).

23 Hesushius (1994) argues that a strong focus on researcher subjectivity perpetuates the self - other binary by focussing on the difference between the researcher and the researched. a complicit acquiescence to the power of the academy. de Certeau (1988, p. 25) writes to remind that such obliteration is a political act with material consequences, saying, "The Bororos of Brazil sink slowly into their collective death, and Levi-Strauss takes his seat in the French Academy" Heshusius (1994, p. 21) concurs, writing, "I am convinced it would have made little difference to the Maori people had their researchers constructed subjectivity ". And Patai (1994, p. 65) asks, "Is the crisis in representation comparable to the crisis in Bosnia?"
Game & Metcalfe, 1996; Packwood & Sikes, 1996; Riessman, 1993). Britzman (1995, p. 153) suggests that writers need to:

allow readers the discursive space necessary to produce the surprising interpretive risks that any reading invites: to read ethnographic narratives less literally, to view culture more suspiciously, and to consider the competing discourses that structure one's reading practices, one's interpretive risks and one's grounds of intelligibility.

This act of reading, de Certeau (1988, p. 173) says is:

to be elsewhere, where they (the readers) are not, in another world: it is to constitute a secret scene, a place where one can enter and leave when one wishes.

de Certeau (1988) suggests one way forward through the debilitating requirements of scholarly textual orthodoxy (he calls this the 'Scriptural Economy' of the academy) that cannot be abandoned by those who must live within its confines. He proposes the notion of delinquent stories, stories that do not follow the rules, that operate "tactically" to transgress and wander through the dominant textual "strategy" that constitutes the structural boundaries of conventional scholarly textual practices. Delinquent stories, while they do not change the dominance of the research writing genres, do enable other stories to be told against, do engage in some conversation and dialogue with, the mainstream research writing genre even if they cannot overpower it. Delinquent storying thus opens up possibilities for readers and writers, while allowing the researcher to remain within the bounds of accepted practice.

There are three ways in which I am attempting to construct a more literary text, to write my research in ways that both present and undercut a sociological narrative. They are the use of image, personal fictions and the conversion of transcripts into prose poems and a specific use of typographical layout.

Image based research

I did not initially intend to use images in my research or as part of the research text. This extract from my journal in January 1998 shows how this decision was made.

I decided that I should drive around the areas I was researching and I spent the best part of the month of January doing just that. Getting a sense of place was always important to me as a teacher and principal, and our school regularly took newly appointed teachers on bus trips around the community so that they had some sense of the geography that helped to shape our students' identities and experiences (Harvey, 1994; Peel, 1995a). Almost immediately I was appalled by the number of factories for sale and lease and the physical appearance of some of the suburbs in the west. I'd worked for the last eleven years out north in a local government area where tree planting was a crusade. I had forgotten the bare, bleached, flat spread of public housing tracts in the west and the way the trees got taller and greener as I drove up the hill towards the inner city suburb where I live. I grabbed a camera as an extension of my eye, framed and distanced myself from the environment, selected the images that equated to some of the key issues and hoped that my photos would give more of a sense of place than mere words. Since then I have shot seven rolls of film and am still pointing and snapping. Journal.
We do now live in a world where the image is increasingly important (Baudrillard, 1988; Cazden et al., 1996; du Gay, 1997; John, 1997; Lash & Urry, 1994)\(^2\) and much information comes from images on screens, billboards and in print. However, literacy and writing are still the dominant forms of research and expression in educational research. As Gough (1998a) puts it:

We continue to promote 'written' versions of the world as 'real' and require all other versions of the world to accommodate themselves to written words - we tend to 'literarise' all of our experiences, to reduce them to a kind of book. We are much more adept at translating images into words than vice versa. We thus tend not to recognise even the limited uses we may make of the visual in our thinking. For example, although a typical education text is in substance verbal, its layout and typography draw on a visual repertoire. Textbooks are visually coded. However, the layout and typography of educational texts have become so conventionalised that we tend to take them for granted and to ignore the operation of their visual codes; our attention is concentrated on the textual codes.

Sociologists are becoming more interested in using visual information (Bach, 1998; Chaplin, 1994; Pautz, 1995; Prosser, 1998; Schratt & Walker, 1995; Walker, 1993), a practice much more widely spread in cognate disciplines such as anthropology and cultural studies. This interest in image is congruent with the 'post' views that there are a variety of ways of knowing, and a variety of ways in which meanings are made. Language is more than words, is also sounds, images, and movements for example. 'Post' scholars suggest that these languages are socially/culturally produced and can be read as texts. Clarke (1997, p. 27) for example asserts that:

Rather than the notion of looking, which suggests a passive act of recognition, we need to insist that we read a photograph, not as an image but as a text.

To which Gough's (1998a) response is:

But there is also a sense in which photographs - or at least some of them - refuse to be read, that confound our attempts to reduce their images to paraphrase or explanation. We might even argue that the very best photographs - the ones that reward us by generating the richest meanings - are precisely the ones that both demand and refuse to be read and confront us with that contradiction.

Nevertheless, photographs are used in a range of circumstances as evidence - in courts, as family records, as print media reportage, as historical documents. The "evidential value" (Tagg, 1988) of such photographs is not because of some innate qualities that they possess, that they somehow capture an outside reality and transfer it through rigorous scientifically controlled procedures to photographic paper. The process of producing photographs is a technical one, but it is also one subject to human interference at every stage. A photograph is able to be dramatically changed at several points - one has only to think of the impact of the lighting arrangements, the length of exposure, the mix of the chemicals, the juxtaposition of images in one print to see the point. The advent of digital photography brings this manipulable capacity of photographic images further to the fore. Furthermore, the reading of photographs is the result of social semiotic processes - the product of biographies, histories, local and broader teleologies and socio-

\(^2\) This is integral to the consumption society (see Bauman, 1998b; du Gay, 1996; Hinkson, 1991; 1998; Mackay, 1997; Radner, 1995).
cultural contexts. Tagg (1988, p. 189) writes that photography is not a "guaranteed witness" but operates within particular "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1977) that are products of their times and places. He says:

Photographs are not ideas. They are material items produced by a certain elaborate mode of production and distributed, circulated and consumed within a given set of social relations; images made meaningful and understood within a wider ideological complex which must, in turn, be related to the practical and social problems which sustain it (Tagg, 1988 p. 188).

Because sociology does not have a history of using photography as evidence, unlike anthropology or indeed like the 'hard' sciences it once sought to emulate (Latour, 1993), the "mission of visual sociology" (Becker, 1974) is difficult to describe (Prosser, 1998). It does not sit within a taken for granted academic practice and 'regime of truth'. However, each visual researcher needs to justify why and how it is that the images they have used contribute to the research process and texts. Harper (1996) suggests that photographs would be particularly useful for studies of interaction, eliciting emotions and studying the material culture - among others.

I have used photographic images in one of the ways that Harper has suggested. In order to present a fuller picture of the social context within which my research has taken place, I have produced snapshots of the material circumstances which directly affect the lives of families, children and their neighbourhood 'disadvantaged school'. I have chosen to use images to amplify the points I wish to make about the importance of the economic and physical environment within which people live. I know of no other way to even begin to present a 'picture' of the extent of economic restructuring and the loss of jobs through combinations of words and images. In these photographs there are few people, since it is an impression of the physical 'text' that I am seeking to record and convey.

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25 The collection and production of images, the construction of a research text that incorporates visual and verbal 'evidence', throws into even sharper relief some important research questions about veracity, selection, framing and representation - questions such as:

- what is in the picture and what is left out?
- where should I stand to get the best picture?
- should I be looking from a different angle? Will I see more if I stand somewhere else?
- since I cannot possibly get the whole picture in, what do I most want to include? What should I leave out?
- what image will best represent what I want to convey?
- what is my relationship to the subjects of this photograph?
- how do I disrupt the tendency of photos to present themselves as if they are 'real' and 'true' rather than as artefacts of my making?
- what can I read into this image? What does it mean? In what context does this photograph need to be placed?,
- how will others read this image? How can I guide their understanding? How can I allow for multiple readings?
I decided early on not to take photographs of particular people, although I have taken some photographs of 'crowd' scenes. I am uncomfortable with asking people to pose or intruding upon their everyday activities and 'stealing moments' from them. Further, this was not necessary for the arguments I wished to make. However, I did want to record pictures of the public(s) that makes up the localities with which I was concerned to illustrate diversity, but more importantly to undercut discourses of 'othering' that focus on crime, depression, pessimism, victims, passive consumers and are often attributed to the poor (Bauman, 1998a; Katz, 1995; L. Morris, 1994). Photographs of people enjoying themselves, not being isolated and alienated, is as much part of the picture I want to create in my research text. My use of photographs then is primarily concerned with acts of representation (although they also were and are research evidence), of use of images to construct a narrative text that is not only 'readerly' (Barthes, 1975) but also one which resonates more fully with readers.

A similar need to experiment with ways of representing 'voices' led me to experiment with personal fictions and transforming transcripts into poetry.

The fictional and poetic turn

As described earlier in this chapter, one of the concerns I brought with me to this research was the way in which the research into 'disadvantaged schools' had not found ways to present the kinds of experiences I understood as my everyday. Further, the use of conventional sociological prose was distancing and worked against resonance and empathy, while privileging the researcher's analysis over that of the research subjects, of whom I was often one. What I have looked for therefore is not only ways of presenting larger chunks of transcripts in my analysis, but for ways to represent the multiple and discrete perspectives of my colleagues.

A major literary technique I employ in this text is to create poems from transcripts. Modelled on the work of Laurel Richardson (1994, 1997), this is a confronting move, it pares down, hones what has been captured on tape to a narrative that tells both emotionally and intellectually. It creates a stand alone text from transcript rather than encasing transcript extracts in commentary. It presents a story rather than having the story told. It does not present truth, but aims to re-present truthfulness. This approach might be labelled invalid, subjective, trivial, and un-academic because it challenges the conventional norms of sociological selection and presentation. Yet all data collection is a process managed and manipulated by the researcher and all research texts are constructed through writing and reading. This method draws attention to the acts of the researcher in manipulating and selecting and makes them visible, un-natural, needing to be defended and explained.

The process of creating prose poems from transcripts involves finding a major narrative, theme or recurring phrase and then re-organising the order of those sentences. As in any poetry then, the sentences are broken up and placed on separate lines, punctuated in such a way that a reader would be guided to focus on separate phrases and words. I try to structure the words in ways that guide the reader not to gloss over any aspects of what is being said. The development of these prose poems is part of my research, an
investigation of the capacity of this narrative method to present data in a more powerful way, in a way that pays more than lip service to the views of school administrators. It offers one way of presenting voice - what my colleagues have said - as something other than minute embroidery on my sociology cloth.

I have also written short pieces of 'fiction' based on my own experiences. These work in counterpoint to the transcript poems, often directly commenting on them. They serve as an ongoing reminder of my presence throughout the research and are one way of introducing my personal experiences to sit alongside that of my colleagues.

Typographical choices

The notions of research as writing, as a partial representation of truth constructed by the researcher and as an exercise in academic strategy have been the basis of the way I have conceived this text. My (post critical narrative) text is based on these understandings and involves two strands:

- a conventional sociological prose narrative in which transcript data is thematically integrated into an ongoing narrative analysis, which is somewhat episodic in style. I have mined transcripts to find 'little stories' told by my colleagues, and they appear as relatively long quotations in the dominant narrative. This is my way of presenting a multi-voiced text which allows my colleagues the space to 'speak in their words'
- delinquent storying. This dominant story is introduced by poetry, created from transcripts and pieces of autobiographical fiction/fact. Images accompany the main narrative, images made up of maps, snapshots, and newspaper clippings.

The dominant narrative, itself comprised of multiple narratives, runs together with infrequent 'delinquent stories' that seek to disrupt, comment on, answer back, amplify, make difficult its progress. I have sought to weld the two strands together through concentrating on constructing, through layout and repetition of 'genres' from chapter to chapter, a discrete research text. This is an experimental text in which the reader is invited to make their own meaning and their own judgements as to its 'effects'. It is a text that seeks an aesthetic response and has been constructed primarily using processes drawn from contemporary literature. Works by Doris Lessing, A S Byatt and Michele Roberts exemplify texts in which multiple stories are woven together in one volume, where stories cross, intertwine, rub against each other. The effect of these multiple textual practices is one of 'montage' (Quantz, 1992) where a new set of meanings is created from stories each of which have their own integrity and messages. But the juxtaposition creates a set of meanings different from any of the others alone.

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26 See for example 'Memoirs of a Survivor' (Lessing, 1974), 'Possession' (Byatt, 1990) and 'Impossible Saints' (Roberts, 1997).
27 This is different from a 'collage' in which many pictures or stories go to create one meta picture or story.
For this reason, this text does not follow the conventional dissertation genre, but rather is presented as a stand alone 'book' in which a rhythm can be anticipated from chapter to chapter and the sequence of pages are meant to be 'seen' together. I have attempted to make a text which is multiple but still readable. I use in particular a repetitive introduction to each chapter consisting of a newscutting collage - an attempt to visually simulate a "mediascape" (Appadurai, 1996), the flow of information carried in daily print media - a transcript poem, and a piece of personal fiction. Some chapters also have snapshots, maps and other visual artefacts that accompany and interrupt the sociological text to which they refer. Some chapters also have 'after images' that I hope may linger in the mind's eye as the reader moves onto the next chapter.

Laurel Richardson (1997, p. 67) calls such a text in sociology a "combination genre" where:

- fictional stories, field notes, analysis, reflexivity can all coexist as separate (and equal?) components. Each part takes meaning and depth in the context of the whole text. Writers of combination genres clearly demarcate what is intended to be read as 'fiction' and what is intended as 'ethnography'.

Norman Denzin (1997, p. 224) suggests that such "reflexive, messy texts" attempt to bring together experimental literary forms with more conventional sociological approaches so as to move beyond the liabilities of each. Latour (1988) calls this genre an "infra-reflexive text", one where the combination of texts and commentaries work not only at the surface but also below (infra) to create an emotional response, they provoke a reverberation, they move the reader.

While there are already such textual forms in educational research, it is still clearly an experimental approach and as such its generation is a part of my research processes To conclude this chapter, I now formulate a specific research question about method.

THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

Postcritical narrative method as I have adopted it has a dual and mutually constructed focus in:

- shaping the research process
  Narrative research enables me as researcher to engage in conversations with my colleagues about day to day events and to jointly engage in theorising about the effects of the current government policies and broader socio-economic and cultural changes. It places me as researcher as the editor of my colleagues' perspectives.

- constructing a narrative research text
  I experiment with the construction of a text which acts to allow multiple readings, a step away from the modernist scholarly genre. I use an arts based approach that promotes aesthetics, empathy and imagination and employ fiction, prose/poetry,

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28 Bal (1997, pp. 99 -111) suggests that rhythm is elusive, but narratives always contain "ellipses, summaries, scenes, slowdowns and pauses".

29 Latour's 'scienti-fiction' (1996) on the ill fated Aramis self driven train is itself an exemplar of such a text.
autobiography, typography photography to create a stand alone 'reflexive' text consisting of a dominant narrative and 'delinquent stories'.

My second research focus then is on what this particular postcritical narrative research method has enabled me to do, what it has prevented, what it has foregrounded, what it has left in shadow.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

I now summarise the issues that I have discussed in this chapter.

It was no accident that I did not find my particular ways of thinking about 'disadvantaged schools' and students in the research literature because none of it had been undertaken by researchers who had been in my part of the educational space, at the midpoint of policy looking up, down and sideways through a particular wide angle lens. It was no accident that I did not find my voice in the research texts, since most of it was conventional third person narrative using unproblematised ethnographic and case study methods (Quantz, 1992). It was no accident that the meta narratives of class, race and gender did not even come close to describing the students and their families that I knew and the dilemmas of schooling, since it was the very breadth of the sweep and the pursuit of a key explanation (Gore, 1993) that obscured the rich variety and frustrating impasses of my working life.

I was determined to find a way of addressing these issues. I became particularly interested in arts based and narrative methods of research and their potential to develop alternative ways of knowing and telling. In my 'chalkie' persona I had often referred to myself as a storyteller and it is hardly surprising that I would find attractive the notions that stories have the power to engage and get people involved in ways that conventional sociological prose does not (Barone, 1992a; Elbaz, 1991), that storying is not only very much part of teachers' behaviour (J. King, 1991; D. Thomas, 1995) but is also an activity in which humans generally engage in order to make sense of their world (Bruner, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As a school principal I often felt that I had several stories running in my head at any one time, plots and counter-plots, subtexts and stories within stories. I wanted to get away from the idea that there was a single and simple way of thinking about the life of 'disadvantaged schools' and I didn't want to just write from my experience in autobiographical form. The total piece of research is my story (Packwood & Sikes, 1996) and nobody else's - up to the point where the reader, in my case an examiner, reads it.

Taking the "textual turn" (Gough, 1998b), I began thinking about research as a literary process and act and how I might use literary devices and techniques to meet some of these concerns. I am looking at the use of narratives to resolve temporarily the problems caused by thinking that a single and simple narrative is not enough to represent complex situations (Barone, 1995), that any dialogue between two people is not simply a question and answer interview, but rather a mutual construction of meaning (Robinson, 1992), an act of joint storying (Schurich, 1995), that it is possible to connect the macro
and micro without simple cause and effect explanations (Grumet, 1988). That there are alternatives to sandwiching the research subject's voice between my commentary (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Riessman, 1993), and that all evidence is not just found in words (Chaplin, 1994). Concerns about evidence, and its selection, analysis and re-presentation in the text, are therefore of prime importance. My research has become as much about the exploration of postcritical narrative method - the use of literary processes to create a multiple text that combines image, poetry and fiction with a strong sociological analysis - as it is about theorising educational disadvantage in today's 'ex - DSP' schools.

My 'answers' to the 'problems' I had constructed about research led me to a dominant research narrative in which the stories of my colleagues appear to tell their versions of events, in combination with 'delinquent stories' (de Certeau, 1988), comprised of images, transcript poems and personal fictions. This in turn propelled me to decide to adopt explicit typographic and literary structural devices and to produce a discrete 'stand alone' research text.

Before reaching that text, in the next (and brief) chapter, I provide a concise summary of the research questions and outline the procedures I used in this research. This will complete the first section of this text. What comes after the summary is the discrete research text which is the product of my research into arts based postcritical narrative method.

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30 This is an issue I take up in the research text when I introduce geographical and anthropological theoretical tools in Chapter 4.

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Chapter 3

Take 2

Precis of the Research
A SUMMARY

In the previous two chapters I discussed the genesis of this research in my experiences, positioned it in the context of the relevant Australian literature and placed it in its epistemological niche. I outlined how I came to be interested in postcritical narrative method and explained the particular approaches I have adopted. I suggested that this research was as much an exploration of postcritical narrative method as it was a postpolicy study of 'disadvantaged schools' and that my exploration would take the form a discrete stand alone text.

This volume

This volume consists of three sections:

- the chapters that outline the research context, questions and methods. These are Chapters 1-3
- the literary text I have produced as the representation of the findings about 'disadvantaged schools' in the western and northern suburbs. These are Chapters 4-11
- the final section which is a reflection on both research questions and a speculation about its implications for policy and research. This is Chapter 12

As a conclusion to the first section dealing with research context, methods and questions, in this chapter I will reiterate the two research questions and then outline the processes I used in order to carry out this research.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In 1996, the Howard government abolished the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) and replaced it with the Commonwealth Literacy Program (CLP). This was one aspect of a conservative public policy regime focussed on neoliberal economic reform that has sent questions of equity and justice to the margins. There is increasing speculation that microeconomic reform, changes in families and in the labour market have combined with the retraction of public services and diminution of the social wage, of which education is an integral part, to adversely affect the neighbourhoods most in need. This has resulted in what some see as increased socio-spatial polarisation in Australian cities (e.g. Badcock, 1997; Baum & Hassan, 1993; Forster, 1986; Gregory & Hunter, 1995; Peel, 1995; Stilwell, 1994).

Question one

Through conversations with school administrators, welfare workers and local government officers I seek some answers to the following questions. In the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide, two of the most severely depressed city regions in Australia (ABS, 1997a; Spoehr, 1997),

- what is happening to disadvantage and to 'disadvantaged schools' in the current social, economic and policy contexts?

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• what is everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', how has it changed and how is it the same as it always was?
• what moves can and do 'disadvantaged school' administrators make in the current context to advance an educational justice agenda? What policies would they propose for the future?

I also have a 'reflexive' subquestion:
• what can a 'mid point post policy analysis' do? What does this particular 'sample' allow me to 'see'? What is obscured? What other questions are raised? How is such a study positioned in the literatures and conventions of academic practice?

Question two

In attempting to meet this set of questions I have used a postcritical narrative method which has a dual and mutually constructed focus:

• in shaping the research process.
  Narrative research enables me as researcher to engage in conversations with my colleagues about day to day events and to jointly engage in theorising about the effects of the current government policies and broader socio-economic and cultural changes. It places me as researcher in the position of the editor of my colleagues' perspectives.

• in constructing a narrative research text.
  I am experimenting with the construction of a 'literary' text (Barone, 1992a; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Denzin, 1997; L. Richardson, 1994, 1997) which acts to allow multiple readings, a step away from the modernist scholarly genre. I use an arts based approach (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999) that promotes aesthetics, empathy and imagination. I employ fiction, prose/poetry, autobiography, typography and photography to create a 'reflexive' text consisting of a dominant narrative and delinquent stories (de Certeau, 1988) to create a distinct stand alone text.

My second research focus then is on what this particular postcritical narrative research method has enabled me to do, what it has prevented, what it has foregrounded, what it has left in shadow.

A political intent

This research also has a political intent. It is not dis-interested, but on the other hand, my intention is not to create an agenda for action. My hope is however, that this research may be useful in the collective process of understanding what is happening in the current context, and also that the information may be useful in changing things for the better, by which I mean in the interests of those who are currently being marginalised. In particular, I hope that a focus on the school as an institution, subject to policy and active in the creation of policy, is re-generative - not only for my colleagues but also for me.

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1 This is what Bourdieu (1990; 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) calls a "sociology of sociology".
SOME NECESSARY DETAIL ABOUT PROCESS
In the next section I provide a description of the scope of the research and the research subjects, the focus of taped conversations, details of how I approached analysis of the evidence found in transcripts, and indicate what other information I collected.

Scope

I focus on sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' in the northern and western suburbs in this research. In each of these I talked with the principal. On one occasion I also spoke with an assistant principal and in another a classroom teacher in the school. I spoke with secondary principal colleagues, some of whom had been in 'disadvantaged schools' and who had transferred elsewhere, and with some who worked in 'disadvantaged schools' in other locations. I also spoke with two principals who had worked only in more 'advantaged' locations. My conversations with principals in other locations in and out of 'disadvantaged schools' served as a reference point, because I needed to keep asking myself how much of what I was being told was simply about schools, rather than 'disadvantaged schools'. This was one strategy to "fight familiarity" (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). I also sought a few other 'outside' perspectives on school, social polarisation and poverty in order to cast other lights on the particular locations in which this research is based.

The categories of people I spoke with are as follows:

Western suburbs:
- 4 x 'disadvantaged school' primary principals. This covers 5 primary schools since one had recently transferred from one to another
- 1 x 'disadvantaged school' secondary principal
- 1 x 'non disadvantaged' school secondary principal
- 1 x 'disadvantaged school' primary classroom teacher (same school as principal)
- 1 x youth worker
- 1 x local government youth development coordinator
- 1 x local government planner
- 1 x Chief Executive non government welfare agency

Northwestern suburbs:
- 2 x 'disadvantaged secondary school' principals

Northern suburbs:
- 4 x 'disadvantaged school' primary principals
- 4 x 'disadvantaged school' secondary principals
- 1 x 'disadvantaged school' secondary assistant principal (same school as principal)

Eastern suburbs:
- 1 x secondary school principal recently transferred from a 'disadvantaged school'
- 2 x 'advantaged' secondary school principals

Southern suburbs

2 A list of the schools is found at Appendix 2
• 1 x 'disadvantaged' secondary school principal
• 1 x secondary school principal

Country:
• 1 x 'disadvantaged school' secondary principal
• 1 x secondary school principal

State wide:
• 1 x non government welfare agency schools-liaison officer

Focus

The field work for this research consisted of a number of taped 'research conversations' with colleagues. Each taped conversation lasted for approximately one hour. These were not structured interviews, but I did have a set of areas I generally covered. They were:
• how poverty appeared in the particular school
• what this 'meant'
• what everyday life in the school 'looked like'
• the implications of the abolition of the DSP and the introduction of the CLP
• what were the main policy issues affecting the school
• what policy(ies) would help their school.

'Non school' people were asked about poverty and social polarisation and how that affected their work, what they thought was happening to schools and what they thought government policy should be doing to alleviate poverty, particularly education policy.

Analysis

I transcribed the conversations verbatim and then analysed each in four ways:

1. Storied analysis
I asked of each transcript a Brechtian question - what is the 'major action' going on here? Where are the anecdotes, phrases and paragraphs that illustrate this dominant story? What sub texts are at work - what are the anecdotes, phrases and paragraphs that illustrate these subtexts?
What is now left after these have been taken out? Do they have another story to tell? The result of this sweep through the data was not only the material for the prose poems but also the development of the major themes of the research.

2. Thematised analysis
I listened to every tape three times and then marked on the transcripts the themes that emerged around the following broad headings:
  • The community
  • Media
  • Youth cultures
  • Poverty in the community
  • How poverty appears in the school
  • The 'ensemble' of issues in the school

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• Everyday life in the school
• Behaviour
• Students
• Staff
• School-community
  - parents
  - wider community
• Curriculum
  - school initiatives
  - policy driven reform
  - postcompulsory changes and issues
  - early intervention focus/literacy
• Resources
• Facilities
• Government policies
  - education
  - other
• Inter-Agency programmes
• Marketisation
• Clustering
• DSP
• CLP
• What is needed
• Social capital
• Devolution/decentralisation
• Leadership

These headings emerged both from the transcripts themselves, from the literature and from my own experiences.

3. Foucauldian reading
I went through the transcripts with a set of Foucauldian categories that I thought might reveal power/knowledge at work. These categories are based on Foucault's work on governmentality (e.g. Foucault, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1991) and on the work of Foucauldian researchers, (e.g. Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996; Dean, 1991; Dean & Hindess, 1998a; Falzon, 1998; Gore, 1993; Moss, 1998; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Ransom, 1997):
  • fragmentation / individualisation
  • homogenisation
  • normalisation/exclusion
  • surveillance/regulation
  • the move from external to self discipline

4. Reading with reference to sociological literature on 'New Times'
There were a number of other lenses that I used to scan the data. These informed my search for theoretical 'tools'.
  • I looked for evidence of the 'risk society' theorisation of social change advanced by Beck (1992, 1997, 1998; Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), Giddens (1991, 1994) and other scholars who have adopted and debated these ideas (e.g. Franklin, 1998; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Heelas, Lash, & Morris, 1996).
• I sought evidence of resonance with contemporary Australian and British social policy analysis that focuses on marketisation (e.g. Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1996; Gerwitz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Kenway, 1995; Lingard, Knight, & Porter, 1993; Lingard & Porter, 1996; Reid, 1998; Taylor, Rivzi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1997).

(I take up this literature in Chapter 6 when I look at the context of the northern and western suburbs and 'disadvantaged schools').

• I looked for the relationship between the stories of the administrators with the key texts on 'disadvantaged schools' - that of Connell and colleagues (Connell et al., 1982) and Wexler and his associates (Wexler, Crichlow, Kern, & Martusewicz, 1992) - to see what they might help me say about the evidence I had collected or what the evidence might have to say to their theorisations.

Other information

In addition, I collected other evidence.

• I have maintained an extensive news clippings collection, about education policy and locality based issues, taken from the national, state and local press for the year 1998.

• I downloaded individual school data from the Departmental web site, and collected documents from the schools. These have not been extensively deconstructed but rather, are used as illustrations of the general milieu.

Writing decisions

In order to protect the anonymity of my colleagues I have made two decisions. Firstly, I refer to all research informants as 'they', rather than as 'he' or 'she'. In some instances the number of people who would be able to provide the information I have used is very small and the use of gendered pronouns would reveal who has been involved. Secondly, I have not connected the informants with their schools and have listed transcripts by number, derived from the order in which the conversations occurred. I have provided some detail about the schools in Appendix 1, unlinked to the transcripts. In addition I have edited transcripts to remove some distinctive speech patterns where I felt that these might provide clues as to identity.

LOOKING FORWARD.

This volume consists of three sections:

• the chapters that outline the research context, questions and methods
• the literary text I have produced as the representation of the 'findings' about 'disadvantaged schools' in the western and northern suburbs
• the final section which is both a reflection on the second 'method' research question and a speculation about its implications for policy and research.

In the research text I have adopted a standard typographical formula consisting of an introductory set of news clippings, a constructed transcript poem and a personal story. Some chapters are ended with a page of snapshot 'after-images'. My intention is that
Sell and be debt free

Mining boss says get rid of ETSA

More job cuts’ to balance Budget

Taxes to rise in Budget

slashed

Rising interest in

airport sell-off

Elderly man gets one shower a fortnight

Child-care cutback

claim 11th centre

Patients told to go away

Hospital cash crisis flares

Crisis in mental care for kids
these linger while the sociological text is being read, as delinquent stories that operate 'below' the main text.

This concludes the first section of the research text in which I have outlined the genesis, theoretical and methodological frameworks and processes that underpin the next section of this text.

What follows is a discrete entity, a look at the 'everyday' of 'disadvantaged schools' in the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide, through the words and stories of several of its school administrators.
Is poverty getting worse?
I could give you indicators that
That's the case but
I'm not sure
Whether it's the case
Or not

We have a huge run
On emergency assistance
All the time
I'm sceptical about
The numbers
Because there's so many
Other processes...

The word gets round
That there's somebody who'll
Give a bit of money out
And all these people turn up

We used to give out shoes
And then
We stopped

It was amazing
Within about two months
They stopped.

We went for about eight months
When not one person
Asked for them.
We never put a sign up, saying
No shoes.

Then someone gave us
Four or five thousand dollars
And we started to give out shoes

We never put a sign up
And they all came pouring in
They all needed shoes

There are so many cultural community
things
The word gets round.

But we average about twenty or twenty five
people a day
For emergency assistance
And always
About a third of them
Are new.
(Transcript 5)
When the Howard government was re-elected for its second term in 1998, I allowed myself the wry thought that one benefit was that my research begun in 1997 would remain unchanged. More of the same. Or perhaps the same but harder and faster. I had cause to re-think on this just today when I went into the struggling youth theatre company of which I am the Chair. On asking how the workload had been this week, the manager tossed off, 'Oh, much better. Our new Mutual Obligation person is fantastic.'

A clear case of stripping language of ethical meaning, I thought to myself, when words such as mutual and obligation are strung together in Orwellian doublespeak. 'Mutual obligation' - where all the obligation is that of the recipient, who must oblige or face punishment. The role of government is reduced to that of hands off broker, and that of business just reduced.

And the perennial justification for such lexical contortions is globalisation. Zygmunt Bauman (1998a, p.57) says that the existence of the global poor outside and inside our national gates works to discipline the population - their existence keeps "the middle class struggling for positional goods" and maintains "their fear of falling from their uneasily attained state of grace as good consumers into the fiery pit of the damned."

.....Go easy into the world today for you too could end up a faulty consumer, mutually obligated to acquire a work ethic for which no real work will be forthcoming.
Chapter 4

Poverty, Inequality, Matters of State
THESE TIMES

Those who study and comment on society agree that we are living in a time of great change,1 but they cannot agree about the nature of those changes. Some studies of society centre on the rise of global technologies and communications (Virilio, 1997; Wresch, 1996), the dominance of the image and appearance (Baudrillard, 1988; Baudrillard, 1996; Perry, 1998), and propose that there is a change from the dominance of modes of production to those of consumption (Bauman, 1998b; Lee & Turner, 1996) - although others argue they cannot be separated (LeFebvre, 1971). The importance of cultures - popular, youth, different, everyday, multiple, global, simulated, bricolaged2 - and spatialities of difference (D. Harvey, 1993; Soja, 1996) - dominate our lives.

It is suggested that, in this emerging new world, ethics and democratic politics need to be remade in order to prevent a lapse into fragmentation and relativism3 and social isolationism.4 Writers and scholars call this a postmodernist age which coexists with modernist industrial, and pre-modern, feudal social organisations (Gibson-Graham, 1996)… a postcolonial age (Bhaba, 1994; Gelder & Jacobs, 1998; Jacobs, 1996; Said, 1991; Spivak, 1988) peopled by flaneurs (Benjamin, 1969; Tester, 1994), multiple shifting chimeric subjectivities (Serres, 1997).

Other scholars focus on the changing dimensions of the internationalisation of economies and changes in the organisation of work, using terms such as post Fordism, fast capitalism, and de-industrialisation.5 Some suggest that the internationalisation of capitalism envisaged by Marx is being brought further into being by the digital flows of international financial exchange (Castells, 1996,1997,1998; Lash & Urry, 1994), the growth of world cities that function as nodes of exchange (Sassen, 1994), changes in the regulatory capacity of nation states (Beilharz, 1994; S. Bell, 1997; Hinkson, 1991; Hinkson, 1998; James, 1996; Ofte, 1996; Pinch, 1997), the fragmentation of classes (Bradley, 1996; Marshall et al., 1997; Pakulski & Waters, 1996) and the prominence of localised, culturally based political action (Pile & Keith, 1997; Wark, 1997).

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1 A point found in many texts (e.g. Bertens, 1995; Crook, Pakulski, & Waters, 1992; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Dunant & Porter, 1996; Foucault, 1977; S. Hall & Jacques, 1990; Hassan, 1993; Jameson, 1991; Latour, 1993; Lyotard, 1984; Taylor, 1992).


3 There is a growing literature that seeks to put together a normative politics of postmodernity (Bauman, 1993; Fraser, 1997a; Mellucci, 1996; Mouffe, 1993; Soper, 1993; Sunstein, 1997; Szkudlarek, 1993; Touraine, 1997; Young, 1990).

4 There is an emerging concern with questions of community and social networks (e.g. Davis, 1992; Etzioni, 1993; Farrar & Inglis, 1996; Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Putnam, 1993).

5 This literature variously looks at organisations, labour process, subjectivity, the availability of work and its transformations (e.g. Burrows & Loader, 1994; C. Casey, 1995; du Gay, 1996; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Grint & Woolgar, 1997; Kincheloe, 1999; Probert & Wilson, 1993; Reich, 1991; Rifkin, 1996; Ritzer, 1993).
Some writers highlight ecological changes, the growth of manufactured risk and the increasing reflexivity of social life as everybody becomes self-managing, prudential customers (Castel, 1991; T. Miller, 1993; N. Rose, 1993, 1996) in the hyper-surveillance society (Bogard, 1996) in which the lines between humans and machines are increasingly blurred (Haraway, 1990).

This study operates at a level below these abstract theorisations, being concerned primarily with empirical generalisations. But at the same time, the broader social context and the theoretical debates about how these social changes are best understood and represented are implicated in the way that my analysis is positioned and conducted. The literatures represented above create the cradle in which this small study takes shape.

In this opening chapter I sketch the social, economic and cultural context in which Australian public policy is made. I indicate something of the nature of neoliberalism, focussing primarily on the social and economic wage, and then go on to look at poverty and inequality in Australia. Coinciding with this sketch I begin to discuss how it is that my empirical research relates to these broader questions. I continue to make liberal use of footnotes and citations in this chapter to indicate the literatures on which my analysis relies and to which it relates, even if I do not take the space to detail it.

A note on the analytical geography of this chapter.

In the course of analysing Australian government policy I will use the terms globalisation and the (nation) state. Later, in other chapters, I use the notion of the local neighbourhood as the unit of empirical analysis. The most common way of imagining this geography of global, nation state and the local is as discrete, or perhaps imbricated, spaces. In a recent book on globalisation in Australia, Wiseman (1998, p. 14) succinctly summarised this imaginary geography:

The processes of globalisation are helping to create a world of 'nested locales' in which households, neighbourhoods, cities, provinces, nations and regions sit inside the wider global relationship like Russian Babushka dolls.

This is absolutely not the way that I intend the geographical imaginary of my text to be read. This construction of global, state and local as Russian dolls simultaneously homogenises what happens in each delineated space or 'layer', separates and obscures the interconnections between its hypothesised 'layers' and constructs a teleology of hierarchical cause and effect. The universalising theorisation of globalisation is under challenge and there is convincing evidence that it is a very uneven phenomenon across

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6 The risk literatures suggest that 'old fashioned' left and right politics no longer apply as lives become increasingly reflexive (Beck, 1992, 1997; 1998; Beck et al., 1994; Franklin, 1998; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Giddens, 1991, 1994; Heelas et al., 1996).

7 James (1996b, pp. 250-51) suggests, albeit provisionally, that four levels of theoretical abstraction constitute a comprehensive theory of social relations and subjectivities: they are Empirical Generalisation, Social Formational Analysis, Social Integration Analysis and Categorical Analysis. He acknowledges that this four part conceptualisation must still be "tested against the question, Is this a useful approach for understanding the complexities of social life?"
the globe (Allen & Hamnett, 1995; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; J. Scott & A. Scott, 1998). Similarly, its 'newness is questioned because internationalisation and colonisation have been features of global relations for centuries (Blunt & Rose, 1994; Painter, 1995; Thrift, 1996). Massey (1993, 1994) argues that there is a "power geometry of space" and explicitly rejects the Babushka representation saying:

It is all too easy to think of global space as divided up into nested hierarchies of consistently smaller spaces.... where in fact, there is no single set of spatial scales into which all social relations are organised... the geography of the new division of labour does not map directly onto the geography of religion, nor onto the geography of the women's movement, ...nor onto the geography of the black diaspora... senses of place may draw upon a whole range of different geographical scales. (Massey & Jess, 1995, p. 228)

Swyngedouw (1997) argues that the focus on scale works to suggest that it is the scales themselves that interact, rather than the firms, workers, governments, in spaces that can be defined in scale terms. He says that scale is important because it delineates the space in which activity - contestation, diaspora, marginalisation, transformation and stabilisation - takes place and proposes that we use the term "glocalisation" to represent that we are talking about a set of processes rather than a playing off of the local against the global. Massey and her colleagues (Allen, 1995; S. Hall, 1995; Jess & Massey, 1995; R. King, 1995; Meegan, 1995; G. Rose, 1995) propose that we consider working from the local which is the site where a number of 'stretched out', socio-spatial activities and relations work their way into materiality. This is the perspective I have adopted in this study.

The geographical imaginary of my text then is not so easily summarised as a visual metaphor.

THE AUSTRALIAN STATE

In this introductory chapter, I provide a brief history of the current Australian state and the social and economic policy context. I will present some alternative theorisations of this history and their implications for policy. This brief sketch creates the grounding for some discussion of government social welfare policies and poverty and inequality in Australia. This is fundamental to my study which moves in and around questions of equity and justice.

Australia has been called the "wage earner's welfare state" (Castles, 1985, 1991, 1994). This particular explanation of Australia's history rests on the importance of legislation passed early in the twentieth century. This legislation, known as the Harvester judgement, enshrined the minimum wage as the male breadwinner's wage. Over time, and despite wage indexation, the living wage that was established under the Harvester decision became insufficient to support a man, woman and more than one child. To

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*8 Appadurai (1996) argues that we should consider global "flows" and proposes five non isomorphic paths - "ethnoscapes" (people), "technoscapes" (plant and machinery), "financescapes" (money), "mediascapes" (images of information) and "ideoscapes" (ideologies linked to freedom, welfare, justice). This set of categories informs some of the collages of news headings in later chapters.*
rectify these problems, a national Child Endowment Scheme was introduced by Prime Minister Menzies in 1941. The introduction of child endowment formalised family income support as a distinct area of social policy and ensured that responsibility to families undertaking child care and nurturing activities extended beyond the wage system and was borne as a shared community response through the tax-transfer system (Cass, 1993). This established the precedent for building, upon the foundations of the (male breadwinner) family living wage, a growing range of non-contributory and means-tested social security payments and social wage benefits which would support or temporarily replace market income.

Over time, a series of benefits loosely called the social wage were constructed. Improvements in the social wage included not only guarantees of employment through industry protection policies, superannuation and leave entitlements but also universal access to health, more widely available child care, higher family payments and a maternity allowance. All of these increased the role of social policy in addressing the community's social needs. Initiatives in housing, regional development and employment, education and training support are built in as part of the broader concept of the social wage which has become decidedly more important in supporting the purchasing power of market incomes and in alleviating the economic hardship experienced by those denied access to a wage, or foregoing market income where engaged in unpaid work. These improvements have served to ameliorate the hardship associated with lack of, or low, market wage income.

This 'wage earner's welfare state' relied on full male employment, strong social policy, minimal welfare provision and an ethic of self sufficiency and it differed quite significantly from its British counterpart.

The Welfare State and the Welfare Assistance State

The British project of the Welfare State was to ensure continued economic growth and a cohesive, free and peaceful citizenry, to be achieved through programmes of "social insurance and social work" (N. Rose, 1993). 'Social insurance' meant that the state, rather than capital, managed the risks affecting the whole population through the provision of universally available public health, shelter, and education services. As well, using specific applications of Keynesian economics, the state intervened and supported economic growth through judicious application of public funds. 'Social insurance', was also the means of collectivising the population and provided a basis for solidarity and an articulation of public goals and goods. 'Social work', meant that the state managed individual cases of hardship and delinquency, and this was the basis for an articulation of the reciprocal responsibilities of individual citizens: in return for the stewardship of the state each person would be thrifty, industrious and socially responsible (N. Rose & Miller, 1992).

The British Welfare state had its origins in a late Victorian reforming socialism, but it was not until after the second world war and the resulting economic boom that the welfare state, as it is usually understood, came into being. Many universal state services were increasingly professionalised and government employees better remunerated.
Centralised planning sought to weld the diverse mix of government operations and disciplines into a more coherent network that linked together the "fiscal, calculative and bureaucratic capacities of the state to the government of social life" (N. Rose & Miller 1992, p.192). It is this network of juridical, bureaucratic and professional tools and processes that we know as the realisation of the Welfare State.9

The Australian 'wage earners' welfare state' on the other hand managed things differently. It was a welfare assistance state. It was primarily through reasonably remunerated readily available work - available to the (white) male breadwinner and supported by policies that made it possible for him to be self-sufficient - that the population was to attain a decent standard of living. It was not until the Depression (1930s) that support for the unemployed moved away from individual charity to being seen as a support for wage earners temporarily deprived of the capacity to make their own way. Because of the emphasis on the importance of work and self-sufficiency, Travers and Richardson (1993, p. 204) suggest that Australia has the reputation of being: a classic 'Poor Law' welfare state. By this we mean that there is heavy emphasis on self-reliance through the market, with social security provided only through means-tested payments to those who fall below some standard of minimum income.

This Australian welfare assistance state depended on tariff protection, mechanisms to arbitrate and fix wage levels, financial regulation, intervention in the market through public expenditure, control of labour supply through immigration, low participation of women in the labour market managed through unequal wage awards and the White Australia Policy (Smyth & Cass, 1998). It also relied on a strong government commitment to full employment, the redistributive and targeted (rather than insurance based) social security system of means tested income transfers, mechanisms to support home ownership and the provision of public education, health and transport. In the immediate post war (WWII) boom period, the 50s and early 60s, this was not a difficult undertaking.

However, in the 1960s the legislative and administrative underpinnings of the White Australia policy began to be unpicked. Under pressure from post war migration the policy emphasis shifted from one of assimilation to one of grudging integration. Aboriginal people were able to be officially counted as Australians. Social commentators such as Donald Horne10 spoke for large sections of the Australian population who, unlike the Menzies government and its successors, felt less allegiance to England and who sought a more 'Australian' representation of the nation. In the latter 60s, voters were also increasingly disenchanted with the military alliance with America which enforced conscription and involvement in a South East Asian war that seemed more and more unnecessary.

The 1970s in Australia arguably moved closer to a 'true' welfare state philosophy and policies. The Whitlam government surfed on the wave of social protest and a social reforming agenda to add, too generously some argued, to the efforts of conservative

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9 The apparatus of the British welfare state is Progressive Public Administration (PPA).
10 Author of the iconic The Lucky Country (Horne, 1964).
postwar governments that had invested substantially in public infrastructure in programs of nation re-building. New investment in education, health, housing, and the arts; new policies in community development, immigration; and new legislation in consumer affairs and equal opportunity were the result. More prosaically, there was also the National Sewerage Plan which brought significantly better living conditions to poorer localities, such as the western suburbs of Sydney (Powell, 1993, p. 75). In particular, the move to provide free higher education was a significant shift away from ideas of targeting. The passing of the Race Discrimination Act (1975) began the official representation of Australia as a multicultural country, although the burgeoning film industry of the time seemed rather more interested in historical portrayals of squatters, settlers and rampaging uncouth colonials (Stratton, 1998) than of the diverse nation espoused by government policies.

It is significant that the undoing of the Whitlam government can partially be attributed to its proposals and schemes to further nationalise key industries, to move further towards a welfare state. The heady environment of the 70s nevertheless produced considerable debate and innovation, only partially wound back by the subsequent Fraser regime. But there were moves towards monetarism that sowed the seeds of the new order to come. By the late 1970s, not only was any move towards a more orthodox welfare state improbable, but also commitment to the apparatus of the welfare assistance state had started to sour. There were increasing critiques of Keynesian style economics which coincided with the end of the post war boom.

The implications of the end of the long period of stability and relative prosperity were about to emerge.

THE RISE AND RISE OF ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Thus emerged what is described as the 'end' of the "Australian settlement" (Kelly, 1994) and the 'beginning'\(^\text{11}\) of new ways to deal with the complex arrangement of the market, the state and civil society. The development of 'new ways' was framed by a range of policy actors as the need to rejig the economy, then in decline as the profits of both the manufacturing and primary industry sectors began to waiver in the face of international competition. Unemployment also began to rise. When the Hawke government was elected in 1983, it initially achieved a remarkable degree of economic and political stability through a formal negotiation between trade unions and the government to work together. Paul Kelly (1994) suggests that this staved off, for some time, the world wide changes that inevitably impacted on Australia.

Globalisation

Those world wide changes are generally called 'globalisation' (or post Fordism, post-industrialisation, flexible specialisation and fast capitalism). Globalisation conveys the idea of a world shrinking in size. Allen and Hamnett (1995, p. 9) put it this way:

\(^{11}\) There was no single point in time when a break occurred nor was there a neatly graded transition. Rather one form mysteriously 'morphed' into another.
the reordering of distance, the overcoming of spatial barriers, the shortening of time horizons, and the ability to link distant populations in a more immediate and intense manner, are prerequisites of global talk.

Miegel (1997, p. 133) defines globalisation as a time when:

an increasing number of national economies are ready and able to fulfil the conditions that enabled the industrial revolution to take place in Europe several generations ago.

Miegel (1997) argues that as the stable monopoly on ideas, capital and skilled labour held by the early industrialisers was challenged, the historical processes of capitalism - the movement of ideas and capital to the places where they achieve the highest return - gathers pace. This was, and is, greatly assisted by the development of advanced telecommunications that make it possible to base decision making headquarters in one part of the world and production facilities in another. The losers of the competition for being the site of production of standard goods were those countries and companies relying on Fordist (Taylorist) models of production. Miegel's 'early and successful industrialisers' experienced:

- a more general shift in production goals from ..'high volume to high value', and the fragmentation of mass markets for uniform goods into myriad sub-markets or niche markets, within each of which there is increasingly fierce competition. In the wealthy economies the market for basic consumer durables has been saturated, and success goes to the corporations able to identify and market endlessly new products. (Probert, 1998a)

Being an economically successful company thus became tied to new patterns of consumption and, importantly, to new kinds of (technology dependent) information and knowledge, that required to:

- innovate, design, efficiently produce, market and transform products and services as symbols of identity and lifestyle in a high risk world. (Gee et al., 1996: p. 29)

In the early 80s, a popular book, Sleepers Wake (B. Jones, 1982), had argued the case for the inevitability of globalisation and its effects. Its author, an influential member of the Labor party, gave voice to a body of popular progressive ideas and advocated a number of points for government policy intervention, viz.: rethinking time use as more people lived longer; reskilling and making flexible the blue collar workers made redundant by the new knowledge systems; planning for the end of the job for life; creating competitive advantage for Australia's industries particularly through human resource development; supporting the end of hierarchical organisation and anticipating the 'dual labour market', when there was simultaneously more employment in toto, as women became full participants in the labour market, as well as high unemployment. The book proposed that a free market solution would not resolve the potential for social disharmony and argued for some kind of alternative. However it was the former points of policy intervention rather than the latter policy paradigm which was to hold sway.\[12\]

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12 Ritzer (1998) would argue, using Mannheim, that this is characteristic of "McDonaldisation", where "substantive rationality" is subsumed by what appears to be "functional rationality" only as long as one stays in the ideological frame. Once outside, the irrationality become apparent.
Because the logic of the Australian economy had been around tariff protection and financial regulation, this readily provided the basis for the analysis that they constituted the 'problem' with the Australian economy. Tariffs hindered growth. Financial regulation discouraged investment. High wages produced demand for imported goods and inflation. This was the economic philosophy that the Hawke-Keating government embraced.

The Hawke-Keating period

With Reagan and Thatcher embracing economic fundamentalism, the modernising Australian Labor government also came to adopt a particular version, one that was desirable within the terms of its compact with the labour movement and was acceptable to its disparate support base - from social reformers to industrial magnates and financial speculators. The rationale was about the imperative of globalisation and told the story that the policy role of all nation states must increasingly focus on the creation of conditions necessary to promote economic competitiveness in the new international economic order, rather than on nation building or on social policy designed to ameliorate hardship (Burrows & Loader, 1994; Penna & O'Brien, 1996).

The theorisation of globalisation that was integral to the formation of Labor policy was one which focused on:

- the inevitable development of transnational enterprises able to move capital and location around the world to maximise profit
- post Fordist production processes - the abandonment of techniques of (dirty and dangerous) assembly line mass production in favour of decentralised organisations, team based work structures, engaged in niche production.

This story of globalisation carried imperatives for the Australian state to act but also told of its increasing incapacity to raise revenue to engage in interventionist activity. It was these explanations of globalisation, rather than those which described cultural, ecological and/or philosophical shifts, that took hold to rationalise and make possible the new Australian government policy directions (Carroll & Manne, 1992). The decline of the blue collar and permanent job and its replacement by a 'core and periphery' workforce, where knowledge and skill are the key resources, were proclaimed by fast capitalist management theorists and trade unionists alike (ACTU/TD, 1985).

The Hawke-Keating Labor government moved rapidly, changing national monetary policy, deregulating banking, freeing up the dollar, reducing tariffs to adopt the hallmarks of the free trade and market relations doctrine. Rapidly increasing unemployment and considerable political pressure linked with moves to more tightly target social and labour market programs. Labor initiatives to free up monetary and trading practices were supported and lauded by significant international policy making bodies. Policy literature emanating from federal think tanks increasingly focussed on the

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13 This might be seen as an "ideoscope" (Appadurai 1996), the flow of ideas through the media and other information vectors, at work.
development of digital communications technologies\(^\text{14}\) that enabled immediate global communications and decisions and the mobility of capital that weakened the relationship of wealth creation to nation state. Talk of not being able to 'afford' welfare increased.

The public spending, infrastructure-owning, service-providing, Keynesian welfare assistance state was left behind, although the Labor commitment to workers and to a targeted income support system that would effect redistribution remained. Talk of balanced budgets, balance of payments, taxation from consumption rather than from production, the value of the dollar, the abandonment of the goal of full employment came to the fore in both electronic and print media. As Wiseman (1998, p. 21) summarises:

Progressive competitiveness aptly describes the political strategy pursued for over a decade by the Hawke and Keating governments...where the policy agenda was based on targeting social-wage and income-transfer programs to the groups most disadvantaged by economic restructuring and deregulation. However, the core business of government remained the restructuring and deregulation of the Australian economy so as to increase competitiveness in global markets.

The Labor government, epitomised by Keating himself, was also keen to re-position the Australian 'national imaginary' (Anderson, 1983) in line with the globalisation story. In a series of speeches, Australia was economically linked to the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, Australia was described as not only separate from, but perhaps even superior to, England. Monarchists were suitably outraged by the retelling of Australian history as the colonial exploitation of resources, symbolised by sagas of military battles where the gallant Australians had been let down by the English and left to fight alone, and shocking tales of the shameful colonial treatment of Aboriginal people. These stories supported claims for a republic (P. Kelly, 1994), and an unencumbered 'adult' nation free to make its own way in the world. Despite increasing conservative opposition to levels of immigration, emanating from right wing academics through to neo Malthusian ecologists, the Keating government portrayed itself, not as blue singleted unionists, but as suave cosmopolitans, active on the world stage (see Gelder & Jacobs, 1998; Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998).

Newly formed national bodies gave greater say to peak trade union, business and interest groups, including some who spoke for equity. The old federalism, the low key struggle between the Commonwealth and the states, appeared momentarily to disappear in the flurry of national policy making and restructuring. Those central to the decision making process operated with world views and "interests" (Bourdieu, 1990) that overlapped at significant points - the labour movement and economic fundamentalists located in public sector bureaucracies, universities and policy think-tanks shared the view that the growth of intellectual capital and the 'upskilling' of labour were a fundamental precondition of any national economic growth.

\(^\text{14}\) These culminated in a fully fledged cultural policy, Creative Nation (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994) and a series of futures planning documents release through the Australian Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC).
For the trade unions this represented a unique opportunity to combine investment in workers through restructured award systems that rewarded what workers could do (their competencies), more humane 're-engineered' workplaces, and leverage for investment in Australia's ailing manufacturing sector, home to the most militant, male dominated, blue collar unions (C. Johnson, 1997). For the Hayek and Friedman influenced economists inside and close to government (Marginson, 1993, 1997a, 1997b), it was appropriately skilled human capital that a free market required if it was to become competitive on the world stage. And many concerned with equity argued that not only was it unjust that some groups of people had less education, measured in credentials, it was also wasteful and inefficient of human resources.

The argument went this way. An active labour market program that equipped unemployed people with credentialled training was far better then leaving workers idle on income support. The 'wage earner's welfare state' would provide free training, a resource to use when employment was made available through the market, and the market would flourish because international capital needed skilled labour. A seamless national system of education and training would ensure that training and education was portable, recognised everywhere and was of a uniform quality. This emphasis on human capital made education as part of the social wage integral to economic policy. This has strong continuity with previous versions of the welfare assistance state.

The dominance of the radical politics of markets, choice and individualisation was the meta policy narrative in operation in most parts of the so called First World (Giddens, 1994) and it came increasingly to dominate the workings of both states and the Commonwealth. "Economic rationalism" (Pusey, 1991) became the meta story that functioned as the imaginary to pull the everyday world closer to its virtual reality.

The Howard Government

The Labor government that had managed significant changes in economic and social policies was ignominiously hustled out of office by the election of the new/old Howard government in 1996. This marks the beginning of a new hard line and hard times. The new conservative government has avidly embraced neoliberal philosophy, and the near obliteration of social policy and the notion of the social wage is the result. This government is marked by a return to overt social tension, as 'freedom' comes to mean


16 Based on Castoriadis (1987) who argues that society exists as institutions and as significations and it is through that dialectic that there is state of perpetual self alteration.

17 Giddens (1994, p. 9) suggests that neoliberalism is an unstable mix of the radical expansion of free markets that destroys family life and tradition, combined with a dependence for legitimacy on the persistence of tradition. This is ironic, since Giddens is sometimes described as Tony Blair's 'favorite intellectual' and critiqued for his 'third way'ness (now the title of his latest book) - see Rundle (1999) and Scanlon (1999).
'freedom from' government interferences of particular kinds. There has been a rise in a culturally conservative nationalism - a reassertion of blatant 'whiteness' - manifested in significant undermining of legislation that acknowledged the primacy of Aboriginal claims to sovereignty and land, a desire to reduce immigration levels, a more timid approach to the notion of a republic and the installation of a 'slippers and cardigan' family man Prime Minister (Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998).

The Howard government agenda is to dismantle those underpinnings of the wage earners' welfare state that were left by the Labor government. They are driven by supply side economics (S. Bell, 1997) and believe that the only way to compete in the global market is through lowered wage cost structures made possible through a deregulated labour market, which will simultaneously increase employment. This is a policy borrowing largely from the American context where, it is suggested, low wages produce jobs, although it has also produced a burgeoning prison system at the same time (Wilson, 1997). Consequently, the neoliberals have moved on the wage arbitration and award system, one of welfare assistance state mechanisms vital to ensuring that wages were sufficient to enable the employed to not only live, but also to engage in a range of consumption activities including car and home ownership. They look to replace industry awards with workplace enterprise bargaining and individualised contracts.18 There are moves to re-enshrine junior wages based on age not skills. Women's organisations also see the withdrawal of the subsidy for child care as a direct threat to the capacity of women in more marginal wage positions to maintain their position in the workforce.

The Howard government has also moved to reduce government expenditure on public services, embarked on an ambitious program of privatisation of government assets and has initiated extensive contracting out of social services. Before discussing these further, it is important to note the rationale that has made these moves possible. In addition to the "globalisation made me do it" (Kuehn, 1998) story that enabled the Hawke-Keating government to persuade the labour movement to engage in wage restraint and accept the sale of government assets, the Howard ministry has adopted a story of public choice and market contestability, which relies in part on a demonisation of public services, social justice, advocates of progressive reforms, the apparatus of the welfare assistance state and the notion of welfare itself. This is a rhetoric not available to the Labor party whose constituents contain substantial numbers who find such a position absolutely unacceptable, and who retain strong commitments to the ideology of welfare assistance.

The social citizen has now been superseded by the self regulating, prudent consumer, an individual responsible for their own personal life management, providing their own insurance against risks, maximising their own human capital through investment in

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18 Some believe - see for example journalist Marris (1999) and various contributors in June-July 1998 to left websites (LeaLink, 1998; War on the Wharfies, 1998) - that the Howard government longs to duplicate the successes of Thatcher and New Zealand in 'union busting', and indeed, some of the reported federal ministerial interventions in the 1998 wharf disputes seem to support that position (e.g. A. Davies & Trinca, 1998; Marris, Way, & AAP, 1998).
their own education, health, and retirement. This rationale plays out in the ways that the social wage has been diminished and in the ways that public services are delivered.

WORK AND WELFARE

Before going onto look specifically at changes in the welfare assistance state, I will interrupt the narrative with a brief summary of the changes that have occurred since the end of what is described as the "Australian Keynesian settlement" (Freeland, 1998; P. Kelly, 1994), highlighting changes in work and the de- and re-regulatory nature of the nation state. I will also indicate the nature of the critiques that are made of the 'end of settlement' story.

Post 'settlement' work trends

Since the end of the postwar 'long boom' and the demise of the wage earners' welfare state there has been a substantive increase in unemployment and employment. Before considering the explanations offered for these changes, it is worth noting what has happened to the 'wage earners'.

A recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publication (1998a) suggests that in July 1998 there were 696,400 unemployed people in Australia, the majority (82%) of whom were searching for full-time work. Young unemployed people (those aged 15-24 years) accounted for over a third (36%) of the unemployed, and 40% of unemployed people were female. The ABS survey showed that almost two-thirds (64%) of unemployed people did not have post-school qualifications\(^\text{19}\) and that unemployed people who had not completed the highest level of secondary school were generally unemployed for longer than those who had (an average duration of unemployment of 46 weeks, compared with 71 weeks for those who had no qualifications).

Another ABS publication (1998b) which looked at employment patterns of people registered as job seekers in mid 1995, (rather than a survey of the experiences of those seeking employment as in the former publication) shows the grim reality - that one in four job seekers has had no work at all in more than two years. Further, the fate of job seekers is tied to their location. If they are in a region where there is an economic improvement, then there is more likelihood of getting work.

According to the ABS (1998c), the situation for young people in South Australia, the site of this study, is this:

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\(^{19}\)This set of data was used in subsequent talk back and chat show settings to argue that unemployment would be reduced if more people completed school, and that the government policy that removed unemployment benefits from under 18 year olds was in their best interests. The fallacious argument, that qualifications produce employment, obscures the reality that if everybody had school qualification then eligibility for employment would shift to post school qualifications. The provision of employment is not simply and causally related to qualifications in the way such rhetoric suggests.
In 1996, fewer young women were in the labour force than young men (63% compared with 68%). The proportion of young people employed in full-time work fell between 1991 and 1996 from 35% to 31%. This decrease was experienced equally by both young women and men and reflected the general move in the labour force from full-time to part-time work. Between 1991 and 1996, the proportion of young people in South Australia who were employed part-time increased from 17% to 22%. Among the 15-25 year-olds who were employed, 50% of young women, and 31% of young men, were employed part-time. In 1996, the unemployment rate for young people in South Australia was 18% - that is, 18% of 15-25 year-olds in the labour force reported that they were looking for work. Among young males, the rate was 20%, compared with 16% for young females.

Freeland (1998) summarises the overall trends saying:

Both part-time and casual employment have increased at the expense of full-time and permanent employment, with a concomitant increase in job insecurity. From 1966 the relative incidence of part-time employment has increased from 4 to 12% for males and from 24 to 43% for females. For both sexes, the bulk of the increased incidence in part-time employment has been the result of teenage and young adult growth in part-time (and generally casual) employment. While these changes have taken place, the average hours worked by full-time employed persons has increased significantly.

There is considerable pressure on governments to reduce unemployment. This story is told in newspaper headlines such as, "Two million unemployed would like a job" (I. Henderson, 1998a), and "Youth jobs on the way out" (Spencer, 1998). In recent times, the rise of the One Nation party has been attributed to the pain caused by 'structural adjustment'. Thus, unemployment is represented by the government spokespersons as inevitable and, because it is globalisation that is forcing microeconomic reform, it is out of the reach of nation states to significantly effect. This is the unemployment we have to have.

What is significant for this discussion is that the absolute foundation of the welfare assistance state, the thing on which the whole infrastructure was erected - a minimum full time wage sufficient to afford a decent standard of living - is now not available to a significant number of Australians and the federal government will not consider how it might change the course of events. The Australian Government sees itself given a: quasi-choice between fast rising unemployment, as in Europe, and an even faster fall in the income of the lower classes, as in the USA (Bauman, 1998b, p. 92).

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20 Both the print and electronic media have become the medium for conveying policy information and for creating policy pressure (cf. Street, 1997).
21 One Nation is a radical right wing party that campaigns on the basis of ending immigration, reintroducing tariffs, increased compensation for 'the bush', ending 'special treatment' of all minorities, especially Aboriginal people.
22 This was the tenor of much post federal election comment in 1998 in both print and electronic media.
23 It is increasingly apparent that the government has opted for the American solution. At the time of writing there were federal government proposals for new industrial legislation that abolished awards and lowered the minimum wage and complementary strategies being proposed by the South Australian government.
Either way, without substantial increases in income support to the unemployed and barely employed, the welfare assistance state will fail to produce a decent living for all.

Post 'settlement' explanations

The notion of the Australian 'settlement', inevitably disrupted by technological and global economic changes, has come in for criticism for a variety of reasons. One set of arguments have to do with its determinism - the representation of the inevitability of global economic and technological changes and the apparent incapacity of any nation state to alter its trajectories. It is suggested that this view of globalisation is a-historical, built on the modernist myth of progress, leaves unchallenged the ontology of work and gives up on the democratic visions enshrined in the social insurance of the welfare state (Gibson-Graham, 1996; James, Veit, & Wright, 1997; J. Scott & A. Scott, 1998). While there is no escaping globalisation, there is the capacity to work with/against it (Lingard & Rivzi, 1998), an argument that rests on a notion of a revitalised state. These are all important issues but a critique that is most immediately germane to my research is to do with the particularities of the Australian state.

This argument focuses in part on the notion of a 'settlement'. The idea of a 'settlement' is based on the idea that there are ongoing contests and struggles over the shape of the state and policy. One is to do with the struggle between capital and labour, but there are also struggles related to race, gender, location and so on. A settlement occurs when there is a period of time in which the terms of the struggle are contained within generally agreed parameters, although the attainment of this is never a one off and conscious occasion. This is summarised by Freeland (1998):

> From our history it is evident that provisional settlements generally involve a number of parties or interest groups striking a broad parameter setting arrangement with the more neutral supervision and involvement of the state... Both the Federation and Keynesian settlements were primarily settlements between the interests of capital and labour oversighted by the state... The elements were the White Australia policy, new protectionism, the tripartite conciliation and arbitration system, the basic or family wage, and a residual public revenue based social security system. Those elements were added to in the 1940s, with a primary commitment to full employment supported by Keynesian aggregate demand management, an extended social security system and an eased immigration program being integrated into the basic policy framework.

Freeland sees the 'settlement' as undermined by the struggles of the women's movement, indigenous Australians, and ethnic groups, with the final blow being dealt as the economy suffered and:

> liberal democrats withdrew their support from the long lasting strategic alliance with the social democrats, and over time (there was) the rise of neo-liberal economic hegemony.

A recent volume edited by P. Smyth and Cass (1998) contains a concerted critique of the 'settlement' thesis. In sum, the assorted authors argue that the notion of a settlement that is now defunct masks the degree of contestation that occurred over the life of the welfare assistance state and presumes satisfaction with its forms that were never present (e.g. from indigenous people, women, immigrant groups and so on). It hides the genuinely 'homegrown' policy developments that occurred, and the tradition of hybridised nation
state policy response. Most importantly, it dismisses the achievements of the wage assistance state - a relative egalitarianism and level of basic income sufficient to afford a decent life for the vast majority of people. The authors argue that this neglect of our own history, and the adoption of 'the end of the world as we have known it' scenario, justifies and makes possible the uncritical policy borrowing of neo conservative solutions, as well as an easy abandonment of the infrastructure of the welfare assistance state.

The authors argue that 'an Australian way', which works from the particularities of our location, history and strengths, would produce different policy solutions. They reject out of hand the story that the nation state cannot make a positive difference and call for a reconceptualisation of a state with a regulated market and strong civil and social policy platform. Cass and Smyth argue that the strengths of the welfare assistance state should not be abandoned.24 It is in the context of this kind of policy discussion that this research proceeds.

Another alternative theorisation is offered by Bauman (1998b) who argues that to focus on globalisation per se, neoliberalism and/or changes in public policy as the source of the problem, is to argue about the effects rather than the cause. He argues that we must find a way to explain why it was that neoliberalism was the policy answer that was taken up, why it "found such a grateful audience" (p.51). He proposes a theorisation that focuses on the interests of capital and the role of the state in meeting the needs of capital. He suggests that the welfare state was the form of state organisation that most served the needs of capital at that particular historical stage, viz. a ready supply of healthy disciplined labour. He suggests that what has been globalised is the reserve army of labour. He also argues that as existing consumer markets reach saturation, capital also seeks new untapped consumer markets. Because of this globalisation (of both labour and new markets) the welfare state no longer suits the interests of capital. Bauman (1998b, p. 54) says that the maintenance of the 'reserve army of labour':

arginably the main axis in the cluster of interests which stood at the cradle of the welfare state, has been removed from the project it once held together. Without it, the whole cluster falls apart, losing, above all, its economic foundation.

The tension inherent in the postwelfare, neoliberal state is that while capital no longer requires an army of labour, reserve or otherwise, (or if it does finds the cheapest labour available in developing nations), the pauperisation of the local state populace also does not serve its long term interests, which require existing consumer markets to be maintained. So the new state, neoliberalist in ideology, must still stay involved in welfare, because the management of orderly consumers, and what appear to be short term possibilities for low state welfare expenditure, may well become long term paradoxes of large and costly proportions.

Bauman suggests that new policy approaches altogether are required, and draws on the work of Offe (1996) on the universal basic living wage for everybody, to argue that it is

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24 Theirs of course are not the only voices making these claims. (See for example Cox, 1995; Emy, 1993; Langmore & Quiggin, 1994; Rees & Rodley, 1995; Rees, Rodley, & Stillwell, 1993; Wiseman, 1998). There are also 'third way' voices, e.g. Latham (1998).
the notion of work equating to 'paid work' that may be the place to begin to develop new dreams.

I now return to the story of the Howard government. I look in particular at three aspects of current government 'reform' that impact on welfare. This is as a precursor to a concluding discussion of poverty and inequality.

From the Welfare Assistance to a Poor Law state.

S. Bell (1997 p. 277) argues that the major change to the Australian state has been restructuring designed to:
- boost its role in steering the economy back to a course where once again dominant
- business interests are privileged, particularly in terms of market freedom and the quest for profits.

This has been accomplished, he suggests, by giving prominence to the state's accumulation functions while presiding over the diminution of social redistribution. In addition to accepting the demise of the full time wage, and dismantling the apparatus designed to guarantee minimum wage security, the Howard government has significantly undermined the social wage.

Criticisms of the apparatus of the Welfare State are familiar and have often been mounted by The Left. Australian justice policy utilised principles of Rawlsian justice, the distribution of goods. This approach to justice pays no attention to the production of inequities. Rather, its purpose is to ameliorate hardship. There is no intention to transform the social arrangements that produce the hardship. As such, welfare can be argued to be a mechanism for maintaining the status quo and containing opposition. Another related concern is that this paternalism contains in-built potential for distributing the 'wrong' goods (Young, 1990). Welfare as practised by the state is therefore described as 'affirmative', that is, it does not challenge, and indeed explicitly rejects any challenge to, the status quo (Fraser, 1996, 1997a).

Recent (gender-laden) neoliberal criticisms of 'nanny state' welfare have appropriated the left critique of redistributive affirmative welfare. Conservative policy makers argue that because welfare perpetuates social divisions and poverty, and does not change things, it therefore can and should be abandoned. They then argue that the problem is one of forced individualised dependence on a system that saps initiative, demolishes the 'will to work' and creates a culture of poverty, rather than a 'problem' concerned with ongoing social relations that produce inequity. The logic then proceeds - if individuals

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26 It is important to note that in previous regimes such affirmative redistributive welfare provision, not intended or able to change the social relations that create poverty, merely to temper the results, were often expressed in transformative rhetoric, suggesting that there would be changes to the basic economic and social structure. This ranges from the (in)famous Prime Minister Hawke "No child shall live in poverty" speech (Hawke, 1987) through to theorisations of social case management as emancipatory. The practices however were inevitably affirmative
just exercised initiative and behaved like 'good self managing self insuring consumers', then clearly they would not be in the position of needing welfare. In this way, the Howard government has rationalised and explained how it has simultaneously reduced the number of people eligible to receive welfare, heightened concerns about an 'undeserving poor' and substantively reduced services. This has been accomplished in practice through:

- The introduction of 'workfare' programs

The Howard government has removed unemployment benefits for young people under eighteen years of age and increasing numbers of young people are compelled (Penberthy, 1998a; Windsor, 1998) to participate in community work programs (Tingle, 1998) - many reluctantly (Lyall, 1998a), some happy with the scheme (Stock, 1998) - or return to school (Lloyd, 1997a; Michelmore, 1997). When announcing the introduction of 'work for the dole', subsequently renamed 'mutual obligation', the federal minister (D. Kemp, 1997) suggested that:

Work for the Dole will restore self esteem and motivation to the unemployed (my emphasis).

But as the Chief Executive of a large non government welfare program explained to me, this is no substitute for training:

With the previous government there was the use of the phrase mutual obligation, but at least with the LEAP program and the New Work Opportunities program there was a six month program that really did make some effort to work on the transition, that gave people some skills. There was enough time to consolidate that, and there was an emphasis on the training... But you replace that with two days a week work for the dole, and with the amount of money that's available to agencies to put those two days on, there's no money there for real preparation or training. I think what's happened is that this present mob has forgotten their obligation... they're saying to young people, you've got an obligation... I mean what is the obligation... doing two days a week work? It's not like they're really putting something back into the community, the programs are so contrived. It's going to cost the community more to put the program on that the work's worth. (Transcript 5)

Bessant (1998) argues that the 'mutual obligation' scheme is founded on two claims - the claim that the scheme will establish and secure a balance between citizenship rights and obligation which stems from a classic liberal view of citizenship, and the claim that the scheme will reinforce the normative/sociological role of paid employment. She suggests that the scheme is discriminatory on the basis of age and amounts to a new form of civil conscription (Bessant, 1997). Bauman (1998a) claims that the use of the work ethic is merely a cover up for rendering the poor invisible and reinforcing the norm of ethical vacuity which eliminates the duty of social care:

While denigrating dependency of the poor as a sin, the work ethic in its present rendition brings most relief to the moral scruples of the affluent. (p. 80)

because as Connell and colleagues (Connell et al., 1991) have pointed out, revolution is not usually on the state's agenda.
• **Changes in the delivery of public services**

For many years one of the major 'user' criticisms of the welfare system has been the proliferation of different benefits systems, each administered by separate, paternalistic welfare bureaucracies (Thomson, 1998b). The Howard government has consolidated income support and transferred all benefits into one government benefit system. This has been constructed through the abolition of a number of service delivery line agencies and the introduction of a 'one stop shop' for approvals, Centrelink. Service delivery has been marketised, and in particular employment services contacted out through the Jobs Network. This has had very significant teething problems (Michael, 1998a, 1998b) and amid claims of government underfunding (Dore, 1998) and employer confusion (P. Green & Marris, 1998), some services have closed while many agencies who had been involved in labour market programs before were never even able to begin in the new system because they missed out on contracts (Foster, 1998a). The distribution of the Jobs Network around the country and particularly in disadvantaged city and regional locations and in isolated rural areas remains contentious (Allard, 1998; Michael, 1998c). Centrelink itself has also been subject to staff reduction - up to 6000 nationally in 1999 (Dore & McGarry, 1998; Van Deventer, 1998). Contracting out clearly rewards the large players and, by placing the incentive (a kind of jobs bounty) on employment rather than the provision of training, there is little reason for private companies to work for those most difficult to place and who need the most support (Michael, 1998d; Trinca, 1998).27

'Contracting out' has also been undertaken by states (Farrar & Inglis, 1996; Webber & Crooks, 1996) in the hospital system, transport, prisons, telecommunications and in utilities production - with similar tales and experiences of unsatisfactory performance, inability to locate responsibility and difficulties obtaining information in conditions that are framed as commercial transactions (Kemp & Eccles, 1998). The slide from public good and public interest to private, commercial, in confidence business is increasingly of concern in these areas (Bachelard, 1998a; Watchdog's spotlight, 1998), but has yet to fully manifest itself in the welfare system. However what is of most concern is the reported decline in the level of services. As Katz (1995, p.148) points out, for poor people:

> It matters little what institutional sponsors write about their goals, whether these agencies are 'public' or 'private', or how their internal administrative hierarchies are structured. What counts is what they do: what kind of help they offer, how accessible their services are; what conditions they attach to assistance.

On these measures, welfare and labour market public services are doing less well then they ought (Farrar & Inglis, 1996), at least in part because there are fundamental differences between the provision of sewerage and community services (Brennan, 1998; Thomson, 1998b), and because vulnerable job seekers are in a weak position to assert their contractual rights in the "quasi-contractual employment assistance regime" (Eardley, 1997).

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27 The second term election of the Howard government saw a series of adjustments made to the 'bounty' system at significant cost to the government, and there were reports of improved performance (AAP, 1999).
• **Reduction in levels of funding**

The Commonwealth government claims that it has a shortage of income from the taxation system (the effects of globalisation 'out of its control') to spend on public services, and even if it were in the business of service provision, which it isn't, it couldn't afford to do more than provide the bare minimum safety net. The Howard regime has substantively reduced the amount of funding available to the states for public housing and has worked for a national approach that supports public housing provision as a last resort, with the majority of the population being catered for through the private rental market. Health funding has become enmeshed in case mix policy, which shortens hospital time and prioritises waiting lists, and providing support for the ailing private health insurance industry.

Most state governments have also reduced their levels of funding to public provision (in South Australia funding cuts have been ongoing for many years). Levels of health care are thus subject to considerable state-Commonwealth wrangling and the public made anxious by media stories of huge hospital waiting lists, dangerously low levels of care and deaths due to understaffing (Denholm, 1998; Hailstone, 1998). Cuts in legal services (M. Kemp, 1998; Murphy, 1998) are similarly alarming. At the same time public services require increasing levels of payment - from the pharmacy to the local bus, from water to the local childcare centre - all are requiring the public to contribute more for the services provided (Changing Face 1998; M. Saunders, 1998).

• **Increasing attention paid to separating out the deserving from the undeserving poor**

The welfare assistance regime relies on the capacity to separate out, target, those determined to be in need of supplementary assistance. Bureaucracies coalesce around the development and policing of eligibility criteria as does the political project of weeding out those who are 'unworthy and untrustworthy'.

Caricatures of the long haired surfing dole bludger, the drunken wife-beating, work-shy 'yob' and the slatternly housekeeper who buys fast food rather than budget properly, are not new in Australia. Fraser (1997a, p. 29) suggests that ameliorative redistribution welfare systems, such as the welfare assistance state, often produce such 'backlash injustices of recognition' which mark individual people as deficient, unstable and insatiable. White (1996) argues that this labelling trend began to gather momentum with the Hawke-Keating Labor government, a time in which the institutional tendency was to target 'groups', to:

relate the existence of inequality to the characteristics of certain population groups rather than to identify the sources of inequality in the market economy and the structures of power in a class divided society. (p. 121)

This isolation of the undeserving has gathered more momentum in recent neoliberal times and works not just to locate specific people who may be at fault, but also reflects on all people who are in receipt of welfare. Any of them could be undeserving so

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28 According to a recent report (Trust housing, 1999) South Australia has lost 40% of its federal funding, in real terms, for public housing since 1990.
systems need to be in place to watch and monitor. The increased surveillance and policing of the poor, people from particular ethnicities and the young can be seen, for example, in the efforts of the public housing authorities to rid themselves of 'bad tenants' (Public housing, 1998; Criminal tenants, 1999), in the increased demand by local governments for greater powers to patrol public places (Milohanic, 1998), in the continued pursuit of welfare 'cheats' who falsely claim benefits (Tenants get away, 1998; Penberthy, 1998b), and in the continued production of tabloid media items about 'nice' employers who can't find any people willing to take their jobs (Clarke, 1998a). Such characterisations are explicitly rejected, for example by young people (Cultures not to blame, 1998; Kendall, 1998), but to little effect.

Travers and Richardson (1993, p. 203), in arguing the case that the welfare assistance state finds it impossible to find an uncontested and adequate way to identify need, suggest that the Poor Law states share a number of characteristics, viz.: punitive features; inadequacy in terms of levels of benefits; constant risk in terms of legitimacy; failure to deliver owing to low take up rate of means tested, stigmatised benefits; failure to recognise the potential role of welfare states in assisting rather than impeding industry restructuring; a tendency to divide society into insiders and outsiders.

Furthermore, they suggest that while Australia has not had the characteristics of a Poor Law state nor the levels of social inequality and poverty of most other nations, neoliberal policy directions are rapidly bringing a more divided society and Poor Law state into being.

This assertion rests on an analysis of the relative egalitarianism of Australian society. In the final section of this chapter I examine this claim.

INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

There are widely different claims made about poverty in Australia. In the first instance, I deal with nature of the debate about poverty and inequality in Australia, before moving on to one particular interpretation.

Media reportage of poverty

A recent study (Birrell, Maher, & Rapson, 1997; Birrell & Rapson, 1997) that made national headlines (Gunn, 1997) claimed that child poverty in Australia is "getting worse" and that as many as 40% of Australia's children may live in poverty. Just over half of this number lived in homes, the study claimed, that might be categorised as the working poor. This study used Social Security data, not ABS data. The working poor were counted as those people who claimed the Family Supplement, a means tested

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29 Elliott and Atkinson (1998) maintain that the neoliberal state is characterised as by increasingly hands off behaviour towards business, while being increasingly invasive of personal spaces and lives, in direct contradiction of the classical liberal goals of personal freedom from state interference. Bauman (1998c) suggests that people have traded economic freedoms at the cost of personal risk and uncertainty, which gives permission for the state to provide security through 'law and order'.

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allowance designed to lift families out of hardship. This group were just over 20% of the 40% that made the headlines. This study has been criticised for placing these people in the poverty basket - it is argued that they would be poor if it were not for this ameliorative policy, but they are not poor because of it (Travers, 1998). The '20 plus' % is perhaps better taken as a measure of success of welfare policy, the provision of income transfer that prevents people from falling into poverty. More importantly, it might also be seen as an indication of how much the federal Labor government moved away from an award minimum living wage for all, preferring to use the welfare system to top up wages rather than the traditional arbitrated wage assistance apparatus

However what gained media reportage was the 40% in poverty, with little or no explanation just as, twelve months later there was another article (Hannon, 1999; NATSEM, 1999) suggesting that child poverty had fallen by one third since 1982.

There is quite a deal of media attention on poverty in Australia. Another media report claimed that "Millions struggle on the poverty line" (Gazard, 1996) stating that almost one person in five eked out an existence below or just below the poverty line. The article, based on a study by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra, said that 1.7 million Australians live in poverty and a further 70,000 manage to live in only slightly better conditions, lifting the proportion to 17.1%. "In the grip of poverty" (Rodda, 1997), based on a national study by Mission Australia, says that four children out of every ten live in poverty in South Australia and argues that current definitions of child poverty do not currently recognise homeless families in temporary accommodation, families on limited budgets and parents who cannot afford child care. This article states that 57% of low income families say their standard of living is worse than two years ago, more than 25% go without meals due to lack of money, 43% needed second hand clothes and one in three cannot afford a holiday. Another headline says "Basic living a luxury for low income renters" (Foreshew, 1998) citing a Smith Family study that suggests that low-income families - almost a third of Australian families - with an annual income of less than $26,000, are spending more than half of their income on rent. The article cites the following figures:

- HEATING - 30 per cent have none in their homes;
- CLOTHES - 18.3 per cent either cut out or reduce expenditure on replacement of worn-out clothing;
- TRANSPORT - 10.9 per cent either reduce or cut out their transport expenses.

Yet another article, headlined "Welfare payments far short of needs" (I. Henderson, 1998b) detailed the findings of a commissioned report by the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) which showed that Social Security

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30 Another research paper by A. Harding and Szukalska (1999) reported that working families with two children received only $425 per week in 1982 (in 1995-96 dollars) whereas in 1995-96 they could receive up to $118. This paper also suggested that since 1982 child poverty has only fallen marginally after housing costs had been taken into account, although if housing costs were ignored a dramatic fall in child poverty could be recorded.

31 At the time the report was criticised by one columnist for failing to focus on the impact of unemployment (Florin, 1997).

32 The then name of the federal agency responsible for income support.
payments fail to provide an acceptable income for any type of family and fall well short of delivering a 'modest but adequate standard of living' for any household. The article explains that the investigation was commissioned by the previous Labor government in the light of widespread criticism of the long-established Henderson poverty line method of benchmarking the adequacy of welfare payments. And yet another (Lyall, 1998b) said, "Jobless suffering worst of poverty" reporting.

Australian poverty has increased 50% since the landmark Henderson inquiry 20 years ago, a result Governor-General William Deane described yesterday as "startling and embarrassing". Launching a book reflecting on Australian poverty since the 1975 inquiry by Professor Ronald Henderson, Sir William said that, despite the quality of the original inquiry, "the problem of poverty in affluent Australia remains unresolved ... it's unlikely it will ever be resolved". University of Canberra economist Anthony King writes that 36.4% of families and single people are living near or under the poverty line, up from 20.6% in 1973. Dr King's research also found that while in 1973 the largest group in poverty was the elderly, in 1996 it was the unemployed. The poverty line, invented by the late Professor Henderson, is updated quarterly and is currently at $452 per week, including housing, for a family of two adults and two children.

The article goes on to report the words of another poverty 'expert':

Professor Fincher\(^{32}\) said yesterday ...research had shown poverty had worsened despite a dramatic increase in government expenditure on social welfare since the 1970s: "The reason ... is the growth in poverty is related to the growth in unemployment that has occurred since the Henderson inquiry in the 1970s. "If we haven't managed to stem the growth in poverty with large expenditure on social programs in the last two and a half decades, then what is going to happen when social expenditure decreases, as it has been in the last few years?"

Most of what the public hears about poverty is in articles like those above. They are characterised by the use of percentages that talk about a poverty 'line', a 'standard of living' and a series of population characteristics and household expenses. None of them seem to relate to each other, which is hardly surprising since they often use different data bases and different ways of calculating poverty. The overall impression however is one of worsening material conditions for many in Australia.

**Academic literature on poverty: measurement**

But, when the scholarly literature is broached, a different (but equally confusing to the uninitiated) picture emerges. Much of it is taken up with discussions of the calculations of poverty. A recent paper (A. Harding & Szukalska, 1998) from NATSEM serves to illustrate the point. The bulk of the paper consists of comparing percentages of the Australian population in poverty according to four different calculations, including and excluding different items and units of calculation. The authors argue that the Henderson poverty line is 'too high' and that a more realistic calculation would use half the family income of the average person in Australia. This method of calculation suggests that 12.8% of all dependent children in Australia are in poverty (a far cry from the figures of Birrell and associates (1997; Birrell & Rapson, 1997) who showed that around 20% of

children live in homes totally dependent on social security payments). The Harding study then goes on to say that:

Essentially a child in Australia is poor because either:
- the head of their family is unemployed
- the head of their family is a sole parent
- one or both of their parents is self employed or
- one of both of their parents earns wages and salaries but is part of the 'working poor'

This is exactly the same group with whom Birrell is concerned and yet his calculations based on a different date base and using a different arbitrary income based poverty 'line' (some $60 per couple difference for a two parent family with two children) are significantly greater. What I surmise from comparing the two is that there is a substantial cluster of people in receipt of relatively low incomes who stand to be included or excluded depending on the calculations.

However another group of researchers argue that not only is the Henderson calculation (income linked to increases in the CPI) inadequate, but so are any studies which rely solely on income. Income with housing costs taken into account is a better measure but one which still is inadequate. Rather it is expenditure - what people need to spend to maintain a decent standard of living, that is consumption - that needs to be taken into account.34

A note on consumption and poverty

Consumption based arguments are an application of Sen's (1992) notions of "capabilities to function" (rather than the notion of opportunities to function) to describe the condition of wellbeing that might be considered to be the hallmark of a just society - one in which everybody has the capabilities to live a life commensurate with general standards of living. 'Capabilities' to exercise a range of freedoms and enjoy a decent life depend on having what Sen calls "primary goods". Sen's argument is that 'primary goods' are not sufficient to produce a more just society or a decent standard of living, but they are a necessary prerequisite. In very poor countries many people experience 'absolute poverty', that is go without food, shelter and sanitation, but in 'advanced' countries 'capabilities' are socially derived norms of what constitutes a decent standard of living.

In 'advanced' societies, 'capabilities' such as enjoying health derived from good nutrition are more to do with the provision of the 'primary goods' of public health care, than with having enough income to buy food, as is the case in very poor countries. According to Sen, agency - the freedom to make choices - is also important. The condition of poverty in 'advanced' countries must thus be seen in the limitation of choices available to people, and in the lack of 'primary goods', as well as in normative measures of 'capabilities'.35

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34 It is important to note that A. Harding, whose work on poverty lines I examined earlier, is one of the advocates of this position.

35 It is easy to see how the argument of relative poverty could be ideologically manipulated. Equally significantly Sen's argument also has little explanatory power about how inequalities are systematically produced and needs to be accompanied by other sociological work. Latham (1998) also uses a version of Sen to argue about the 'primary goods' needed in the information society.
The introduction of the notion of social norms of 'standards of living' that are based on consumption recall one significant aspect of globalisation - the shift from patterns of production to pattern of consumption. Bauman (1998b, p. 24) explains the difference between the two this way:

The reason for calling that older type of modern society a 'producer society' was that it engaged its members primarily as producers; the way in which that society shaped up its members was dictated by the need to play this role and the norm that society held up to its members was the ability and willingness to play it. In its present late-modern, second-modern or post-modern stage, society engages its members - again primarily - in their capacity as consumers. The way present day society shapes up its members is dictated first and foremost by the need to play the role of consumer, and the norm our society holds up to its members is that of the ability and willingness to play it.

Bauman says that consumption has not replaced production, rather there is a shift in emphasis between the two which means that people's identities are now irrevocably shaped by the social relations of consumption - the state of permanent desire for consumption, constant choice and the absence of routine - rather than drilling monotonous and panoptically supervised behaviour. Living meaningfully in today's world, says Bauman, requires "daily visits to the marketplace" (p. 26).

Understanding the shift to consumption has important implications for understanding what happens to people who are not able to consume because they do not have the income to do so. It casts some light on why it is that markers of a decent standard of living, such as the video recorder, are ubiquitous in most low income homes, and goes some way to explaining the levels of Australian credit card debt. Understanding 'keeping up appearances'36 in a consumer society is vital to understanding the meaning of poverty in Australia.

Consumption based measures of poverty

One example of a consumption based measure of poverty is the "index of deprivation" (Travers & Richardson, 1993) that looks at twenty one items - six that could be considered as general indicators of financial stress, including going without meals, pawning or selling something, being unable to heat the home or to pay electricity, gas or water bills, having to delay optical or dental treatment. A seventh is simply not having enough income to get by. A second group of indicators looks at what people are missing and includes the ability to raise $1000 in an emergency, to have a special meal once a fortnight, invite friends or family for a meal once a week, have a night out once a fortnight, take a week's holiday away from home at least once a year, take up a hobby or leisure activity, or buy new rather than second hand clothes. A third group incorporates less tangible items such as dissatisfaction with housing, security, heating and cooling the home, getting to hospital or health facilities, and general level of dissatisfaction with life.

36 This is congruent with the work of Skeggs (1997) who researched how it is that the drive for 'respectability' was a major issue for working class women, and with the work of Bourdieu (1984) who looked at 'taste', cultural consumption patterns, as evidence of classes.
The final item addresses whether a person's standard of living has worsened over the last two years (Travers, 1997).37

A further example is the "budget standards" approach (P. Saunders, 1997a, 1997b, 1998b) which attempts to deal with the premise that poverty is characterised by restricted choices, and that any measure needs to be based on social relevance - that is, what the poor themselves say is important, rather than just what those who study poverty believe to be important. This involves finding out from the 'community' what it considers to be important for a decent life, as well as looking at items such as food, education and shelter38.

Many who work on measures of poverty that include some kind of expenditure component are concerned about the amount of time and energy that has gone into conducting the scholarly debate about lines and numbers. P. Saunders (1997a) for example says:

What many see as disturbing about the vigorous debate that has taken place over the last few years is that is focussed not on the causes of poverty, nor its consequences and what should be done about them, but rather has become almost entirely preoccupied with the measurement of poverty.

This is alarming in his view because such scholarly conflict may well work to support those who wish to deny that poverty is an issue in Australia. Furthermore, research does have an impact on the benchmarking of benefits and the focus on the 'line', and who is under it, has supported a strengthening focus on eligibility and administration of benefits.

Academic literature: worsening inequality

Amongst those who study the distribution of income plus some kind of expenditure there is a relatively consistent story, and that is the position I have adopted as the basis of this research. It is argued that while the Henderson poverty calculations see a comparative increase (some 5%) in both the poor and relatively poor in the period 1972-3 to 1996,39 this is only a part of the picture. A. King (1998, p. 91) for example suggests that the proportion of the population with incomes just above the poverty line has increased more markedly than those below it, and that the aged are no longer as prominent amongst the poor. Rather it is those with families, those in which the parents are facing unemployment, and young unemployed people not living at home (A. Harding & Szukalska, 1999) that are now the face of poverty in Australia.

37 These issues can be seen echoing through oral histories of people living 'hard lives' (Brewer, 1980; Sykes, 1993; Trehewey, 1989; M. Turner, 1983).
38 This Australian consumption based poverty scholarship is critiqued on the same basis as that of Sen, namely that it obscures theorisations of how it is that inequalities are produced.
39 These are the figures most often used by welfare advocacy groups, see for example ACOSS (1998) whose web site accessible Poverty Fact Sheet headlines read "Two million living in poverty".
But poverty may well be the wrong word. Many now argue that what is most measured in Australia is *inequality*, rather than poverty. There are few people in our country who experience the kind of deep deprivation suffered by people in Africa and India, and for those Australians who do - most of whom are Aboriginal people - we should reserve the notion of poverty. What is measured in Australia is comparative, based on socially constructed meanings of a decent standard of living, looks at the difference between the most and least well off, and relies on notions of justice where relative weakness in one area, such as income, is offset by advantages in another such as housing (Burke, 1998; A. King, 1998; Travers & Richardson, 1993; Whiteford, 1998). While I accept that what is measured is inequality, the various authors fail, in my view, to make the argument that this obliterates the notions of a (relative) poverty and of class.

There is a general consensus amongst these scholars that Australia was for most of this century a *relatively* egalitarian country, where there was significant mobility between generations, and where the comparative gap between the most wealthy and the lowest incomes was not as great as in most other comparable countries. Despite the more negative aspects of the welfare assistance state (such as stigmatisation resulting from targeting) the income transfer system and public housing system provided substantial buffers against deprivation and hardship. The social wage built into the welfare assistance package, and the wage associated benefits were *relatively* effective (Burke, 1998; A. King, 1998; Travers & Richardson, 1993; Whiteford, 1998). Cass (1998) and Probert (1998b) point out that there were still numbers of people who missed out in this relative equality - it was highly male oriented, and the aged, sick and disabled, female headed households and those excluded from home ownership did not fare well - the very vulnerable groups that one would most expect to be most protected in a welfare system.

However in the 80s this picture of relative equality began to change for the worse. The strengths of the system - namely the social wage built around full employment - required a relatively weak welfare infrastructure, a strong public housing policy, and efficient social security income transfer system, and of course a stable labour market. These have now become the undoing of the state of relative equality. Since the 80s, unemployment has increased markedly. There has been a progressive increase in wage inequality. Spatial inequalities became intensified as large numbers in declining manufacturing areas were made redundant.40 Despite the relative success of the income transfer system to briefly halt the disparities in income in the early 90s, the social wage - those commonly provided goods and services - continued to decline. Market policies were mitigated somewhat by social policy in the Hawke-Keating period, but under the Howard ministry, both the commitment to minimum income and also to the social wage have deteriorated dramatically (Cox, 1995; Fincher & Nieuwenhuysen, 1998; Gregory & Hunter, 1995; Latham, 1998; P. Smyth & Cass, 1998; Travers & Richardson, 1993; Walmsley & Wernard, 1997; Webber & Crooks, 1996).

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40 See for example the edited collection by Troy (1995) for various dimensions of urban inequalities and planning issues. This question is the focus of the next chapter.
It is too early for detailed studies of the impact of the most recent policy changes on social equality to emerge. However the most recent crop of academic writing is pessimistic, seeing this federal government’s policy going in directions that privilege markets and efficiency over equality. If there was to be relative equality, if Australia was (and is) to maintain the levels of inequality to which we have been accustomed then, welfare and social policy analysts suggest, we would need:

- the restoration of employment levels
- adequate public housing and other public infrastructure and services, as well as
- a more equitable income transfer system that does substantially better for lone parents.

Travers and Richardson (1993) perhaps speak for their colleagues when they say that their research produced a generally positive picture of material well being in Australia, rather than the populist image of stark contrasts in wealth and equality. However, they say:

> We attribute much of what we have found to a long period of full employment, to sensible housing policies and to a ‘good enough’ social welfare system. All of these elements are now at risk. If the goal (of full employment) is abandoned or proved to be unrealistic, we know of no set of policies proposals that could enable our account of Australia .to hold good in the future. (p. 224)

My own conclusion from these literatures is that the impact of the changed economic situation is causing increased inequalities in Australia. Importantly, the recent changes have blurred even further what boundaries might be drawn between the poor and the working class. Large numbers of people are placed in more tenuous life circumstances, dependent on income support and diminishing wages, as the interests of capital dominate the policy making agendas of the Australian state. In a recently published locality study, Social Change, Suburban Lives (Bryson & Winter, 1999), that examined changes in an "Australian New town" from the 1960s to the 1990s, the authors list the interventions that have been made by federal and state governments in the thirty years in between research ‘visits’ - childcare, income support for the working poor, and public housing for example. And they say:

> The sum of all this state intervention was not sufficient to shield workers and their families from the fallout from other economic trends and the effects of other policies that contributed to the economic restructuring program. (p.42)

They conclude that:

> the decades covered by the study have been ones of major change and ones that have not advantaged ordinary workers and certainly not the unemployed. (p. 44)

This is a perspective I share.

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41 In a recent tour of Australia, Professor Gerhard Bosch showed slides of calculations he had made for a forthcoming OECD report that demonstrated a widening of income inequality in Australia.
LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

This then is the context of my research. I look at the abolition of the DSP at a time when inequality, according to informed social scientists, is getting worse and when changes in social policy, of which public education is an important part, are reducing the social wage.

In this chapter I have looked at the demise of the Keynesian welfare assistance state which brought relative prosperity and equality to most Australians. The welfare assistance state was built on the basis of an arbitrated minimum wage and associated benefits, a relatively efficient social security system and a range of public goods and services. The end of the long postwar boom and the decline in manufacturing and rising unemployment was met by governments and policy actors who embraced a determinist view of globalisation married with economic fundamentalist ideology which privileged markets over all else. The welfare assistance state began to be dismantled.

The Hawke-Keating government relied on wage restraint ameliorated through means tested income supplementation, a human capital capacity building approach to the labour market and a continuation of the fundamentals of the social wage to prevent the effects of fiscal deregulation and tariff reduction undermining too much the basic standards of living. Media headlines focussed on keeping inflation down, rather than levels of unemployment which were attributed to the vagaries of international capital against which the state was represented as powerless to act. They promoted a cosmopolitan and regional national identity and met some of the demands of Aboriginal people, women and those of immigrant backgrounds, in combination with an active 'managed' approach to the unemployed to secure some degree of social cohesion during a period of rapid change.

The Howard government continued and extended the policy of neoliberal marketisation and privatisation but has also begun to attack the industrial relations and wage infrastructure and the provision of public goods and services. The consequences have been a further decline in full time employment and an increase in part time and casual work. This has led to an increase in the number of people who are living on relatively low incomes.

Popular conceptions are that poverty in Australia is getting worse. The most significant factor is unemployment and casualised employment. The academic literature suggests that it is inequality rather than poverty that is at issue in Australia and that the relative merits and achievements of the welfare assistance state are now under duress. Unless a local, Australian solution can be found by building on the strengths of the system we had, to which there is no return - even if it were good enough, which it wasn't for the most vulnerable - the prognosis is not good. The borrowed policy solutions of the current government show every indication that they will significantly increase inequality and decrease social cohesion. In effect many more working class people now have relatively low incomes and they are required to increasingly pay for services which were formerly provided at no or little cost. At the same time community expectations of what constitutes a decent standard of living have risen. Those on reduced incomes thus
have to do more with less and many more people have to do more with the same income. Social division is increasing.

As Bauman (1998b, p. 41) succinctly puts it:

The sky, which is the limit of consumer dreams, rises ever higher while the publicly-managed magnificent flying machines once designed to lift those low down to heaven, first run out of petrol and then are dumped in the scrapyards of 'phased out' policies, or recycled into police cars.

In the next chapter I take a look at the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide. I literally send this analysis to ground. I present the location of my research, using a variety of data and forms of representation, while carrying on the narrative of worsening inequality brought into being by declining jobs and public services.
It is difficult to convey the sheer magnitude of the impact of economic restructuring. As I drove around the western suburbs where I lived as a kid, I found myself compelled to reach for a camera, both to distance myself from what I was seeing, but also as the only means I could think of to try to create an impression, à la Geoffrey Bateson's banks of photos, of what had happened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disused Wool Store</th>
<th>Beverley factory site</th>
<th>Vacant land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Gym For Sale</td>
<td>Disused Engineering Plant</td>
<td>Old CSR factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilburn Auction Centre</td>
<td>Demolished factory</td>
<td>Kelvinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe factory</td>
<td>Engineering plant</td>
<td>Phillips factory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The empty factories and rusting piles of machinery in the older western suburbs are testimony to the demise of the textile and white goods manufacturing sector, and the automation of the passenger automobile car industry which concentrated production in one site in the north, closing down two huge plants in the west. Empty wool stores are now marketed as potential warehouse accommodation as the global fashion market shifts further away from wool and rural micro economies struggle to adjust.
We are in a light industrial complex. All the white goods factories have become one multinational But the jobs are not there.

When you drive around the district there are huge industrial complexes Idle. Empty. The jobs are just not there.

There’s people at the shopping centre But no unskilled labour. We just haven’t got that thinking to the kids

It’s about Keeping kids at school and Skilling yourself.

On the one hand, we know it’s true, But... Lets not pretend about the unemployment figures.

All the fast food and supermarkets talk to the kids about "You’ll be a manager" Come to a certain point "Sorry, no jobs" It’s cheaper to employ a youngster.

It creates a society where People lose hope.

The jobs are just not there. (Transcript 17)
On a clear day, from the vantage point of the leafy bluestone and iron lacework suburb where I live, on the rise of the hill that leads into the city of Adelaide, I can almost see the sea. The western suburbs spread out before me, a geometric grid of public housing conveniently located next to huge industrial areas, interspersed with gentrified pockets of last century’s workers’ cottages and bungalows. In the distance are the manicured and managed foreshores, where sea breezes and ocean views lure some into graceful Federation gentlemen’s residences and others into new gelati coloured ‘California style’ terraces. Those with cash to spare sit chatting in newly developed foccacerias and seafood restaurants. If I turn, I can see the northern suburbs. Neon car yards and discount electrical, carpet and furniture stores line the main roads that lead to post war tract and public housing estates clustered around modern factories. From a distance, in the light of the clear dry-desert-blue South Australian skies, it does not appear that anything is amiss.

I was told a story about the mixing of social classes by one primary school principal in the west. Their school, which serves a public housing area, is involved in a range of shared programs with another school which serves the seaside suburbs next door. On the first occasion that Year 7 students met together there was a fight between two groups of boys, school against school. The seaside school was non-plussed, their students didn’t fight with each other. The only logical explanation therefore was that the rough boys from the DSP school, where fights were known to occur, must be at fault. On investigation, the DSP school principal ascertained that the seaside boys had been taunting their students, calling them "Salvation Army", because they didn’t have the ‘right’ (expensive) shoes and clothing. They retaliated, in what seemed to them to be the quickest and most satisfactory way to end the name calling, with fists. The two principals could not agree on a version of events, and rather than destroy an emerging cooperation, agreed to let the whole matter drop. I heard the story in several places around the district with various embellishments and interpretations.

The view depends on where you stand.
Chapter 5
Neighbourhood Watch: Geographies of Inequalities and Difference
A SPACE FOR 'PLACE' IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

In this chapter I advance a locality based analysis of neighbourhood 'disadvantaged schools'. This is a deliberate grounding of the socio-economic and political context outlined in the previous chapter. In it, I show the effects of the postwar boom and the subsequent decline in manufacturing industry; shifts in public policy from the largesse of the early 70s to the current neoliberal cost cutting; and the widening inequalities and social divisions in the city of Adelaide. I draw particular attention to the availability of work, having established in the previous chapter that it is unemployment and receipt of social security benefits that are most significant as the cause of income inequality. I make further comment on the relationship of global changes to 'the local' and amplify the general comments made about inequality and class through a discussion of social polarisation.

I begin by addressing the local.

The importance of place

Like much of this research, this focus tallies with my experience.

I've always believed that understanding the local area was the first step to being able to teach the local children and young people. When new teachers arrived at our school at the beginning of each year, they encountered a ritual. First of all they had to endure me, in my role as school principal, trying to disperse preconceived ideas about 'disadvantaged schools'.

"I suppose you all think that there are lots of Housing Trust kids with single parents here" I always began, "Well let me tell you that's not the case," and then continued on to outline some of the many communities that made up the school population.

Next, they were all crammed into a mini bus, accompanied a school parent guide, and sent off to tour the local area. They were to visit the places where the students 'hung out' and frequently referred to in conversations, and to locate the local employers and landmarks. The final experience was to meet with a group of experienced classroom teachers to discuss a series of introductory processes that might be useful, not only in establishing relationships with students, but also in finding out the some information about the students in their class and where they were 'located', socially, spatially and culturally. Very few teachers after that were able to present a simplistic and homogenised picture of the neighbourhood and, after meeting the parent guide, a dismissive deficit view of all local parents.

I am not alone in having this sense of the importance of particularity. I have often been struck by the consistency with which I and colleague school principals begin to explain our work to others with the words 'this school'. All the school principals, with whom I spoke for this research, began by grounding their remarks in the particularities of the geographic location, 'this place'. They then went on to give a thumbnail sketch of the kinds of students who attended their school, 'these kids'. It is the 'this place' that is the
focus of this chapter. In a subsequent chapter (Chapter 7) I focus on 'this school' and 'these kids' in an attempt to move beyond both the open sign of 'school community' and also the homogenised and essentialised policy notions of 'disadvantaged schools'. In this chapter I look at 'this place' in a broad sense, at the western and northern suburbs, using visual, statistical, descriptive and fictionalised material in order to paint a picture of both commonality and difference.

Connections to the literature

The importance of the local context was noted by seminal 'disadvantaged school' researchers, Connell, Ashenden et al. (Connell et al., 1982), whose concern was to develop a generalisable theory of school-community relationships organised around the axes of class. They commented:

The spatial arrangement of the city itself is an important form of social organisation, How people organise their domestic life and their leisure depends partly on where they live. And where they live, in turn, depends both on the resources they personally command, and the way the city has been constructed so as to produce class separation (p. 68).

They went on to suggest that the story of the public school as a common school, where all classes rub shoulders together, is not materially the case, since neighbourhood schools reflect the class composition of their location. Connell, Ashenden and colleagues challenged economically determinist analyses of education (such as reproduction theory), made more complex the notions of class, resistance and agency and brought gender into focus. However, their research focus on the broad distinctions between ruling and working class relations with the institution of schooling sent the differences amongst the group of working class, and the group of ruling class neighbourhoods and schools to "frame off" (de Lauretis, 1987). This was also characteristic of the sociological tradition within which the research was carried out, the 'new' sociology of education which was primarily concerned with the ways in which social class was produced and reproduced by schooling.

A more heterogeneous view of class, schools and location can be seen in recent work by Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe (1995) whose study of "skilled, semi skilled and disconnected choosers" and the "circuits of schooling" in the British educational marketplace revealed specific locality issues. They suggest that locality constraints to choice, such as the availability of transport, the pattern of roads and spaces, racialised housing estates, local information networks and structures, the impact of health, social welfare and employment and employment training, adversely affect working class, 'disconnected' choosers more than others. ¹ These locality factors also affect schools which have little or no control over such contextual matters. In addition:

The outcomes of previous governmental and LEA decisions ... such as the history of school building, of school closures and amalgamations also have a continuing impact in relation to the dynamics of local competition between schools. (p. 58)

¹ The notion of restricted choice as a key characteristic of poverty is congruent with the consumption based analyses of poverty outlined in Chapter 4.
Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe seek to display the complex array of "planned, political, historical, spatial, producer and consumer forces" (p. 87) at work in the contemporary British educational "policy complex" (Gerwitz, 1997). There is considerable resonance between this analytic framework and 'stand alone' school ethnographies that focus strongly on the impact of locational politics, such as the story of failed school reform at Heights High (Tittle, 1995) where specific sets of local people, local and racial politics, and educational people and policy combined in a toxic and conservative mix. I seek to join this body of researchers.

Not all current educational research shares this perspective. Vast bookshelves are written between educational brackets and the impact of social events, broad public policy directions and locality is "sequestered" (Giddens, 1991) out of consideration. This is acutely and ironically the case with the self management and school effectiveness literature, which relies on an imaginary of a communal village school that is managed and led like a multinational corporation (I will speak more of this in Chapter 6), and floats somewhere, anywhere and everywhere. As Rea and Weiner (1998, p. 30) put it:

The fundamental weakness of the ESM analysis is that it ignores the 'context' in which educational events happen. Rather, urban poverty, social class, race, gender and so on, become variables that need to be 'controlled for', to be put aside so that 'real' factors can be scrutinised. By using the market concept of value added to resolve questions of effectiveness, the ESM has thus both rendered issues invisible, and ensured that key factors which continue to sustain inequality of opportunity in our educational system remain sidelined and neglected.

Establishing the importance and the nature of locational and contextual factors is therefore a crucial move against such totalising theory and policy practice.

Policy sociology offers a strongly contextualised analysis. Based on notions of policy 'trajectory', it is a sociological practice that examines policy context, texts and effects (e.g. Ball, 1990; 1993; Lingard, 1996; Taylor, 1997). While this overlaps with a locational analysis in the study of effects, as in the case of the Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe (1995) study, such policy sociology often fails to capture the sense of positive local agency in the manner of the self management literature (this must surely be the source of some of its seductive power), relying instead on notions of policy refraction and resistance. Because of this, the macro policy environment of global economic and cultural change and the neoliberal policies of the competition state often assume the form of a totalising discourse (Gibson-Graham, 1996) where the macro/micro, the local/global, meet in a never ending, one sided power struggle.

This is certainly not my goal in putting forward a locality based approach to education. Rather, I am searching for a way in which the global can also be put in its place, within the reach of my colleagues in 'disadvantaged schools' and their local neighbourhoods.

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2 ESM stands for Effective Schools Movement.
THEORISING THE LOCAL/PLACE

The new geographies offer a way of linking together the macro - global social and economic changes, and the responses of nation states to those changes - with the micro - the local setting. Rather than offering Big Science explanations of global change, or empty slogans about the local and the global, the new postcolonial and feminist geographies and anthropologies suggest that world wide social trends, such as the convergence of communication and information technologies, the shift from Fordist to post Fordist production, and the concentration of wealth in the ledgers of mobile transnational companies, work their way differently through different localities (Appadurai, 1996). As Massey and Jess (1995, p. 226) have it: "The global is not just 'out there', it is part of the character of 'in here'.

This is not a simple question of 'effects'.

Theories of the local

Global cultures are translated locally and unevenly, and rather than eroding local differences, they actually work through them, and are mediated by them (Allen, 1995). There are local interpretations, variations, rewritings and rejections of globalising trends (Pile & Keith, 1997). Even American television and fast food culture, from which it seems no part of the globe is immune, is hybridised and transformed differently in different local settings (e.g. Andrews, 1997). This is more in the nature of diffraction rather than refraction (Gough, 1994). Similarly, migrations and global diasporas reinterpret and reinvent themselves differently in different locations, as they interact with the local (Jacobs, 1996) and as they hybridise and find their 'place' in new locations. The binary construction of global/local is an inadequate representation of what is a mutual construction, for the global relies on the local to bring it into being and the local now often relies on the global (Dirlig, 1996).

A 'place' is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location, and is best thought of as a process (Massey, 1994). Actual physical places, such as local schools and neighbourhoods, are the sites of social interaction. Each place is unique to that specific location because of the particular conglomerations of people, histories and subjectivities that come together. It is through the agency and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) of people engaged in everyday/everynight (D. Smith, 1990) social activities, mediated by institutions and

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3 The argument that I make runs differently to that proposed by Giddens (1991, 1994) and D. Harvey (1996) who suggest that in high modernity, conditions of globalisation lead to a compression of time/space which in turn separates place from time/space. The local place, according to Giddens, becomes a nostalgic relic even though local customs and habits remain. Detraditionalisation and reflexive individuation produce life politics, which can be, but are not necessarily, mediated through social institutions. Giddens' argument has been extensively critiqued by feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial geographers as being over exaggerated, denying the material reality of most people's lives which do revolve around home and local place (e.g. Fincher & Jacobs, 1998; Massey, 1993; Merrifield & Swyngedouw, 1997; Pratt & Hanson, 1994) and excessively individuating agency (e.g. Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Wyn & White, 1997).
networks in particular places, that the global becomes localised. Local 'place' involves
the development of particular local circuits of meaning, and the production and
maintenance of metaphorical and sometimes literal boundaries (Pratt & Hanson, 1994).
Place is not only permeable but also fragile, and neighbourhoods and local institutions
can be easily threatened by social and physical changes. Even in the most stable social
situations, local place requires constant maintenance through a range of local
technologies and teleologies for the production and reproduction of neighbourhoods,
social relations and subjectivities (Appadurai, 1996).  

The local is the site/sight of many gazes - specialised niche marketing relies on local
specificities for niche consumption (see du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997;
Lash & Urry, 1994; D. Miller, 1997); public intellectuals advocate locally based
communitarianism, the basis for new/old village organisation, as the bulwark against
dehumanised capitalism (e.g. Etzioni, 1993),  
and neoliberal policy makers see the local
as the interface between the customer and the provider (e.g. Caldwell & Hayward, 1997;
P. T. Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). Each of these views relies
on an understanding that the local is not passive, is not merely something acted upon,
but it is a site for action and agency. Appadurai (1996, p. 186) explains this by suggesting
that the local is 'context generative' as well as being context driven, and:

thus, neighbourhoods seem paradoxical because they both constitute and require
contexts.

The way that Appadurai theorises context is not as an empty space but a discursive site
for the contested processes and practices of people and social institutions. This is not the
way in which context is generally used in educational literature where it is more often
seen as 'background' (Comber, 1997), something that is 'out there' in student lives that
has to be compensated for or screened out, rather than something which is 'in here' in
practices of the institution and in bodies. Seddon (1993; 1995) makes the same point
when she talks of the difference between the "politics of context" and "context and
education" as an abstract categorisation (1995, Chapter 10). This shift in understanding
context not as abstract but as agentic, and as both driving and being driven at the local
level, is highly significant.

The local re/generates.  
Local neighbourhoods and local institutions, such as schools,
are not only shaped by global, national and state events and forces but they are also
significant in the creation and maintenance of the sense of locality re/generating by
neighbourhoods, local social relations and local subjectivities. This argument resonates
with the story that is told in support of the policy complex of decentralisation. It is often
argued that local management will generate context by strengthening local networks,

"Place' and its networks and social relations also now occur beyond the local, made possible by
new information technologies.

The Communitarian movement is criticised for its modernist and positivist turns which make it
attractive to nostalgic neoliberalists and 'third way' advocates (Beck, 1997; Castells, 1997; Frazer &
Lacey, 1993).

'Generation' emerges from the Enlightenment doctrine of irrevocable progress and so I prefer to
use the notion of re/generation to link the idea of continuity and change with an ecological
perspective.

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helping to create communities and to bring schools closer to their local parent body - this body of literature however denies 'context derived' factors. The imaginary of the local, and its capacity to be 'context generative' as well as the ways in which its capacity to act are limited by 'context derived' factors, are central concerns of this research.

Caveats

It is important to make three caveats about this theorisation. Firstly, not all in the global is bad and all in the local is good. This is particularly the case when it comes to matters of justice and equity. As Cvetcovich and Kellner (1997, p. 13) put it:

It would be a mistake to theorise the global as merely homogenising, universalising, and abstract in some perjorative and leveling sense in opposition to a more heterogeneous, particularising and concrete local sphere. Such a discourse labels the global in advance as a purely negative and oppressive force while assuming that the local is more positive and commendable. Globalising forces such as human rights can be progressive in some local contexts, and indeed the local has often been the site of the most oppressive, patriarchal, and backward forms of domination.

Nor is the global/local a simple binary of the powerful and the victimised. It can better be understood as Foucauldian micro circuits of power/knowledge (e.g. Foucault, 1982) in which, despite conditions of hegemony, domination does not equate to power flowing only in one direction, down from the top. Action is also possible from the bottom, the effects of which can flow all the way to the top. Stuart Hall (1997) suggests that in postmodern conditions, it is paradoxical that marginality has become a space of power, admittedly weak power, but a decentralised, subaltern power nonetheless, that threatens dominant regimes.

The conditions of postmodernity/late capitalism/high modernity in western societies are responsible for causing the destruction of local communities as sources of 'truth' and 'authority', but this does not destroy local life and local practices (Giddens, 1991). A. King (1997, p. 14) argues that under conditions of globalisation, the notions of de-localisation and re-localisation are helpful ways of conceptualising what happens 'at the bottom'. The local can thus be seen as a site of constructive resistance (e.g. Pile, 1997), a "site of promise for a critical localism" (Dirlik, 1996), the place for a new reflexive politics (Beck, 1997, 98), the site for "petits sociologies" (Foucault, 1982).

The third caveat goes to the question of the space in which the local generates context, relocalises, resists. Such local politics do not sit within an empty social space (Massey, 1992; N. Smith & Katz, 1993) nor one that is fixed, homogenous and universal (Soja, 1996; Soja & Hooper, 1993). A conceptualisation of the social as a heterogeneous space in which meanings are temporarily fixed, specifically located and partially unified, situates the local as a constantly changing source of counter meanings and practices (Blunt & Rose, 1994; K. Gibson, 1996; Pile, 1997) and makes a local politics possible.
LOW INCOME EARNERS
distributed across the city
(ABS 1997a)
TALES OF TWO CITIES

I move now to the specific 'local' with which this research is concerned. The remainder of this chapter uses a range of data to consider the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide.

Social polarisation in Adelaide

At first sight, Adelaide appears to be a very divided city. The eastern suburbs, the hills face, the inner city and a fringe along the coast are home to South Australians with higher than average incomes, home ownership and qualifications. They contain the vast proportion of adults engaged in managerial and professional employment. The western and northern suburbs, by stark contrast, are home to Adelaide's unskilled, semi skilled and skilled workforce, who have fewer qualifications and who earn considerably lower incomes (ABS, 1997a). The 1996 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 1997b) set the mean average personal weekly income of South Australians at $267. A comparison of the north and west with the eastern suburbs reveals the degree of difference in average weekly spending power of individual people over the age of 15 years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North and West SLAs</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>East and inner city SLAs</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enfield B ( The Parks area)</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>Adelaide (takes in extremes of North Adelaide and near Western suburbs)</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>Tea Tree Gully</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield A</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>Unley</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thebarton</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>East Torrens</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide (takes in beach front areas)</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>Walkerville</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh and Woodville (takes in gentrified and beach areas)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>Happy Valley</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munno Para (takes in hills face and Adelaide Plains wineries and market gardens)</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>Stirling</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salisbury (takes in hills face)</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>Adelaide (takes in extremes of North Adelaide and near Western suburbs)</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ABS, 1997b, p. 21)

It is worth noting that another ASB publication (ABS, 1998b) cites figures for local Council areas - a smaller measure - and reports that the Adelaide (city) Council area had a weekly income of $522, then the Walkerville Council area followed with $492, and Saint Peters with $417. This places the figure of $177 in Enfield B in starker relief.

Other measures, such as household income and annual income, show the same distribution pattern, which is broadly one of geographically distributed inequality. It is important to note that this data just shows income, because there is no systematic census
of wealth (savings and assets) in Australia. Such income data is limited in its usefulness because it relies on householders to divulge their circumstances and many of them do not do so accurately, and it is based on an annual gross income rather than an after tax figure in which there is some mediation of the levels of inequity (Whiteford, 1995).

The data in the Social Atlas, which is widely available, does not discriminate between sources of low income, and does not disaggregate the working poor. The data on low income certainly includes all those in receipt of income transfer, wage substitute payments. The two largest low income groups are sole parents and the unemployed. Contrary to popular belief, not all sole parents are dependent on welfare; just over half (54.9%) of all lone parents in South Australia are engaged in the labour market (p. 23). But the vast majority (87.4%) of lone parents are female. Areas with concentrations of sole parents include the outer northern suburbs of Smithfield Plains, Salisbury North, Davoren Park, Elizabeth Grove and Gawler West, in inner northern suburbs of Kilburn and Dudley Park and the northwestern suburbs of Angle Park and Port Adelaide. These are areas where there are also high concentrations of public housing and unemployment.

Jobs and the lack of them

South Australia has had, for some time, the second highest unemployment rates in the country, worse than all other states and territories but Tasmania. A recent media report (Mitchell, 1998) on unemployment in Australia’s capital cities described both Melbourne and Adelaide as having employment 'black holes'. Melbourne’s northwest topped the list of unemployment hot spots with 12.1%, followed by western Adelaide with 12%, northern Adelaide with 11.4% and outer Melbourne with 11.2%. In May 1998, the release of ABS labour market data produced joyful headlines (Kelton, 1998a) trumpeting that jobless were at a 14 month low. At this happy point in time, the average Australian unemployment rate was 7.9%. By state, Western Australia had 6.9%, New South Wales 7.2%, Victoria 8.4%, Queensland 8.5%, South Australia 9.4% and Tasmania 10.5%. And while there had been a slight drop in unemployment overall, South Australia’s youth unemployment had actually increased to reach 38%, a full 12% above the national average.8

Two of the state’s Statistical Local Areas (SLA) - the unit used by for census data collection - were near the top of the nation’s unemployment league table:

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7 Travers and Richardson (1993) point out that no data has been collected on wealth since 1915 (p. 64) and that sample based studies indicate that 1% of the adult population owns about 20% of the wealth in Australia, the richest 10% own about half the wealth and the poorest 30% have no net wealth (p. 71). We could conjecture from this that there is relatively little wealth to be found in the north and the west of Adelaide beyond the seafront.

8 The figure fluctuates seasonally, and is also dependent on the way in which the data is collected. What is significant to my argument is that South Australia’s relative positioning in the national league table remains stable, and the disproportionate number of young people who are unemployed continues to remain higher than the overall average (e.g. Youth hit, 1999).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>SLA</th>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acton</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mount Morgan</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kolan</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wacol</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Miriam Vale</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Enfield B</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Spoehr, 1998, p.2)

The distribution of unemployment in the city follows along the regional lines of the broad brush picture created by income and qualifications. In December 1997, Adelaide University’s Centre for Labour Studies (Spoehr, 1997) drew up its list of the state’s 20 worst unemployment hot spots. There were eight city and twelve country local government areas named. Not surprisingly, the city components of the list were dominated by the northern and western suburbs which, during a twelve month period when average unemployment was 9.1%, showed much higher rates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Local Government Area (SLA)</th>
<th>1996% unemployment</th>
<th>1997% unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enfield B (The Parks)</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hindmarsh</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thebarton</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Munno Para</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Enfield A</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Spoehr, 1997, p.1)

Nine months later, the ranking had not altered substantially, but the increase in percentage rates and the trend of rapid increase can be clearly seen. According to Spoehr, (1998, p. 3) the state’s top ten ‘hot spots’ in September 1998 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>SLA</th>
<th>11% average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enfield B</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Port Elliott and Goolwa</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coober Pedy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wallaroo</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Munno Para</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thebarton</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Enfield A</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mannum</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This general picture has held up over time. In the Index of Regional Unemployment Vulnerability from 1990-97 (Spoehr, 1997, p. 2) which uses DEETYA Small Labour Market data, the northern and western suburbs again dominated the city listings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Rank 1990-97</th>
<th>LOCAL GOVT AREA (SLA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enfield B (The Parks):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elizabeth:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thebarton:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hindmarsh:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Munno Para:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wallaroo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Riverland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Enfield A:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mannum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cooper Pedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Port Adelaide:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Berri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Port Pirie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Peterborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Port Elliot &amp; Goolwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Renmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Barmera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Glenelg *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Murray Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dudley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Adelaide:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Noarlunga*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Woodville:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Salisbury:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Willunga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Northern and western suburbs = [ ]
* other city areas in the south.

Enfield B, generally known as The Parks, has in this time, consistently been more than double the state average unemployment, while the others have consistently scored between 50-70% higher than average the state unemployment rate.

When youth unemployment is factored in, the picture becomes even more stark. The December 1996 census (ABS, 1997a) suggested that 18.6% of 15-24 year olds are unemployed (double the state average), and they made up 35% of all unemployed. In some suburbs however more than 40% of 15-24 year olds were unemployed - the South Australian Social Atlas (p. 29) records those as the post-codes of Smithfield Plains, Elizabeth South, Davoren Park, Angle Park and Wingfield - these are substantive parts of Elizabeth and Enfield B.
THE LIMITS OF DEMOGRAPHY

There are several things to be noted about the sources and uses of such population data. The Social Atlas is probably the most widely used Census data, and copies of it can be found in most school libraries and government offices. As such, it may be considered to be the kind of bottom line data that helps people who are interested find out about their 'place'. Massey (1995, p. 20) says:

Maps are means of representation, and every individual map embodies a particular way of understanding, a particular interpretation of the place it is depicting...Their design - for instance what they include and what they omit - reflects different experiences, priorities and interpretations.

As such, maps constitute a popular text that can be discursively deconstructed. It is worth considering what it is then that these Social Atlas maps make it possible to know, and what is blurred, cast in shadow and omitted altogether.

Mapping and graphing

These particular statistical pictures do obscure some important things. In each of the maps of employment, income and qualifications, a single focus or snapshot is created. Other snapshots are necessary to illuminate the picture more fully. For example, the shift from full time to part time work and the casualisation of the workforce over time is obscured. Spoehr (1997, p. 2) suggests that the number of full time jobs in South Australia declined by 1.5% from 1995-97, while part time employment increased by nearly 12.5% over the same period. But that data has not been mapped, so how this overlaps the more general pictures of employment or how many of those represented as employed are in actuality only working part time is not represented in the Social Atlas.

But even if this data were included, it would still only tell us some of the story. Michael Pusey (1998) suggests that, according to his research into middle Australia, more than 50% of respondents reported changing jobs during the last five years, and 34% reported having been unemployed at some time within the preceding five years. And this research has not touched the most economically vulnerable sectors! So a more temporally sensitive picture suggests a far greater penetration of the experiences of unemployment into the population than a single snapshot can provide. It also casts doubts on the possibility of making clear demarcations between the poor and those who might be called working class, and between the working class, and middle class. Maps and graphs construct a representation of fixedness and stability whereas that picture is more likely to be one that is blurred and shifting, where borders are highly permeable and regularly crossed. In material terms, people's sense of economic security is likely to be far less widely distributed than the maps suggest.

Furthermore, the gender implications of employment are fraught. The Social Atlas (ABS, 1997a, p. 32) indicates concentrations of women in the workforce, but does not show whether that involvement is full time, part time or casual. The ABS comments that there are high concentrations of women working in both the northern and southern city
mortgage belts and in the eastern suburban professional/managerial areas. This leaves many questions unanswered.

One that come to mind immediately is whether there are more part time and casualised female jobs in the mortgage belt than in the eastern suburbs. In August 1997 (DEETYA, 1998a) national employment data showed that there were more females than males holding multiple jobs, a reversal of the 1991 picture, and that employment participation for married women had increased as employment for married men had declined. How many families now rely on a working woman's wage rather than a male breadwinner's? Are these families regionally concentrated? Gregory and Hunter (1995) suggest that while female employment has risen overall, women in the lowest two socio-economic deciles have declined. And in South Australia, a recent report (Forster, 1998) by the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University claimed that not only was South Australia the only state to record a fall in jobs since July 1997, but it was also the only state where more females dropped out of the labour force than entered it, giving it the lowest female participation rate in Australia. How this drop has played out spatially is information that is not readily available.

If we take on board ethnicity, the picture becomes even more complex. Jock Collins (1998) argues that the unemployment of Vietnamese born Australians has been three times higher than the national average for more than a decade. He suggests that NESB immigrants have born the greatest burden of the three recent recessions (70s, 80s and 90s) and that official employment figures do not get anywhere near reality because they do not count large numbers of discouraged NESB job seekers. Given the high percentage of Australia's population that are born overseas (22.7% in 1995 according to Collins) and given the concentration of particular immigrant groups within the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide, this is an important missing picture.

A recent report by National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) combines for the first time data from the ABS and the Australian National Training Authority (Spencer, 1998). It suggests that not only has full time work for 15-19 year olds fallen by more than 10% in the last decade but also that full time teenage jobs have fallen by 47%. Some of the shortfall in youth employment could be made up, the report argues, by asking those working more than 49 hours to give up some of that overtime. According to the media reading of NCVER data, South Australia was the nation's 'worst performing state' in offering traineeships and apprenticeships, and it received only 6% of national training funds, despite having more than 10% of the nation's 15-19 year old unemployed. South Australian employers took on only 7% of the national tally of new apprenticeships and over a quarter of those were due to the efforts of the state government (Foster, 1998b). How this has played out regionally, taking gender and ethnicity into account, can however only be surmised from the kinds of trends displayed in the broad ABS data.

A detailed statistical breakdown of the northern and western suburbs, of the kind that would illuminate further what is actually happening to families, is not available. It would require the use of multiple data sources and sophisticated mapping technologies. Above all, it would require the will to produce such a picture. It is perhaps surprising
that government planning processes do not routinely require data to be spatially and multiply mapped with anything like the complexities that seem necessary to capture change, relationships of gender, class and ethnicity. Regional economic development planning exercises routinely have to employ consultants to do such work.\(^9\)

Why is the lack of sophistication in demographic data collection important? In my time as the head of the Education Department's planning section, no common central data was made available to government departments beyond ABS data so I, like my colleagues in other line agencies, was left with what I could dig up myself. The fact that data that reflects the complexities of the socio-spatial distribution of inequalities is not readily available speaks to the ways in which policies often fail to deal with complex issues, since they have no way of 'seeing' the ecology of the policy 'problem' in the first place. This is a matter that becomes more acute the more 'local' the picture needed.\(^10\) I draw out the implications of this demographic myopia in subsequent chapters.

However, a blindness to complexity is not the only way to think about the inadequacies of data.

**Mapping and knowing spaces of difference as discursive practices**

The development and use of population categories and statistics has been one of the functions of sociology put to use by nation states. The practices of statistics are built upon positivist and empiricist science, where numbers claim to be truths and legitimate forms of knowing beyond contest and politics. Population policies function discursively, defining what constitutes a 'problem', what can be seen and what is to be ignored. As such, statistics are a power-knowledge technology, one of the disciplinary strategies of government(ality). According to Hacking (1991, p.194):

> The bureaucracy of statistics imposes not just by creating administrative rulings, but by determining classifications within which people must think of themselves and of the actions that are open to them.

In matters of welfare policy, statistical categories define who is to be subject to intervention and to receive assistance, and in what terms they may be known. This is far from 'objective', far from 'a-political'. For example, the categorisation of Aboriginality, what it means and how someone comes to be included or excluded, and for the extreme right wing whether it is even a legitimate category at all, has been and still is hotly contested. The implications of this category struggle are material, cultural and spiritual. Lives will be, and are daily, profoundly affected by policy agreements made about definitions.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) See the Western regional development plan (South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 1996) which despite its alleged comprehensiveness omits questions of gender/employment almost entirely.

\(^10\) See for example Badcock (1997a) on the need to be sensitive to population differences in the Parks.

\(^11\) However not everything can be reduced to questions of categorisations. As Anderson (1998, p. 215) points out, 'Poverty has not been manufactured by the terms through which Aboriginal people have been defined. Such poverty is not ... the cultural invention of the white census.'
Castel (1991, p. 295) notes that:

The profiling flows of population ... suggests a rather different image of the social: that of a homogenised space composed of different circuits laid out in advance, which individuals are invited or encouraged to tackle, depending on their abilities. (In this way, marginality itself, instead of remaining an unexplored or rebellious territory, can become an organised zone within the social, towards which those persons will be directed who are incapable of following more competitive pathways).

Such population categories provide one basis for sorting and surveillance. They provide the basis and the material for deciding 'norms' against which sub-populations can be measured and defined (the process of normalisation). The development of norms is a political exercise, rather than a simple process of mathematical averaging or drawing an arbitrary line. It is because normalisation is constructed and legitimated by the teleology of quantification, that it presents itself as reality, rather than as a manufactured simulation (Hacking, 1991). At the same time, such data also provides the basis for individualisation:

A mass of individuals is dispersed, individualised, and organised. The goal, however, is not to maintain a static distribution. Instead, a standard of performance is set. Individuals are evaluated and arranged according to that standard but also subjected to exercises that will move them closer to the norm. (Ransom, 1997, p. 16)

Population data then is significant because it provides the basis for particular kinds of policy responses\footnote{That is, the population discourse positions policy actors in particular ways and makes available particular ways of framing policy texts. Their actions are not determined by this, but are further shaped by their habitus, particular location, specific circumstance and other discursive resources and traces available to them. It is at this node that they exercise agency.} and understanding the world. It is commonly available - to journalists, officers in local government, welfare and youth workers and school administrators - and provides a important discursive resource through which meanings are made and on which actions can be based.

Implications for the place of this research

Maps of Adelaide, as of any city, are typically 'seen from above'. They are represented as an entity which can be known and mapped, made available to modernist 'masterful' rational and objective planning (L. Johnson, 1997). Australian suburbs have long had a reputation as being ugly, and home to 'others' (L. Johnson, 1994) and planners of various persuasions have sought to make them 'better' places with dreams of garden cities, villages and tamed populations.\footnote{There is a growing body of critical and postcritical urban planning literature. I have drawn on some (e.g. Grace, Hage, Johnson, Langsworth, & Symonds, 1997; Peel, 1995a; Troy, 1995).} This is the view that underpins much of the policy activity that has worked on and in the western and northern suburbs of Adelaide for many years and it will reverberate throughout this study, as I take the same 'place' and attempt to get inside the frame.

Rather it is the result of two centuries of crushing marginalisation within the relations of colonial capitalism.
The broad categorisation of the northern and western suburbs, while naming some important material circumstances which ought not to be ignored (Badcock, 1997b), also helps to construct a broader normalising discursive formation of 'othering'. Such delineation opens up the spaces for particular locations to be portrayed in the media as feral, lawless, lazy, dirty, not nice, lacking in taste, poorly educated, in-educable... It opens up spaces for researchers to fill in by looking at the health, habits, proclivities, lifestyles and choices of 'others' (the space of 'researching down')... It opens up spaces for teachers to avoid.

In a study of western Sydney, Powell (1993) commented that 'place' functioned as a social category, that certain discourses were brought into play through the process of geographic naming. The use of the word 'westie' summons up particular kinds of 'other' images and stories. She says:

The western suburbs have been studied by academics, observed by welfare agencies and scrutinised by government departments. A large and detailed body of knowledge has been accumulated about many aspects of the lives of people who live there. Like the people in colonised countries, the information may serve many useful purposes, but it remains in the hands of institutions and 'the authorities'; little of it seems to empower the people to whom it belongs. (p. 16)

With these comments in mind, because I too research in/on this space, although I attempt to do so 'with/against' (Lather, 1991b), "working the hyphens" (Fine, 1998), I proceed to another set of descriptions of the west and north of Adelaide.

CONSTRUCTING SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITIES IN ADELAIDE

The map of Adelaide as divided city is intimately connected with state, national and international history. The post war boom period in South Australia, managed by the conservative Playford government, saw the state's previously largely agricultural base diversify. International motor vehicle, ship building and white-goods manufacturers were attracted by the presence of cheap labour - much of it from immigration - and government inducements - low cost land, and cheap fuel, power and water (now privatised or subject to proposals for privatisation). In what was seen for many years as a model of economic success, the state government managed spectacular expansion through the "seemingly irresistible nexus of manufacturing growth, suburbanisation and population growth through immigration" (Forster, 1986, p.6).

Constructing spatial inequality

In a blue print of nation building economic and social interventionism, the post war Playford government built low cost and public housing adjacent to industrial areas. Public housing was an integral part of overall economic strategy, and unlike other states in Australia, was not just intended for the poor (Peel, 1995a). Rather, public housing ensured a nearby, ready supply of working class labour for the emerging heavy manufacturing base of the state. This was a strategy continued by subsequent governments who combined public housing programs with low interest first home owner loans through the state owned bank (now privatised). Former Premier Don
Dunstan (1998, p. 293) claimed that this was the proportionately largest effort of any
state government and that in his time:
the Housing Trust was building 23% of total housing in this state, and a further 13% was
provided through funding by the State Bank.

Such a policy not only helped the state economy and advantaged young families and
newly arrived immigrants but also had the effect of concentrating low income and
public housing in specific parts of the city. The majority of housing in the Port Adelaide-
Enfield Council area is still publicly owned\textsuperscript{14} and the west and north still have
significantly lower home ownership than other parts of the city, even though housing is
moderately priced.

When global economic change and national microeconomic reform led to the decline of
the manufacturing sector, this guaranteed that the public housing and low cost suburbs
where those employees lived would be most affected. The jobs that were (and are)
growing in these 'blue collar' areas, such as assembly, packaging, 'back offices', and fast
food, tended to go to young people and women and were generally less secure and
lower paid, whereas the better paid 'knowledge work' tended to be available to the
better qualified populations in the more wealthy suburbs (Badcock, 1995). Spatial
inequity was built into the design of the city. The combination of micro economic
restructuring and the growth of transnational companies able to move production sites
offshore (see previous chapter) is writ in the urban landscape of all Australian capital,
and many regional, cities and has led to very obvious and deep spatial divides (Stilwell,
1994). Adelaide, with its particular dependence on tariff protected heavy manufacturing,
has been very adversely affected. In addition, the failure to quickly find an alternative
state economic strategy, such as large scale tourism or exploitation of natural resources,
as both the manufacturing sector and declined and immigration tapered (Beer, 1998), left
the state vulnerable to the recessions of the 80s and 90s and hampered its capacity to
recover. This was an unimaginable future at the time when the post war boom seemed
never ending.

The planners who built Elizabeth in the 1950s, a satellite town of public and low cost
housing largely settled by ten pound migrants from Great Britain, could have had no
idea that world wide trends in economics (from protectionism to deregulation), the
introduction of new labour saving technologies, and the opening up of lower cost
centres of production in Asia and South America, would later 'make poor'(Peel, 1995a)
so many who depended on wages drawn from passenger auto industry, the major local
employer in the northern suburbs.

Locational disadvantage has been the subject of some home grown scholarly
investigation. One mid 80s case study of economic restructuring and spatial inequality
in Adelaide, that of Forster (1986), gives testimony to the sheer magnitude of change.
Forster suggests that, between 1974-75 and 1981-82, over 16,000 manufacturing jobs were
lost, with 4,500 in the western suburbs caused by curtailment of operations by Philips

\textsuperscript{14} A local government officer suggested to me that the figure used for rates calculations was 60%
Housing Trust owned of total stock of dwellings.
and GMH, and 2,000 manufacturing jobs from Elizabeth as a more modern car plant was built (Forster, 1986, p. 7). This job loss was compounded by the effects of population decline, due to aging, low birth rate and significant slowing of immigration. As families in the north and west reached the post children stage, the population growth shifted from the established areas to new, fringe suburbs in the north and south leaving the inner western and northern public housing areas to be re-populated with single parent families, and new refugees from South East Asia. At the same time, the remaining aging and newly made redundant required new services and facilities. Forster (1986, p. 9) argues that in the mid 80s:

Adelaide has become a more unequal city. This increase in spatial inequity does not merely mirror trends in Australian society as a whole, but also represents a worsening of the plight of people in poverty because they are concentrated together in areas short of services and facilities and with a poor rate base to support the activities of local government.

A further case study in the early 90s undertaken by Baum and Hassan (1993) traced the shift in the state and city's economic base. Their work suggests that there has been an increase in the number of service sector jobs and a decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs and, while unemployment overall has increased, it is most significant in lower income areas (p. 160). John Spoehr, from the Center for Labour Studies at Adelaide University, argues:

There's been a massive shakeout in manufacturing employment in the last ten years through increased productivity and deliberate attempts to improve profitability in industry. We've seen massive reductions in employment in those regions where car manufacturers and their suppliers do provide a significant percentage of local employment. There's not a lot of local leakage into other parts of the state, and maybe 60 to 70% of people employed in the passenger motor vehicle industry in the north come from the north. So it's no surprise that when you've got the loss of thousands of jobs in the passenger motor vehicle industry that you're going to have a cycle of unemployment, long term unemployment and underemployment in that region. And that's particularly an issue with male employment, because it's traditionally been a male dominated industry. This has led to the creation of large numbers of long term unemployed older males.

Enfield B, which consistently has the highest unemployment in the state, is in that void between the north and the south. It tended to have a fair bit more of the textile, clothing and footwear manufacturers concentrated in that area, which was even harder hit than the manufacturing industry in the north and south. And the low cost of housing in those areas adds further to the concentration of low income... The longer term trends in the north, west and south are testimony to the notion of locational disadvantage, that is the class concentration spatially of disadvantage, not just in income measure, but also in health. (Transcript of conversation)\(^\text{15}\)

Epidemiological research suggests that the population in the west and north is more prone to lifestyle related illnesses such as heart disease, lung cancer and industrial accidents (Glover, Shand, Forster, & Woollacott, 1996). Because of the correlation

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\(^{15}\) Spoehr, whose views on this subject are well publicised locally, gave permission for his transcript to be attributed to him personally.
between unemployment and these indicators of general well being such as health and educational levels, Baum and Hassan (1993, p. 165) argue that:

The spatial distribution of the most vulnerable groups to economic restructuring means that their economic position is further adversely affected by their locational position. These factors may affect their access to employment opportunities, which are mostly located in the inner urban areas and to public services such as child care, education and public transport... the benefits of the (income) redistributive policies of the Labor government are being eroded by the spatial distribution of vulnerable group.

They warn that this may lead to the formation of an underclass, particularly in the north, west and southern areas of the city, producing a deeply divided, bi-furcated city. (I deal with this in the next section.)

The South Australian state government also had a particular financial fiasco, with the spectacular collapse of the State Bank16 resulting in its sale and the rejection of the long term Labor government. The concomitant state debt issue now overshadows all state government projects and the swing to neoliberalist approaches means that 'balancing the budget' is done through very significant projects of outsourcing, sale of public assets and shedding of services and jobs in the public sector. These recent changes in the public policy agendas of the state and the Commonwealth have caused substantial closures of beds in public hospitals and the closure of some private hospitals; rerouting, privatisation and reduction in services of public transport; delineation of several public housing areas as sites for redevelopment by private speculators, reduction in maintenance programs, rent increases and the designation of some houses as 'empty' awaiting the approval to demolish; increased costs of childcare and closure of some services; reduction in the number of unemployment and training services; reduction in the provision of free legal advice and legal aid services; and increases in gap payments of medical and pharmaceutical benefits; and increased payment required for TAFE, higher education and schools.17 Over a ten year period, the western suburbs in particular have had many school closures, in part due to the declining population.

But the private sector has suffered too. There have also been bank closures, the demise of much of the strip shopping and the corner delicatessens, and whole-scale closure of small independent petrol stations. The small business that profits in its place is often mobile and based around personal services. The north got its first cinema complex in late 1998 although this still places it way behind the remainder of the city just in terms of

16 Walmsley and Weinard (1997, p. 73) estimate that this collapse cost $3,000 million. They argue that the policies of the Commonwealth government were heavily implicated in this - the federal government's decision to relax monetary policy in order to sustain economic activity after the 1987 share market collapse encouraged lending for property investment. The subsequent government induced recession through the raising of interest rates in 1989 meant that property debts were unable to be realised and many financial institutions found themselves with significant difficulties. In Victoria for example the entire Pyramid group and the Tricontinental merchant bank folded.

17 At the same time there has also been a worsening rural situation with the inevitable weather crises exacerbating rapidly escalating input costs, reduced value of the Australian dollar and a decline in some commodity markets.
access. Until mid 1999, the west travelled to North Adelaide and the city to see the range of current popular films.

The possibility of continued economic decline looms large in the eyes of policymakers. Adelaide is struggling to locate itself as a regional city, rather than a world city (Sassen, 1994). With eyes on markets in the Asia-Pacific region, successive South Australian governments have given incentives - such as tax exemptions, infrastructure, and utilities concessions - to high tech-telecommunications and defence industries to stay or to relocate, and sponsored the formation of a 'salad bowl' on the northern Adelaide Plains, in the hope of an olive oil and wine led economic recovery (Austin, 1998; Kelton, 1998b). However manufacturing remains in the region, some of it as the toxic legacy of poisoned ground, some as an ongoing environmental management concern, some struggling to stay in business and some doing quite well - for the moment.

Local government in the west struggles to re-define the empty harbour area as a centre of cultural production, renovating old buildings for conversion into restaurants and antique shops, establishing the ubiquitous waterfront market and apartment blocks, as have numerous other cities around the world facing the same economic desperation. As (Zukin, 1997, p. 229) suggests:

(such) cultural strategies suggest the utter absence of new industrial strategies for growth i.e. the lack of local strategies that have any chance of success in attracting traditional productive activity.

Another problem for policy makers is the declining population. The South Australian population continues to age and the state now has the lowest birth rate in the country (ABS, 1997). Planners proselytise in attempts to convince us that we might be an antipodean Geneva - middle aged, cosmopolitan, cultured and urbane, our favorite pastime strolling around leafy boulevards and sipping chardonnay. 18

This 'vision' rarely encompasses people of the western and northern suburbs. 19 Gourmet eatery guides for example blithely omit the twenty or more Vietnamese restaurants scattered around the mid west, 20 and the communities that support them feature more often as the site of media stories about gangs armed with machetes and nunchukkas or as home to heroin couriers.

18 This was the substance of several public talks given to government agency planners, of whom I was one, by various member of the state Economic Development think-tank.

19 The Adelaide 21 Vision names the hills the wine area and the road from the airport as significant sites outside of the city. The northern and western suburbs are invisible (Bonham & Ferretti, in press).

20 The Asian restaurants in other parts of the city, including in the central market area, are included in such guides. The omission of the Parks area is congruent with Hage's (1997) notion that cosmopolitanism, associated with liberal-democratic multicultural policy, relies on having 'visible' migrants only in the position of servers of food, not as residents, homemakers, families and communities.
The underclass and urban 'others'

The west and the north are ‘other’ to the dreams of the regimes of planning economic development agencies, and they are ‘other’ to many who live in the affluent zones which are far less troubles by macro and micro economic reforms. While Adelaide is not a gated city, it is now acknowledged by many to be very deeply socio-economically divided (e.g. Towers, 1997). Gregory and Hunter (1995) have argued that this concentration of poverty has caused the creation of what they call urban ghettos: they suggest that these are a continuation of a long term urban trend but one that has been hugely accentuated and hastened by economic change.

The underclass thesis depends on defining pockets of extreme hardship, and these are certainly to be found in the statistical representations of the west and north of Adelaide. There is little doubt that the areas of the Parks, Smithfield Plains, Elizabeth and Le Fevre Peninsular are both struggling and suffering in the current economic circumstances. However, there is also some evidence to suggest the boundaries between such sub regional localities and their surrounds are not so easily drawn. De-industrialisation blurs further the already murky boundary between those on welfare and those who work, those who might be described as working class. Substantial numbers of people now seem to spend time on the edges of welfare and working, sometimes employed, sometimes not, while many who are in work face very uncertain futures in industries vulnerable to currency fluctuations, offshore decisions, and tariff reductions.

Connell and colleagues (Connell et al., 1991) have pointed out that it is really the advantaged who are the most distinctive group in society, sharply delineated on maps and in the material world. Policies to reduce poverty are built on the notion of the poor

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21 Stigmatisation of low income and public housing neighbourhoods is common across Australia (Bryson & Winter, 1999; Powell, 1993).
22 Hunter and Gregory (1996) argue that the lack of regional income data makes it difficult to explore these issue in detail, but it is evident, they say, that spatial inequality is an increasingly important phenomenon and that low and high status areas are becoming increasingly homogenous. Whiteford (1995) agrees that spatial inequality is an increasingly important feature of inequalities in Australian cities but cautions against the conclusion that concentration equates to a ghettoisation and that increased concentration equates to an overall increase in inequality. Burbidge and Winter (1996) argue that there have been opposing trends in Melbourne and Sydney in terms of concentrations of people in public and private housing: in Melbourne the poor are increasingly concentrated in private housing, whereas in Sydney it is in public housing. This points to the importance of state housing policies in forming concentrations of the poor and the dangers of over generalising an 'Australian' situation.
23 There is a substantial Australian literature in sociology, economics and geography and planning on spatial polarisation which has taken up the question of whether there is an emerging underclass or not (see for example, Badcock, 1997b; Beer, 1994; Hodge, 1996; Hunter, 1995; Maher, 1994; Peel, 1995b; Walmsley & Wernard, 1997). Many scholars in the UK, USA and Australia conclude that there is no easily defined underclass and rather, it is an ideological term of contestable strategic value (Bessant, 1995b; Hope, 1995; Hunter, 1995; Katz, 1995; MacDonald, 1997; L. Morris, 1994; R. White, 1996).
24 From conversations with five school principals about families.
25 But they are not immune from the impact of corporate and public sector ‘downsizing’.

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being the exception, a tiny minority who need special consideration. This they argue is not the case and the arbitrary and contested poverty line drawn by policy serves to hide the very much larger numbers of people who might be considered to occupy a similar, but not identical, socioeconomic space. Many sociologists now suggest that it is extremely difficult to place people in socioeconomic categories (e.g. Clark & Lipset, 1991; Holton, 1996; Pahl, 1996; Pakulski, 1996; Pakulski & Waters, 1996; B. Turner, 1996) and that, far from there being a sharp dividing line between the poor or an underclass and the rest, the situation is much more blurred, and shifting. Further, a focus only on disadvantage and advantage fails to recognise that the two are relational, constructed together by the same economic and social processes. The economic restructuring and processes of flexible specialisation that make an unskilled Elizabeth resident redundant and trapped in 'place', makes a Burnside resident with university qualifications more desirable, more highly remunerated and more mobile.

There are numbers of people living below the policy ascribed poverty line in Adelaide, but they not be there forever, and the vast proportion of people living in the west and the north are all economically vulnerable. Rather than focus on who is under 'the line', poor or not at any particular moment in time, the picture is better painted as one of deepening social and economic inequalities (Burniaux et al., 1998; Fincher & Nieuwenhuysen, 1998). Those inequalities can most easily be seen as being spatial and intergenerational, as particular neighbourhoods and the young bear the brunt of economic change. The advantaged and the comfortable are separated geographically and socially from the remainder of the city, and this picture is one that gives rise to speculation about the degree of social cohesion that is possible in such situation.

A caveat on polarisation

The polarisation thesis is not uncritically supported. Marcuse (1993), writing on the USA, argues that there are more than two cities, more than a binary class logic at work. He lists five cities that exist in the American city space, five life worlds that brush against one another in the malls - the luxury city, the site of power and profit; the gentrified city, professionals who are doing well but ultimately who are at the mercy of others' decisions; the suburban city, the better paid workers who seek stability and security in the comfortable world of consumption; the tenement city, the lower paid workers who despite their economic vulnerability are still able to exert some political pressure; and the ghetto, the abandoned and excluded and permanently unemployed.

In a volume of papers addressing social polarisation in Australia, Jamieson and Huxley (1996) argue that the notion of a 'dual city', drawn from overseas theorisations, does not neatly fit Australian conditions (p. 2). What is more, it simplifies a complex reality. Because economic considerations and the notion of paid work dominate all others, this sends non economic factors to the margins. They point out that economic data bases are highly gendered, aged and raced. Such data bases fail therefore to capture the dynamics of the interaction of economic change with other social and cultural processes that produce difference (p. 3).

28They are however differently positioned in their neighbourhoods and networks.
In the same volume, Gibson (1996) shows that a concentration on global economic trends obscures the ways in which people may be simultaneously multiply economically positioned through gender, sexuality, cultural and family arrangements, as well as through the existence of alternative economies. She suggests that the processes of social polarisation are often "confounded with class exploitation" which has the effect of "eliminating the economic difference and diversity" that lives embody, eliminating the "possibilities for partial identification across the many differences in subject positions", "placing people solely within the organisational grip/grid of global capitalism thereby turning key aspects of their subjectivities" into "merely opportunities for greater profit making." (p. 11). She argues that this is another case of discourses about class and difference failing to come to terms with each other, as they "collide", rather than "converse".27

Johnson (1996) examines a particular location to show how five moments of economic restructuring in Geelong have produced complex gendered and spatial effects that are not readily reducible to broad scale econometric measurement. Jamieson and Huxley (1996, p. 4) say:

The literature on social polarisation and global economic restructuring has provided a framework for one dimension of academic and policy debate about current processes of urban change. In the main research has often been economistic, gender-insensitive and often tangled up in arguments over measurement and definition.

They suggest that what is needed is more nuanced research that looks at difference and disadvantage in particular spaces and places.

Marcuse (1993) points out that the way that the city is conceptualised by planners shapes their policy strategies. An imaginary of an underclass or a potential underclass concentrated together in one space easily leads to policy that seeks to disrupt and break up such groupings.28 In housing policy in Australia this has led to an orthodoxy of deconstructing, both materially and metaphorically, "problem housing areas" (Badcock, 1997a) through redevelopment projects. Such projects often involve substantial demolition of dwellings, private developers, and the establishment of new, more up market and less uniform houses. While on the one hand, this can have the effect of restoring to many public housing estates the more diverse populations with which they began (Peel, 1995a, 1995b) the other (more) likely effect is that the most economically vulnerable are forced to move elsewhere, usually further out to the edges of the city to the cheapest and most undesirable housing (Badcock, 1995).29

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27 However this position has also been subject to critique for failing to focus on differences that make a difference (Badcock, 1997a).
28 See T. Wright's (1997) study of the political economy of homeless people in San Jose (and other places in the USA) and their struggles around refusing to be managed and made invisible.
29 Badcock (1997b, p. 12) says in relation to the proposed redevelopments in Elizabeth North and the Parks, "Ultimately many more households in the public rental sector will have been displaced than will get to return to their former homes. Moreover, some of the tenants will have been displaced twice over, once in the labour market, by industrial restructuring, and a second time as
Both the question of difference and that of the policy discourses of ghettoisation appear in this study. There are significant differences within the western and northern suburbs, and these can recede from view if the difference between the advantaged and the remainder is brought sharply to the fore. The local is on a smaller scale than the broad sweep of the plains and it is to some of those particulars that I now turn.

In this next section I use both images and descriptive writing to convey impressions of the site of this study.

It is as if I've always known that where you live, how you appear and your social position are related.

My mother always insisted that our house was in Kelmscott, a tiny western suburbs subdivision of two streets that has now been subsumed by her worst fear, the suburb of Rosewater. Rosewater was home to the working class of the less respectable kind. My mother wanted to live in Largs Bay, a seaside suburb that was lower middle class, but there were no blocks of land available for returned service men in the late 40s. So she reluctantly settled for Kelmscott and the same house design as all the other returned servicemen's families. This was far from satisfactory and a continued source of low key resentment that, even well into her 80s and living in the leafy eastern suburbs on the benefits of my shiftworker fathers' superannuation, she can still summon up.

She once told me that as a child at Sunday school in the inner western Bowden Baptist Church (now demolished), she had overheard one of the Sunday school teachers, a young lady from genteel North Adelaide up the hill, talking about the poor children she was teaching. My mother realised with a shock that she was one of those spoken about, and that she was seen as poor. This left a lasting hurt and hostility both to the place and also to being seen in such a way. I've always assumed that this was the reason she connived to prevent me from buying my grandfather's house (now gentrified) when he died. She might have had to grow up in Bowden-Brompton, but she had escaped and didn't want her daughter going back there to live.

It was hardly an accident when, after university I went to work as a community developer in Bowden-Brompton. The local residents treated me well when they discovered that old Perce, impossibly lucky punter and the pensioner caretaker of the local basketball stadium (now demolished to make way for an urban wetland), was my grandfather. My mother was appalled when I included a photograph of his decrepit bathroom (her bathroom) in a successful submission for funding for an alternative school. And she certainly couldn't comprehend why I'd want the house since I obviously thought it was in a poor area and in poor condition.

It has been no accident that all my teaching has been done in "disadvantaged schools" in the western and northern suburbs. This doesn't upset my mother however, since in her eyes I am now like the young lady from North Adelaide, doing good deeds with the less fortunate. And I'm respectable. Even if I do wear black far more often than she can countenance. Like my mother I've moved out of the west. I have no desire to go back to Rosewater to live and am somewhat sad to see how rundown our old house, my mother's bid for adult respectability, has become.

a consequence of the redevelopment strategy. It is widely recognised that displacement as an outcome defies accepted canons of social justice."
But I often call myself a girl from the western suburbs. I find a number of my women friends in education do the same. We were all advantaged by the post war economic boom, selective state and Catholic schools, the teacher shortage and the women's movement. But we use the place where we grew up to speak to our current social positions. When we talk, we find that we have in common feelings of awkwardness in certain social situations, times and places when we cannot find the right words, times when we know that we don't look 'right' and will never look 'right' because our clothes and hair, no matter how expensive and respectable just do not hang the right way. The western suburbs and all it stands for are written deeply into our bodies, our accents, and our outlooks. There remains a brooding resentment against immaculate ladies who lunch, privileged pony children, ostentatious displays of wealth - and conservative politicians who now care nothing for the children we once were.

THE WEST: A SKETCH

Much of the older western suburbs now consists of pockets of low income and public housing rubbing against more wealthy neighbourhoods. Inner suburbs have undergone a rapid period of renovation as their proximity to the city has made them desirable. There is also considerable urban infill on near-city land previously used for brickworks, rail yards, and transport storage. Towards the coast, privately owned housing has changed hands, with the Victorian and Federation bungalows being popular with many who cannot afford similar dwellings in the eastern suburbs where they fetch tens of thousands more. Older public housing areas, some recently upgraded, are clearly identifiable. As one primary principal remarked, "The kids here live in one world and they can see the other over the road." (Transcript 2)

But there are meeting places. One is the 'foothy'. In the mixed income/class west, the shopping and recreation facilities become a space for the 'publics' to intermingle. And the common language is football. The Port Adelaide football club is the lingua franca of the western suburbs, crossing all income and cultural boundaries. The other place to meet is 'at the shops'.

The Charles Sturt Council, an amalgamation of four inner western local councils, has made a priority of upgrading Henley Beach Road, capitalising on the concentration of Greek eateries and businesses. Their focus on community arts can be clearly seen in the banners of school children's art strung along Port Road and in the summer performance program for the 'spaces of pleasure', the seaside café precincts of Henley and Grange. Their planning priority is the creation of an inner city Digital Precinct based around an empty Council Chambers and the old Hindmarsh public school, closed some years ago, one of the first casualties of the dramatic inner western population decline. It is locally suggested the Charles Sturt Council area has proportionately the lowest preschool age population of any capital city local government area in Australia (Transcript 17) and local state school demographic projections foreshadow even more school closures than those that have so far occurred.

The planning processes employed by this council are unique in that they are built up from the notion of 'villages' and council planning documents illustrate a deliberate
attempt to support and 'add value' to existing neighbourhood cultures, facilities and infrastructure, to create community (Transcript 30). Unfortunately some of the pockets of public housing such as Hendon and Seaton have no such centre, and this planning strategy, which appears at first glance to be highly enlightened, serves to marginalise further some of the poorest residents. In these tiny pockets, it is the neighbourhood schools that are the only public infrastructure.

Across Grand Junction Road, in the zone between the west and the north, the picture is bleaker. Here the suburbs are dominated by the architectural Stalinism of the South Australian Housing Trust circa mid 1950s, and the bleak flat horizon demonstrates the singular lack of attention paid to tree planting by the Port Adelaide and Enfield Councils, now amalgamated. The Vietnamese community, settled in these parts for twenty years, have grown a colourful and aromatic array of supermarkets, restaurants, jewellery, clothing and video shops down Hanson Road, an arterial street leading to what must be the most down-market Westfield shopping mall in Australia. Filled with aisles of cheap T shirts, plastic scuffs and lottery stalls, and with every neon sign shrieking one or all of 'Cheap', 'Bargain', 'Low cost' and 'Value', this is where Enfield B shops. A renovation of this shopping centre has just been announced, and one can only conclude that the owners of Westfield have decided that there are sufficient numbers of people with better incomes located within driving distance who may be lured away from North Adelaide and the city.30

The Parks area consists of several smaller suburbs of mainly public housing, all ending with the word park, a somewhat grim joke, since they are very far from green, lush and well tended. Recently the state Liberal government closed the high school built within the Parks Community Centre, a Whitlam funded, one stop (government and recreation) shop. Originally containing a comprehensive health and dental service, welfare office, adult, further and secondary education, a gymnasium, theatre, childcare centre, youth service and swimming pools under the management of an statutory authority and elected board, the severely diminished services that remain now live on an annual basis, reluctantly administered by the Port Adelaide-Enfield Council. The latest scheme to upgrade the Parks area involves shedding much of the public housing stock, and for a major housing redevelopment to upgrade the Housing Trust houses which are increasingly being left empty. This redevelopment threatens the viability of at least one primary school, and many families live with uncertainty about their future location. The redevelopment has been in the planning stages for over four years and no final announcement is yet in sight. Public transport has been severely curtailed and many residents now have to walk several kilometres to the Westfield shopping centre pushing a shopping trolley there and back. One school holds all its parent meetings before 6 p.m. at night because many parents are afraid to go out after dark, now that so many squatters are ensconced in untenanted houses.

30 See Louise Johnson's (1996a) study of Highpoint Shopping Centre in Melbourne's west for a comparative situation in which high status goods were introduced into a formerly downmarket area.
Grand Junction Road, with its bevy of road trains, sweeps along the border of the west and the north, from the vast acreage of the now empty Islington Rail yards (whose toxic lands were once home to a work force of thousands), through the mix of old rust belt manufacturing plants, motoring past the new high tech, low labour, Asia focussed engineering, building material and warehousing factories, skating through the working class suburbs of Ottoway and Rosewater, through the nearly empty wool stores ending at the usually empty docks of Port Adelaide. Serious import and export transports bypass the Port city centre and take the backroad through Gillman, past the nearly full Wingfield city dump, through the now defunct MFP-inspired wetlands and newly expanding industrial areas, to go straight on to Outer Harbour, and the small but highly efficient Sealands container terminal, much maligned by the Minister for Industrial Relations in the 1998 waterfront dispute.

Beyond the hollow centre of Port Adelaide is Le Fevre Peninsular, a long strip of beach front middle class housing, cafes and marinas on one side, a long strip of the Port River canal with petrochemical plants and the cement works on the other, and sandwiched in between, a narrow strip of public housing with rapidly declining population. Two 'disadvantaged' primary schools have finally been told that they are likely to close and amalgamate on the site of Tapeeroo High School after five years of reviews and uncertainty.\(^3\) The Le Fevre Peninsular population has for many years shown up in epidemiological studies as having disproportionately high incidences of respiratory disease due to the large number of industries emitting toxic fumes, thick with particles. Some of these have now gone, such as the coal burning power station which has been closed down and demolished to make way for a cleaner gas burning alternative, while others, like the cement works, soda works and ICI, have been legislatively compelled to undertake emission control precautions, although they still pump extraordinarily large amounts of poisonous waste into the Port River.\(^3\)

Port Adelaide is a lonely place. It must be terrifying at night, desolate, except for the desperate drinking in the local territorial pubs. But even during the day it's empty.

I wonder about the Council strategy. It's one I've seen in other cities trying to renovate themselves after major economic downturns. The elements are all the same - a fishermen's wharf, restored historic buildings turned into offices, cafes, restaurants, tourist accommodation and antique shops, backpacker hostels and warehouse apartments. The pieces are all here. But it's not working.

\(^3\) The MFP was the Multi Function Polis. It was an object of government policy fantasy - a high tech industrial and residential development built on toxic waste land that would bring economic good times back to South Australia. It was abandoned in name by the Liberal government in its first term, but the desire lingers on.

\(^3\) This announcement was made in late 1998. Six months later, at the time of final revision of this document, the final decision had still not been made.

\(^3\) A new private electricity power station in Osborne opened just as the final revisions to this document were being made, and there were debates in the media about the likely prospect of another private power station at Pelican Point which would pump 12 cubic metres of hot water per minute into the already highly polluted Port River.
That's really the point. Port Adelaide used to be working. Ships in the harbour: hump that bale, load that steel. The few ships that are still visiting have now moved further out to the container terminal. It's twelve hours to unload and reload, no need for shore leave. The hard drinking, blue singleted, macho militant wharfies, much reduced in number, comfortably share their building with a women's theatre group. The federal industrial minister lambastes them as inefficient. They show they still know how to organise when it counts: but now instead of pickets barricading the docks, a delegation of wharfies and the stevedoring company fly together to Japan to reassure desperately needed importers they can do the job.

Sailors speaking many languages, swaggering down the main street, are now almost non existent and their support services - beer, women, and clubs - have vanished with them. Holdens have packed up: two factories, one at Birkenhead the other at Woodville, both closed, plants consolidated at Elizabeth. The Rosewater wool stores are nearly all empty - some moved closer to the harbour mouth, some just closed, as the export market for the clip dries up. The Osborne electricity station which belched brown coal smoke over the surrounding public housing estates has been demolished and its highly automated natural gas replacement now faces privatisation and a fragile position in the national power grid.

The families whose breadwinner fathers worked in the Port are now grown up. The population is dwindling. The Westlakes shopping mall has taken away the commercial heart of the Port and a new supermarket has been built off the main road, to facilitate more car parking. The strip shops on Commercial Road close down from lack of passing trade.

When I was a kid the Port was bustling. Every week we went to the library on my father's day off, then to the shops. Nearly every week I visited old Mr Smith in the Maritime Museum to say hello and look at what new treasure he had catalogued. His collection overflowed from the top floor of the library, and a peculiar smell of tar, dirt and old tobacco accompanied by old anchors, sea instruments, and photos wafted downstairs when the double doors opened and closed. Mr Smith's collection became the basis of the current Maritime Museum, palatially housed in a restored warehouse - no lingering dust or meandering tales - now with fully interactive exhibits and a hefty admission charge.

And that's happened. From the headquarters and vast storehouses of the state's primary and secondary industries are made postcard scenes for tourists to stroll around. They rarely come. Just after Christmas a desultory few Americans bustled around the designated historic precinct, clutching their walking maps and making loud and unfavourable comparisons with Fremantle.

From a working port and a working class city to an empty place, where stories of strikes and fights and marches and great victories are packaged as oral history for sale to tourists, and those who led the struggles have their names engraved on the Worker's Memorial.

The old working class is literally enshrined, a referent for which there is hardly a reality.\(^{34}\)

\(^{34}\) Which is not to deny that on occasions it does emerge with banners unfurled, as in the case of the wharf dispute in 1998.

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THE NORTH - A SKETCH

The North is geographically linked to the city by three major highways - Main North East Road, which leads to the foothills areas, Main North Road which leads to Elizabeth and Smithfield Plains, and Port Wakefield Road which goes through to the market-garden area of Virginia. Main North East Road is really the edge of the north and the poorer area of the north east is found in the suburbs of Windsor Gardens, Northfield and Enfield, close to Grand Junction Road. At Gepps Cross, Main North Road crosses Grand Junction Road and the Port Wakefield Road veers away towards the coast.

Gepps Cross is an industrial area but also is home to the state abattoirs and its holding paddocks. The green belt between Gepps Cross and the Parafield Airfield on the edge of Salisbury has been filled in. A major sporting complex now abuts Technology Park, itself the site for a new high tech suburb, Mawson Lakes, built around the existing futuristic architecture of British Aerospace, Motorola and the failed Galaxy television. Salisbury, last century a little country town completely separate from the city, is now seamlessly joined, its old bluestone centre now malled, transport hubbed and surrounded by lower income suburbs progressively developed by 'spec' builders over the last twenty years.

Salisbury Council, the largest local government area in the state, has a history of strong environmental and social development policies. Aggressive tree planting, wet land, linear park and neighbourhood park developments, have meant that many old stands of river gums have been kept, and complemented with new plantations, thickets and verges. The green of the general area belies the relative poverty of most of its inhabitants. A number of community recreation facilities and neighbourhood houses is also testimony to the efforts of the only local government in the state to name poverty as a priority issue in its planning documents.

However, it has been unable and unwilling to stop rampant spec. development on its Port Wakefield Highway side. The old post war public housing areas of Salisbury North and Salisbury North West, with their characteristic red brick duplexes, have been joined to the highway by the suburbs of Parafield Gardens, Paralowie, Burton, Settlers Farm and the Pines. These have been built on former market garden land and tiny handfuls of greenhouses, olive groves and artichoke fields remain, nestled amongst some of the cheapest new housing in the state. Settlers Farm is adjacent to the Bolivar Sewerage Treatment Works and failures in the plant in 1997 and 1999, collectively dubbed 'the pong' by the state's media, make life in that particular part of the city sometimes almost unbearable.

However that at least passes. Burton is built next to the Edinburgh RAAF air base, in an area that as late as the early 1980s was deemed unfit for habitation due to the noise created by aircraft taking off and landing. This ruling was revoked and rampant unplanned development proceeded quickly. The Burton primary school was built at the same time as the first houses (late 80s) and, together with a post box and two bus runs a day, was the sum total of the social infrastructure provided. It was only in 1996 that the school canteen stopped opening early and closing late, selling nappies, milk and a few other basic necessities to those residents who had no transport to get to the major
shopping centre in Salisbury or to the more recently developed Hollywood Plaza, built on the site of an old drive-in. Teachers at the school have to have annual hearing tests but local residents, predominantly Cambodian, have to manage their own bodies. It is unlikely that anyone outside Paralowie, Burton and Direk, seeing the spectacular and courageous rescues conducted by Air Force Orions on global television, would even think that such aircraft and their crew belonged in, and so adversely affected, a 'place'.

Joining Salisbury to Elizabeth is the Defence Research operation, home of the Jindalee above the horizon radar, and satellite tracking, (and after Pine Gap, a major nuclear target that was the site of considerable protest activity in the Cold War period), and Holdens. Holdens really is the giant of the north both in terms of its plant size and still in terms of its labour force even though that has substantially reduced over the years. Where once it was considered a lesser choice to end up working at Holdens on the line, it is now a coup. The promise of relatively secure work, compared to most other employment available in the area, combined with the lure of training and award wages, is a considerable prize.

When Elizabeth was designed planners decided to create a mix of suburbs, some privately owned and some public. The public housing areas on the western side of the city and those in adjacent Smithfield Plains, are now those which dominate the statistics. Predominantly filled with people who can not afford to choose another area, they contain significant sectors reserved for emergency housing, and the neglect of those areas stands in contrast to nearby Rosewood, the site of a renovation project which transferred upgraded Housing Trust duplexes set in newly landscaped streets into private ownership. Such a scheme is now underway in Salisbury North and, as in Elizabeth, will force some residents who cannot afford to buy the house in which they have been living, to move ever out and away from facilities.

On pension days the Elizabeth shopping centre is teeming, but it is usually busy, because it is one of the few places where the large numbers of young mothers and unemployed can come, meet and talk. The many local clubs and pubs also offer opportunities for sociability. As Peel (1995a) remarks, in his study of Elizabeth, the valiant city legend perpetrated by the locals in self defence against the 'slum of the north' picture drawn by the media and well meaning social scientists, has at its heart an understanding of the complex web of social networks that keep many residents in place, despite the difficulties.

The headlines say that further tariff reductions in the passenger vehicle industry will threaten the continued presence of Holdens in South Australia. Jimmy Barnes comes home and sings the anthem of the north, 'I'm a working class man'... A raging, rasping, proud and angry song.

Four years ago, Brad and Shane were in my senior school English class. They went to work at Holdens, apprenticed to the passenger vehicle industry like their fathers and their fathers' friends. They are the lucky ones.
As I remember, they were tall, straight backed, healthy, strong young men, clear eyed and fresh skinned. They could be filmed slouch hatted in re/constructions of digger-dom, on beaches where the Australian life style is manufactured for the tourist gaze, in cricket whites and AFL jerseys - and they would look in place. I saw in them what I see looking at me from early photos of my father – that indescribable look of Australian masculinity that is beyond the stereotype - the products of good climate, cheap fresh food, space to grow and the standard of living to support it.

They hated English. Under duress they reluctantly produced the pages necessary to scrape through. They came up with every known excuse, they called me Mum, they flirted, they didn't appear in lessons, they talked instead of wrote, they asked for help in efforts to get me to do the work for them. Brad raced cars and I could occasionally force him to a text devoted to the sport or to the computer to write the article he longed to see about his winning form. Shane played soccer and read and watched grisly splatter stories. He would write in this genre, but I could hardly bear to mark his efforts. The task of working with them drove me to distraction, but I knew I could never yell at them, for to do so would be to lose them and for them to lose. They needed to pass.

In other people's lessons it was different. In Tech Studies and in Phys Ed both boys were stars. They worked hard, their marks were high, their teachers full of praise. Both young men went off to Holdens on work experience and came back determined to sit for the entry test. Sometimes spelling and comprehension skills come when it matters it seems, for both passed the antiquated multiple choice grammar exam.

If I was an employer I would have taken them too. Snapped them up. They were willing to work extraordinarily hard on the things that mattered to them and they showed they could excel. Despite the occasional fights with other boys, the rudeness to teachers who backed them into corners, their brash self assurance, they were fundamentally decent young men, basically honest Australian blokes, with all the good and bad that that implies. They cared about their families, their friends, and even their school.

At the time Holdens were employing few apprentices. They were accepted out of a huge pool of potential applicants.

Many of those who were unsuccessful now scrape together casual work and live on the edges of hope and despair. Shane and Brad are the lucky ones. Lucky, not because they have a job with training and some kind of career path, they deserve that. Lucky because they went to a factory where tall, strong young bodies are no longer so exposed to toxic paint fumes, to mind numbing repetitive assembly lines, to back breaking heavy lifting, to flash burns and corrosive chemical spills. Lucky because the union and the management have worked together to manage the downsizing brought on by roboticisation, micro-economic reform and changing work practices. Lucky because the Commodore has been a huge commercial success and the General has been in expansive mode in recent times.

It will not be bad luck that puts Shane and Brad into the same tenuous economic space as their school mates I've recently seen hanging round the local pub car park on weekday afternoons. Bad luck is random. This will be a choice, a choice made far away, at a distance, by elected men in expensive suits. They will never have to meet the clear eyes of those they govern, to see the strong young bodies wanting and waiting to be at work.

If Holdens goes, many other smaller factories will close down. This is already one of the poorest areas in Australia with high levels of adult and youth unemployment. It bears
the brunt of de-industrialisation and the retraction of public infrastructure. This is not about maps and percentages and sound bites in the news. This is about people and their place in the world.

Working class city already made poor. Jimmy Barnes sings on but the north’s other song gets louder.

Don’t want no work for the dole,
Wanna fill my bowl,
I’ve got the dope and drinking, hope is sinking, what are you thinking,
Just gimme a job......
The blue collar blues.

SOCIAL MOSAICS

I have attempted to get beneath the flattening out picture created by population data to give a little of the flavour of the north and west. This is of necessity sketchy. It is a conscious construction and a particular representation that provides the basis for the argument to come. It is important to recognise that the north and west are not uniform, nor are they uniformly alienated, antisocial and victim to policy and global forces. At the same time as policy fractures the neighbourhoods and myriad of communities that make up the mosaics of the west and north, and economic restructuring makes them poor, they also respond to those changes and take action in different ways.

The Port Adelaide area still has a working class tradition and identity and a community based infrastructure, despite the decline in its commercial heart. It is still able to summon up fierce parochial pride. The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) managed to bring to a cheering and whistling halt all traffic in an impromptu march during the 1998 waterfront dispute. The state premiership win of the Port Adelaide Magpies rated more local bunting and balloons than the more generally state stopping second Australian Football League (AFL) Crows35 victory, also based in the west.

The Vietnamese community in the west has extraordinarily effective self help processes such as the hui, the cooperative loan schemes that bypass banking institutions. In a relatively short space of time, the community has developed a strong retail network, health and welfare services, recreation programmes, and some manufacturing. However, some of the local entrepreneurial activity involves the use of out work and piece work (Transcript 17), exploitation of the most economically vulnerable by economically vulnerable manufacturers, many of whom are from within the community. The more established Italian and Greek communities in the west also have strong self supporting networks, including ethnic radio, soccer clubs, aged homes and services and a string of social clubs and venues. They are more obviously stratified along income lines as what might be seen as class differences consolidate. The established Aboriginal

35 The AFL is a code of football played predominantly in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. The Crows are one of two local AFL clubs. The other is Port Power. There is also a South Australian league of which the Magpies, Port Adelaide's second string team, is a feisty member.
community in the Port have a range of support services, an elder structure and are well connected to homelands. These are also developing in the north where there are greater numbers of Aboriginal people. As yet, such networks and infrastructure are almost non existent for the new transient Noongah population in the Port, driven over the border from Western Australia by draconian laws and practices (Transcript 5).

Older public housing areas also have strong social networks despite the difficult financial circumstances of residents and the challenges of redevelopments. But there are also ‘streets’ in public housing suburbs where there seems to exist a state of semi-permanent siege, and emergency houses that are notorious for the anti-social behaviours of whoever is living there at the time. New housing subdivisions struggle to establish networks, sometimes assisted by local government and public infrastructure, sometimes not.

The complex mosaics of differences that exist in the north and west are partly historical, partly created by public policy (and in particular housing policy), partly the result of economic restructuring, partly to do with changing demographics, partly a result of the global movements of people. They are also partly the result of the actions local people have taken for themselves.

The snapshots I have produced, (using statistics, photos and descriptions), of the complex production and reproduction of spaces, communities, and networks, attempts to speak to both the 'context derived' and 'context generative' nature (Appadurai, 1996) of these parts of the city of Adelaide. These pictures are partial, filtered through my own readings and experiences, and suffice only to make the point that overall picture is not homogeneous, but highly varied. The pictures I have made from numbers, words and photos, are no more than three turns of a kaleidoscope. New pictures and patterns lie yet unseen, waiting for their turn to come around.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

In this chapter I have argued that global and national policy work their way differently through different locations and that the global and local are not separate layers, but rather different arenas of action. The global is present in the local and every local neighbourhood is now part of stretched out global relations and interconnections. These relations are further mediated through the interventions of the nation state (Australia) and the local state (South Australia) and changes in public policy also work their way variously through different locations. I used Appadurai’s (1996) theorisation of the paradoxical nature of neighbourhoods, that is that they both need and generate contexts to establish a framework for looking at the particular site of this study, the northern and western regions of Adelaide.

I used a range of material to look at the two connecting parts of the city of Adelaide, beginning with the impact of economic restructuring (the combined effects of globalisation and nation state policy responses) on income distribution in the city. I looked at the question of spatial inequality and argued that, rather than a simple duality and easy correlations between income, health, housing, education and so on, the
situation was far more complex. I introduced notions of race, gender, diaspora, population change and income vulnerability to suggest that the ways that the maps and population statistics represented the north and west were modernist and binary. I suggested that such logic added to the 'othering' of the large areas of working class suburbs, where 'place' becomes a substitute category for inequalities and for class. I further suggested that the use of simplistic spatial and class dualisms could have significant policy implications, such as the massive urban redevelopment projects that seek to break up 'problem areas'.

The effects of these modernist and neoliberal policies combine with patterns of migration and diaspora, local histories and subjectivities to create a shifting kaleidoscope of particularities. This kaleidoscope looks different from that made by the more wealthy parts of the city because of the particular intensities of low income, low wages, low qualifications, worse health and less home ownership that exist in the north and the west. I then used descriptive writing, images and personal fictions in an attempt to portray something of the flavour of the overall patterns of difference as well as the very significant local variations within and between the north and the western suburbs.

In this chapter I introduced two ideas that I will build on in subsequent chapters - the first being that local places are both 'context derived' and 'context generative'. Secondly, I elaborated the notion that maps, data collections and their categorisations create a framework within which meanings are made and actions taken, and that through omission, normalisation and homogenisation such categorisations enable spaces and people to be researched, explained, monitored and managed. I take these questions up again in Chapters 6 to 9.

In the next chapter I go back to questions of policy and look specifically at education policy and public sector reform. This, combined with the notion of the particularity of the local as well as commonality, establishes the broad bases for the discussion of the empirical evidence I collected from 'disadvantaged schools' in the western and northern suburbs.
Battle against 'eyesore'

A PLAN to build a three-storey brickworks warehouse at Walker Street has drawn heavy fire from local residents, who say the warehouse would have an unacceptable impact on the area. The project developers have also claimed the warehouse would have a minimal impact on the area. The project has been opposed by a local residents' group, who have petitioned the planning authorities to refuse the development.

Outcry over rezoning bid for warehouse

The project developers have also claimed the warehouse would have a minimal impact on the area. The project has been opposed by a local residents' group, who have petitioned the planning authorities to refuse the development.

Liquid waste plant quietly opens

A THREAT TO the Port River is the proposed liquid waste plant on the riverfront. The plan has been met with a lot of opposition from residents and environmental groups.

Council cools off over stench

The council has decided not to proceed with the proposed liquid waste plant on the riverfront. The plan has been met with a lot of opposition from residents and environmental groups.

$1.5m levy plan to fix Port River

Residents plan road train

Proponents say the road train will be a cost-effective solution to transport goods from Port Adelaide to the inner city. However, opponents claim the road train will cause traffic congestion and pollution.

‘You could sit there 365 days a year, 24 hours a day and it wouldn’t hurt you.’

Radioactive waste on Dry Creek land

Radioactive waste has been unearthed on Commonwealth Government land at Dry Creek, opposite a computer repair station and about 100m from homes. Health authorities maintain there is no public risk but a Commonwealth Government authorised cleanup will nevertheless begin this month.

For anymore information please see the text above.
You don’t hear people talking much about
Social Justice
These days
You just don’t hear it from the government
You just don’t hear it from the Department,
You just don’t hear it from
other principals,
It’s right off
The agenda.

Our parents were really upset that
They were described as
Disadvantaged
They were just
angry that
They are described
as disadvantaged people, and
Their school is described as
Disadvantaged, but when we’ve talked about facilities
they say,
"Just because we’re a poor community"......
So they know that they’re a poor community
But the concept of disadvantage
Doesn’t sit comfortably.

It’s a disempowering term or
its been played out
So it’s disempowering.

I’m really curious about the comparisons
Between education, and health
You meet teachers, and
A whole range of public servants who
Are putting their kids
Through private schools
Its promoted as an individual family decision
and choice, and
Responsibility, but when you say
"Do you have private health insurance?"
they say
"Hell no!"

Justice is process and
Action and
It’s also a connection to morality

It’s immoral that
There’s this division

You can run the economic efficiency
arguments, but
At the end of the day
Society itself, and
A lot of the people in it
Are lessened
Or demeaned
By this huge division.
(Transcript 13)
One of the most trying situations I had to live with as a principal was the breakdown of cooperative arrangements with a neighbouring school.

I was convinced that the way to justice for our students was to enhance the 'professionalism' of teachers through supporting their involvement in innovative pedagogical and curriculum work, engaging teachers, the parents and students in democratic processes of decision making and working on how to make it possible for all students to stay in the school to get their full twelve years of schooling.

My colleague on the other hand was convinced that the community needed to have more confidence in the capacity of working class schools to make a difference and they needed to be less isolated. So he worked on establishing networks with local businesses, local government and youth workers and ran an energetic campaign emphasising how the school would deliver work and further education benefits to students, the things that he believed the community most wanted from its local school.

Both schools were involved in curriculum reform. Both of us argued that what we and our schools were doing was about justice. Both of us argued that what we were doing would improve broad social and educational outcomes for students.

The trajectories of our reform projects led in different directions in ways that neither of us anticipated. What had been an innovative cooperative arrangement eventually soured, damaging personal as well as professional relationships along the way.
Chapter 6

Just Schooling: Education Policies and the Neoliberal State
'DOING JUSTICE'

It is commonplace to hear teachers lament that nobody talks about justice any more. It is the kind of comment that enrages and outrages people who work in policy making positions who can, and do, articulate how their actions are intimately connected with equity. Most educational policy does carry with some kind of equity rationale to do with improved learning, but this is articulated in a range of ways and there are always multiple readings of policy intent and effects. My point is that that the terms equity and justice are very elastic and are subject to widely different interpretations, not only in central policy making but also at school level. In this chapter, I zoom back up to the giddy heights of context, to focus on educational reform and the various stories of justice and equity which are told in and of schools policy. This examination is prior to coming to settle into my empirical research study, which forms the remainder of this text.

In this chapter I focus on two major school reform projects that have evolved over time: the growth of market devolution, which in state education systems is strongly shaped by the institutional processes of public sector reform, and the development of the distributive curriculum. I outline each of these in turn, and consider some of the critiques that have been mounted against these projects. I conclude by comparing how it is that the combined effects of these two interconnected policy complexes differ from dominant model of school reform fostered under the former Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) and more recent interventions such as the National Schools Network (NSN).

MARKET DEVOLUTION

The view held by both the recent Hawke-Keating and current Howard Liberal Commonwealth governments is that education is a matter of national interest. The provision of a skilled labour force is seen as central to continued economic development: investors are both attracted to and retain a presence in a country, and local companies are more productive, if there is a good educational and training infrastructure. Educational policy is now subject to a particular scrutiny: there is now careful policy prescription of the nature of the required changes. This is a situation that has evolved over time and has happened at both state and federal level. In this section I present an historical sketch of the changes that have occurred. This should be read against the wider changes that were occurring at the time (outlined in Chapter 4).

The 1970s - a period of some deregulation

The 70s and early 80s were a time when regulatory controls on schools were loosened. Commonwealth involvement in schooling began in earnest in the Whitlam period. The conception of school reform that prevailed was one where innovation and change were relatively open ended. School based decisions by teachers and parents determined the directions and details of changes that would meet broad national social policy goals of increased retention, participation and equity. Commonwealth funding was used as an incentive, and it was state administrations which placed restrictions on the capacity of schools to innovate through submission and evaluation processes.
South Australia moved away from inspectorial supervision of staff and schools, from central budgeting and supply, and placed the locus of many decisions at the school level through the introduction of School Councils and changed principal responsibilities. The previous tightly regimented, textbook-driven approach to curriculum was substantially shaken; the technical-high school divide was tackled in the move to comprehensive high schools and the abolition of the more extreme forms of tracking and setting; and there were experiments with school organisation and structures – sub-schools, open space, alternative schools and annexes. There was tight control over student enrolments through zoning mechanisms; these also exercised some restraint on demands for buildings and equipment and supported the emphasis on the local neighbourhood focus of the school. There was also tight central control over teacher and principal appointment, transfer and promotion. A bevy of advisers and an energetic young teaching force moved to take up the new curriculum and decision making spaces that were made available.

In the long vision of history, this period of relative deregulation is more clearly seen as somewhat of an aberration, although it was the formative experience for many current teachers and administrators who have not generally enthusiastically embraced the transition to a more tightly and differently regulated system.

**Pressure for more change**

There has been a gradual, not seismic, change over the last fifteen years. The 70s model was expensive as well as expansive, and South Australia has been both in demographic and economic decline for perhaps longer than most other states. There were pressures at state and national level for further reforms – for example:

- the period of deregulation did support increased student retention, although the degree of difference in performance of social categories of students (categories of gender, race, socio-economic status for example) was unacceptable to many, including advocacy organisations.
- school based curriculum development and change was patchy and had to contend with the continued tight control of the post compulsory curriculum exercised through the public examinations system.
- there was pressure to place a floor, a minimum (basic) learning standard to guarantee that the overall failure levels produced by the system would decrease.
- there was some consensus that a national common curriculum framework was necessary for citizens in a democratic country.
- school staffs and principals argued that in order to reform they needed to select staff.
- School Councils wanted principals selected to match the needs of the schools.
- equity advocacy groups argued that merit must replace seniority and procedural rules were required to manage school based selection, and

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1 The Freedom and Authority memoranda issued by Director General Albie Jones (1971/2).
2 Population data is not just used for policy formulation and intervention but also by those seeking to change policy approaches.
• parent organisations argued they wanted to enrol their children in schools of their choice.

The 80s and 90s - a period of re-regulation via policies of devolution

The response to these pressures has been enacted differently in different states of Australia. However, what is common is the trend to reverse the previous reforms - to regulate curriculum provision through the development of national frameworks and in some cases (e.g. New South Wales) state syllabus requirements. At the same time there is a loosening up of tightly regulated institutional infrastructures such as staffing, budgets and buildings and a reduction of restrictions on student enrolment. More responsibility at the school level is dependent on increased accountability measures, geared to describing results. The role of central office changes to one of policy development, monitoring and accountability. This package of measures is usually referred to as devolution, self managing schools, site based management or school based management.

The theory supporting devolution is largely drawn from one strand of the post Fordist management literature (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993) which prescribes a remedy for what is argued to be the failure of public services to meet local needs. This focus on the reform of the public sector argues that the state should have a minimal role in service provision because people should be free from state interference, people should basically be responsible for themselves and that services should be offered by the private and community sectors under policy steerage of the state. This is accomplished, the argument goes, by making local managers more responsible and allowing them more flexibility. Through the savings made by stripping the centre of cumbersome and ineffectual bureaucracy, the points of delivery can be resourced appropriately and their efficiencies can free up more funds for actual service delivery. Devolution is both more efficient and more effective, so the story goes.

Devolution is an international movement. In America, both site based management, and legislated 'charter' schools freed of some state and district requirements, have been seen as a means of introducing innovation into a stagnant and 'poorly performing' system of public education. 'Opting out' and devolution were adopted in England in the late 80s and New Zealand was one of the early adopters of this style of institutional reform. The implications of devolution for schools in Australia has been fleshed by Caldwell, Spinks, and Beare (Beare & Boyd, 1993; Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989; Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Hayward, 1997; Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992), and put into full effect in Victoria as the Schools of the Future program.

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3 The introduction of reforms has been based upon a series of national reports documenting the alleged failure of the US school systems. In these reports extensive international comparisons are made to demonstrate the case that school failure is linked to potential national economic failure (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Elmore, 1990; Gellberg, 1997; Lewis, 1989; Lieberman, 1986; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).
Devolution is very often combined with freeing up of student enrolments - dezonings - and the creation of specialist programs or schools. In America this often takes the form of magnet schools which advertise a particular curriculum specialisation and draw from students across a whole school district. This model inspired the one time Minister of New South Wales who, in the early 90s, instituted such a system of 'special interest schools' across his state. Most other states have also introduced or allowed entrepreneurial schools to develop such specialisations. In South Australia, 'special interest' language, music, and agriculture schools were introduced in the late 70s and 80s partly as an efficient way of delivering expensive, small enrolment curriculum options. Many Australian state systems operated academically selective high schools and they took their place as one 'specialisation' among many: this was not the case in South Australia where there are no such selective 'academic' schools. But, one northern 'disadvantaged school' has just been reborn as a new 'specialist vocational school' (referred to by the Premier as a 'modern trades school'), while the four 'special interest', selective enrolment 'gifted and talented' schools (located in more comfortable areas) are attracting back some students from the non government sector. A well known northern suburbs school has declared itself an 'Enterprise High School' and one school in each of the south and west of the city have followed suit, albeit with less media coverage. A state committee has finally been formed to discuss the processes by which such specialist schools are decided upon and located.

In South Australia there has also been a distinctive approach to devolution. The South Australian system has, over more than a decade, been slowly putting in place the centralised accountability, standardised information platforms, curriculum development and audit measures that are necessary for full devolution. While there have been some trials of school based utilities management and all schools now are able to select part of their staffing component, including most promotion positions, there has been hesitation in moving to complete the picture. A variously composed state wide committee has been meeting on and off for the last four years to consider a 'uniquely South Australian solution' because there is widespread agreement that going backwards is not possible. Recently two northern suburbs schools proposed that they become charter schools to which the Minister responded that he would not be relinquishing control over curriculum or staffing. Discussions about how to manage competition and cooperation in an era when 'shopping around' for schooling is rapidly increasing, discussions that perhaps might lead to a policy of "autonomy and mutuality" (Chapman & Dunstan, 1990), have not yet gone beyond the local level.

South Australia is poised to make a decision about further decentralisation. The most recent committee to look at devolution handed in its report to the Minister at the end of 1998 and a 'quick and dirty' public consultation about the revision of the Education Act is due to be completed at the end of March 1999. Questions of school governance are included as part of the act, together with more public access to school property and equipment, the shifting of kindergartens into the school sector, times of school operation, reduction of Christian symbolism in schools, the abolition of the teacher
registration system, enrolment ages, regulation of non government schools, class sizes, and powers of suspension and exclusion (Schools Overhaul, 1999). The newly appointed Chief Executive has come from Victoria where he was responsible for the implementation of school devolution and it is widely believed that he has been specifically employed to do the same in this state.  

The point most germane to this discussion of equity and justice is that the practice of devolution is one that which places fewer central restrictions around institutional infrastructure - staff, budgets, buildings, and student enrolments, the things that were previously controlled - and more central control over curriculum, previously much more at the discretion of the teacher and school. It is also important to note that the elements of choice existed in states long before the current federal government policy came along or the current devolution policies of state governments were developed.

The Howard reforms - competition and coercion

The federal Liberal government has made a number of adjustments to schools policy. It abolished special purpose funding programs, including the DSP, and has simplified the schools agenda to one of literacy, numeracy, citizenship and work training. Through the national council of Ministers (MCEETYA) the Commonwealth has promoted the development of national benchmarks and comparative state 'performance' tables and even on occasion, threatens the withdrawal of funding for noncompliance and poor performance. Through active support of the development of new private schools, in combination with the 'league tables' and the rhetoric of a wider choice for parents the approach is one of competition (Knight & Warry, 1996). The stated policy expectation is that contestability, more competition between schools and systems will improve the performance of existing providers as they work to maintain their enrolments, and produce efficiency. School education is largely spoken of as a commodity, an individual consumer "positional good" (Marginson, 1997a, 1997b) subject to the rules of market choice.

The federal policy emphasis is not on innovation or providing new curriculum arrangements and options or students. Individual schools or systems may decide that innovation is what the market wants and is viable, affordable and still produces the

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4 A statutory authority, the Teachers Registration Board, ensures that all teachers in state and non government schools have adequate qualifications.
5 At the point of absolute last minute changes to this document, five principals were seconded into Central Office to work on the as yet unannounced changes.
6 I am not suggesting that choice is not a 'good thing' or implying that we should return to zoning. I agree with Walker and Crump (1996) when they argue that choice is a fundamental underpinning of democratic societies. But market devolution only creates wide choice for some, and in a spirit of fierce competition. There are considerable histories of disincentives and barriers to a systemic approach to choice and diversity and these are built on top of the residues of the 1950s regulatory hierarchy. The question for me is not one of whether there is choice, but how it might be more equitable.
7 MCEETYA is the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, a national meeting of the Commonwealth and state Ministers.
designated accountability requirements. Public revelation of 'results' works to further increase the pressure to perform. The policy levers of outcomes, accountability, competition, and selective public information are now the stuff of Commonwealth-state relations and the orthodox interpretation of the ideology and strategy that supports the national economic goals.

Policy reform is decided away from schools. Federal decision making is at the Ministerial level with working groups of officials largely bound to confidentiality. The former Labor party privileged particular peak bodies - unions, business and government through the Accord - with consultation with representative groups, and advice from a plethora of national bodies such as the National Board for Education, Employment and Training (NBEET) (Lingard, 1993). The current government has a different set of groups, eliminating unions and some 'special interest' groups, and privileging others, including principals associations. Many of the consultative mechanisms have been abolished and not replaced. The highly political and closed shop nature of decision making and the increased use of the media to make policy announcements in order to get political advantage, means that many parents, teachers and school principals now feel removed from positions where they can understand and influence both national and state education policy (Thomson, 1998a).

Most recently a variety of policy actors (M. Angus, 1996; Caldwell & Hayward, 1997; Coorey, 1998; Pascoe, 1996) have suggested that there is now no difference between public and private school 'providers' and what is required is full government funding and contracting out of all schools provision, regardless of their governance.

Market devolution

In sum then, market devolution is the term I use to describe the policy formation which consists of the decentralised management of schools, centralised curriculum and accountability functions and the extreme separation of policy decision making from the point of implementation, combined together with the neoliberalist promotion of competition, choice and performativity, characteristics of the 'competition state' (Yeatman, 1993). However these policies must be put into practice and so their enactment through the machinery of government is also important and impacts particularly on state systems of education.

CHANGES IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT

Educational policies are put into operation in state systems through the organisation of the public sector which carries with it its own set of pressures, histories, and practices.

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8 Arguably this is part of a strategy to separate teachers and principals as part of a more general move against unions.

9 This is not precisely the situation in South Australia where both individuals and principal associations do have some access to decision makers although many of the processes for making decisions are unclear and consultation opportunities limited.

10 The separation of the public sector from school education policy and from politics is deliberate, based on the concept of "fields of practice" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); each (overlapping) field
The public sector which supported the welfare assistance state in the post war period in Australia was characterised by the separation of bureaucracy from the sphere of politics and the commitment to impartiality guaranteed by standardised processes. The public sector offered permanent tenure and life long career; rigid hierarchies and transmission of information up and down the chain of command; separation of those who made decisions from those who carried them out; transparent and rigorous procedures for dealing with public finances and the public; and little internal costing in a high trust environment. Its professional basis was the personal disinterest of public servants and their commitment to the long term interests of the public. The public sector was often criticised for its frustrating administrivia, imperviousness to criticism and intervention, unresponsiveness to the public it was meant to serve, and territorial behaviour (du Gay, 1996b; Thomson, 1998b).

Changes

The basis of contemporary public sector reform lies in reversing the two previous cardinal doctrines of impartiality and due process, viz. lessening or removing differences between the public and private sector and shifting the emphasis from process accountability towards a greater element of accountability in terms of results. This has been organisationally accomplished through processes of:

- Corporatisation

The first steps towards reform were through 'corporatisation' - the adoption of business practices such as strategic planning with its requirements for common mission, performance indicators and annual reporting through aggregated data collection; divisional structures that broke up the large public sector structures into smaller units able to be individually managed and monitored; emphasis on hands-on top management by newly named Chief Executives; merit-based selection procedures that broke the old chain of discriminatory seniority-based promotion and enabled organisational culture and human resource management to come into focus; and the introduction of evaluation, quality assurance and review processes that directed attention towards results and thus obscured the diminution of financial resources (Beare & Boyd, 1993; Lingard & Porter, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997) - this was and is encapsulated in the slogan, 'Inputs are not important, it is results that count'. The corporatisation of South Australian public education bureaucracy coincided with the (late 80s) appointment of Dr Ken Boston and the state bureaucracy moved to three year plans, engaged in major organisational restructurings, and accelerated the introduction of merit based contractual appointments. Principals were much more formally charged with responsibility for their schools and with adopting the norms and behaviours of the corporate culture.

Corporatisation should not be seen as being all bad. It did enable a broader range of people to participate in decision making processes, more people were involved in staff

has its own logics, traditions, teleologies. The notion that these are three fields with relative separation and autonomy is supported by evidence about New Public Management's (NPM) adoption by governments of various persuasions - it is an apparatus of organisation that is not inextricably connected to economic rationalism (Hood 1995b).
training, women entered management positions in larger numbers, some procedures were streamlined and the quality of public information about public services and the population improved (Yeatman, 1990). Managerialism however had its negative aspects - the creation of low trust working environments, increased documentation of plans and performance, intensification of work, and the intrusion of generically skilled managers into previously autonomous professional arenas (Considine, 1990; 1994; Lingard et al., 1993; Rees & Rodley, 1995). In Central Offices, corporatised divisions often became bunkers leaving officers in the field to deal with competing agendas and intra-Departmental inefficiencies.

- **Marketisation**
The second overlapping phase of public sector reform is sometimes described as "market bureaucratisation" (Considine, 1996; Considine & Painter, 1997) because of the emphasis on *competition and privatisation*. The market bureaucracy is created by splitting off sections of the public service and placing them either in direct competition with the private sector, or simulating a competitive situation. This, it is argued, will promote efficiency and effectiveness, usually known as 'best practice.' Such public sector changes are also sometimes called "contractualisation" (Burchell, 1993) because of the development of contracts around service provision in which individual, unit and institutional performance is specified and against which units and individuals can be held accountable. "Accountingisation" (Hood, 1995a, 1995b) is another term that is used to describe the introduction of new tools of *accrual accounting and audit*. Introduction of the processes of audit and management have enabled government to get 'inside' the public services previously dominated by professionals, regarded as prime exemplars of 'provider capture'.

Doctor-patient relations and hospital provision have become primarily questions of accounting and actuarial practice (the calculation of risks) and thus have been opened to management scrutiny rather than remaining the sole terrain of professional medical judgements. Likewise, schooling is dominated by the average cost of school for its size and location, per capita student cost with allowances for individual needs distributed to schools in global budgets, and student, school and system results measured as comparable test scores. It is on these 'objective measures' that judgements about efficiency and effectiveness can be made and on which managers must focus.

Organisational structures are realigned to designate some 'core' units, those necessary for policy, regulation and audit (the 'core business' of small government), separate from those that deliver actual services. The separation of decision making from provision attempts to reduce the role of service managers to implementers of policy. When providers are given some autonomy and resources then conditions that simulate a

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11 This is also described as the creation of "quasi markets" (Cutler & Waine, 1997; Whitty, 1997). Kenway and her colleagues (1995b) have called for analyses that differentiate between privatisation, commercialisation, commodification and residualisation. See also Cerny (1997) and Yeatman (1993) on the 'competition state'.

12 University education for example has also been subject to the same intensified actuarial 'gaze' (cf. Mahony, 1997).
market enable efficiency and effectiveness to be achieved through internal competition. Moves to marketise the South Australian public education bureaucracy are now underway, although they are not proceeding as rapidly as they have in state health and welfare departments, and in federal education arrangements where there is now a very clear separation of policy making from provision. Whole of public sector accrual accounting and results based budgeting, together with efforts to standardise quality assurance reporting, have been placed alongside corporatisation practices and many of the residual, older bureaucratic procedures they seek to replace. These institutional procedures and accountability requirements impact considerably on the work of schools.

**How Market Devolution and the New Public Management work together**

The educational policy of devolution appears to open up a managerial space to schools. However, the vulnerability of government to media critique, the performance requirements of line managers, the impost to minimise the risks of litigation and subsequent costs, new accounting and accountability requirements (which also are part of the apparatus of devolution), conspire against such autonomy. 'Providers' are not left to deliver the outcomes and the policy unencumbered. A plethora of documentation, monitoring and reporting requirements increasingly enshrined in digital form tightly regulate management, and the distance between decision makers and delivery exacerbates difficulties in communication and information, and giving and receiving feedback. The goals of flexible and holistic responsiveness are not met and morale suffers.

The policy of 'subsidiarity' that in theory opens up managerial space for school and school administrator initiative and action is at least in part filled with bureaucratic accountability requirements, rules, files, procedures, risk management processes, data collections and performance requirements. Market devolution as practice neither creates the level of autonomy promised in policy nor systematically promotes reform, supposedly one of the purposes.

**CRITIQUES AND CONcerns**

International and Australian studies have highlighted a series of tensions, difficulties and issues in relation to the model of market devolution. The following is a summary of the major points taken from the literature:

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13 As in the funder-purchaser-provider model (Thomson, 1998b).
14 Both the old and the new are modernist and may well fail to deliver in a post Fordist society (Hartley, 1997; Thomson, 1998b).
15 This is not to suggest that principals wish a return to the former tight regulation of institutional policy levers but, rather, that some loosening of low trust bureaucratic mechanisms is required. The gap between policy rhetoric of autonomy and everyday reality of school administration is one current source of alienation of school principals from Central Office and the desire of some South Australian principals to move to American style Charters is indicative of the depth of feeling about unnecessary bureaucratic imposts (Lloyd, 1997a, 1997b).
16 For the sake of readability I have summarised the key points of agreement from the devolution literature. This is not an exhaustive list but indicative of the range of approaches taken (Ball, 1997;
In the first instance there is widespread agreement that there is a lack of evidence of significant improvement in student learning. This agreement includes advocates of devolution who argue that changes in management are only the first stage of school reform, and that successive phases need to focus on improving instruction. Finding out whether this devolution is 'successful' (or not) in improving students learning lies therefore in the future. The difficulties identified by researchers as prohibiting learning improvements can be overcome according to the devolution 'Tiggers', whereas the 'Eeyores' argue that devolution actually gets in the way of significant changes in learning.

Secondly, there is considerable agreement that there are inequities that result from the competition between schools for students. This results in the marginalisation of schools for the poorest, a category which often includes students from specific racial and ethnic groups, disabled students also fare badly under devolutionary reform. The explanations for the processes that lead to the development of hierarchies of schooling based on


17 It is important to note that states do produce evidence of some improvement in school learning e.g. Spring (1997, May 12).

18 A A Milne's Winnie the Pooh featured Tigger, a creature as irrevocably positive, bouncy and optimistic as Eeyore was gloomy, despondent and doom-saying. Debates around devolution seem to be polarised in just this way. It is perhaps useful to remember that Eeyore ended up with nothing in his honey pot and Tigger fell out of his tree.

19 Working on instruction after devolution in management for example might be the equivalent to treating iatrogenic disease, the side effects of drug therapy and high tech medicine, with yet more drug therapy and high tech medicine, whereas a different treatment may not have caused the disease in the first place. The quandary about whether to continue to persevere with the trajectory of devolution and successive phases of reform focus - as is argued for example by Caldwell (1998; Caldwell & Hayward, 1997) - is remarkably similar to that identified by Beck (1992) as the hallmark of the "risk society", viz. the logic of modern positivism is that risks must brought into being in order to test out the hypothesis that they might occur. In other words, the modern 'scientific' supporters of devolution will/may only be convinced that learning gains do not occur if they actually do not occur - and then the response will be more positivist science.

20 A study that does not share this conclusion is that of Good and Fitz (1998) whose examination of the enrolment patterns of Welsh schools showed little change over time in the balance of pupils and results. Their explanation for this phenomena fails to fully take account of other circumstances, such as geography, that may have ameliorated the effects of marketisation.
student enrolments and curriculum offerings, highlight the processes of choosing. Wide choice is available to only some parents and students, not others, and choice therefore privileges those with specific class and race 'interests' and knowledge resources. In addition, the resources that are available to the schools also create divisions: marketisation favours those schools that are in a position to obtain not only funds from their local community, but also voluntary labour - some skilled in business and management and some with the time to spend on school based projects (this favours particular cultures of mothering). 21

Thirdly, researchers suggest that market devolution may have a conservative effect on the curriculum, since emphasis shifts to what attracts the highest enrolments and therefore funds. The valued curriculum tends to be that which is geared to higher education entry or the immediately vocational. This conservatism also extends to students themselves and consequently the image of 'good education', represented particularly by uniforms and 'professional' front foyers, comes to the fore. Some researchers suggest that schools that are most popular also select those students who are most likely to enhance their image in appearance, behaviour and results, and who will stay on for the longest period at school with the least requirement for special and expensive interventions. Researchers who have looked at disabled and 'at risk' students produce studies of their systematic marginalisation to local schools with lesser reputations and images, usually those who promote themselves on the basis of the 'care and friendliness' they offer.

Fourthly, there is a decline in the number of parents able to have a voice in the life of the school as School Councils and Boards of governors gain more power. In locations where there has been little or no parent involvement, the advent of school governance has obviously increased parent participation in the schools, but those who involved are generally an elite. In addition, in some poor communities school based management may make the community even more dependent on professionals as they become the ones who dominate local management structures by virtue of their expertise. On the other hand, there are examples of First Nation, African American and Maori people taking the space offered up by devolution reform to create community based, culturally appropriate forms of schooling.

Fifthly, there is a change in the principal's job which is skewed towards managerial tasks and away from curriculum and pedagogical leadership. Principals generally are not in favour of returning to the former systems of centralised regulation and inspection but also have substantive concerns about the personal demands, separation from teaching staff, and bureaucratic demands and requirements that are part and parcel of market devolution. In a time of increased criticism of the public education system, significant expansion of the private school sector and an increasingly market driven approach to enrolment and curriculum, further pressures are placed on the school administrator to put what time and space they do have available into efforts to keep their school, and the public education system, viable and in good public esteem. Thus at least some of their

time is spent on a variety of image management activities, networking, fundraising and jockeying for 'position'. Some are much better at this than others.

Finally, the processes of market devolution are seen to have a deleterious effect on the public education system in particular. Some of those who speculate on the future of the Australian public education system suggest that the combination of state based devolution policy, and increased federal support for private schools and choice policy, work together to create stand alone schools, both public and private, that compete with each other for funds, image, students and sponsors. In the first instance this further encourages and increases the movement of students from public schools to the government subsidised private sector. The reduction of curriculum to a narrow skills base with an economic purpose reinforces tendencies to recreate the technical/high school, mental/manual divides. The creation of such a binary knowledge base and divided student population is precisely what the public system has, less successfully that hoped for, been working against for the last three decades. In addition, there is a fragmentation of the population who comprise the public, as the development of small, private special interest schools removes those children from contact with the broader community, and the community from them. The hierarchies of schooling create separate 'publics' which in turn undermines the 'public values' of equity and inclusivity, and the broader notion of the public good. It is argued that this has serious implications for future social cohesion.

A recent and very comprehensive review of research (Whitty et al., 1997) into the introduction of 'quasi markets' in Britain, the United States and New Zealand concluded that the strategy seemed as much about transferring power to central offices than anything else and that many of the problems associated with the set of market devolution policies were related to the draconian accountability measures and the cumbersome bureaucracy that accompanied it. The authors argue that while quasi markets did have significant problems it is not as if the previous system of schooling was not in need of change. They identified as challenges, the need to:

- move away from atomised decision making towards collective responsibilities without reinventing bureaucracies
- reinvent a public education that responded to the need for increased specialisation and social diversity without becoming inequitable or fragmented
- examine how the new forms of choice and autonomy might facilitate the development of new forms of community autonomy rather than exacerbating social differentiation.

The critiques of market devolution then raise serious concerns about equity and justice. The policy answer to these concerns rests on the notion that improved student learning is the test. If those groups who have been identified as 'missing out' on the benefits of schooling make some gains, then the policy formation will be deemed successful. The

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22 The 'traditionalising' tendencies of market devolution have been noted in the UK (Halpin et al., 1997).
23 This relates to the notion of the 'context generative' capacity of schools.
24 This is a poor double entendre but was intended.
accountability process set up for market devolution therefore, is also the means of assessing its success as a strategy for educational justice. In the next section of this chapter, I look at the curriculum that has developed as the quality assurance mechanism of market devolution.

THE DISTRIBUTIVE CURRICULUM

Both equity and justice are notoriously slippery terms.25 For the sake of proceeding I will suggest that the idea of justice is *normative* - it is a term we use to describe a judgement we make about the general state of society and its overall levels of social cohesion and division. The idea of justice is also *procedural* and is used to describe a set of principles that underpin actions, strategies and policies. 'Doings' can be said to be procedurally just if they are based on needs, are fair, and if the doing is likely to make an improvement, not only for specific people/things, but more generally. Like justice, equity is also concerned with results and with actions, but it is a term which generally is used with a more limited focus. In this chapter I use the two terms in a specific way. I am concerned with how it is that equity in education - better results for those students who currently miss out - is made possible by acting justly in schools ('doing justice' in education). I am also concerned with how it is that this 'doing' of justice in education might improve overall social justice (education for justice).

To be concerned with social justice is to be concerned with the distribution and redistribution of material goods and services, and of more intangible things such as symbols and rewards, positive regard, identity and so on. The purpose of schooling is to do with the production of knowledge, skills and attitudes. A concern for equity in education therefore has to do with how fair is the distribution of knowledge, skills, attitudes and credentials, how fairly schooling manages the processes of teaching, learning and credentialling (the 'doing justice'), and how much school learning contributes toward making a less unjust society.

The benefits of schooling (which is the way I will describe Sen's (1992) "primary goods" necessary for justice26) have two mutually constructed dimensions, the first of which is to do with 'content', the knowledges, skills and attitudes that are to be distributed.27 There is also a 'process' dimension to benefits, which invokes a consideration of the

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25 The philosophy of justice and equity is hotly debated. Sen's position which I use is by no means without critics, based as it is on a positive conception of liberty. For discussions of justice and equity in the Australian context see for example Taylor and colleagues (1997, Chapter 7), Travers and Richardson (1993, Introduction), and Sturman (1997).

26 See Chapter 4 on poverty and inequality.

27 This raises questions such as - What does everybody need to know in order to exercise the capabilities necessary for a decent life, for material and emotional/physical well being? What literacies are important? What kinds of scientific and mathematical learnings are required for all children to have an equivalent set of social capabilities? What do people need to know in order to choose to be responsible social citizens? How we might we move towards constructing these? How will teachers, parents and students work together to produce such knowledges? See Bentley (1998) for the Blairite 'third way' answers to these questions.
ways in which the distribution of the 'content' takes place within schooling.²⁸ Content and practice cannot be separated because the 'content' is not something 'out there', rather it is produced through 'process', that is through pedagogical and institutional practices. The curriculum 'in and as practice' and the institutional practices of schooling mediate and determine what economic and cultural benefits accrue to individuals and collectivities through the distribution of knowledge, skills and attitudes.²⁹ Both the 'content' and the 'process' integral to the acquisition of educational benefits are produced and produced continually as principles of 'justice as action' are taken up within schooling - that is, by how much, and how well, 'doing justice' goes on.³⁰

And the available evidence suggest that schooling is not 'doing justice' as well as it might. Despite the best efforts of reformers at all levels of schooling, the benefits of schooling are not distributed evenly among the population (Mukherjee, 1996; Welch, 1996). Students from low income families, from particular locations in both the city and country, students from specific immigrant populations, students with physical and intellectual abilities not easily catered for in schools as they are presently organised are among those who do less well. Particular boys and girls also do not benefit as much as they ought from their schooling experiences. Schooling in Australia is not equitable. Pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, reporting and credentialling, school structures and cultures, school architecture, school and systemic policies and procedures, levels of resourcing and staffing are all implicated in the processes of uneven distribution of schooling benefits (Connell, 1997; Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, & Rennie, 1997; Thomson, 1998c, in press). In other words, in order to produce a more equitable school system in which the benefits are more fairly distributed, we need to 'do justice' better.

The normative judgement, that there is a problem with the distribution of the 'primary goods' that result from schooling, a condition we might describe as an inequitable education system, is one which is broadly accepted by all major political parties. The explanations for this and therefore the resulting policy interventions are, however, quite different. Policy is based around a problematisation of equity/inequality and it is an analysis of what constitutes inequity that leads to the formulation of what is needed to address the issue(s). Equity/inequality is a discursive construction and what is included and excluded is important, since this relates to the 'interests' towards which particular

²⁸ Griffiths (1998) suggests that what I call 'content' is 'social justice in education' and what I call process she calls 'social justice from schooling'.
²⁹ I do not wish to suggest that the abstract 'school' does these things. See previous comments about how it is that the combined discursive actions of agents do the actual work of mediating.
³⁰ There is no essential list of such principles. For discussion of the politics of recognition and redistribution, see Young (1990, 1997a), Fraser (1997a), Burbules (1997, Burbules & Rice, 1991); for discussions of ethics, see Lingis (1994), Bauman (1993), Held (1995) and the edited collection by Squires (1993) on values; for a perspective on the law see Sunstein (1997). See also McCarthy (1998) on "non synchrony" and his isolation of 'relations' that matter in the school context - the relations of competition, of exploitation, of domination and of cultural selection (p. 67). I argue that each school must sort out the principles of 'doing justice' for itself within broad systemic policy parameters. This is congruent with Griffiths (1998). I will discuss 'doing justice' further in Chapters 10 and 11.
discursive constructions work. In the next sections I move deconstructively to examine how equity/inequity is now named and framed.

Education and the economy

'Doing justice' in education requires paying attention to both what is learned and the practices that position the learner(s). This is hardly an uncontroversial business, and equity and justice in education have been subject to considerable debate and change over the last three decades. I now sketch the history and some current dimensions of educational equity policy.

For the last thirty years education policy has had some focus on equity - from the meritocratic procedural justice of the sixties, to the expansive needs based approaches of the 70s, through to the targeted, 'commodified' group focus of the 80s. During this period the level of mass schooling rose, as larger numbers of more culturally diverse Australian children and young people stayed at school for far longer, and university places expanded exponentially. However, in the managerial and cost cutting 90s, the purpose of school education has come to be inextricably linked to human capital formation to support an internationalising Australian economy (Marginson, 1997a). In policy texts, the capabilities of schooling deemed most necessary are not the broad goals of social citizenship but the rather more narrow and instrumental goals of skills and knowledge necessary for economic 'recovery'. The benefits to be redistributed by schooling have been redefined.

This has implications for the 'new equity'. Henry and Taylor (1997) argue that in this new policy regime, equity 'target groups' have become individual clients, individual clients have become individual 'enterprises', and responding to the needs of targeted 'equity groups' has shifted to responding to the needs of individual enterprises and 'enterprising subjects'. Structural barriers to access and equity are now ignored, they suggest, as equity is now seen as a matter of, and for, individuals. At the same time, because producing change in the broad dimensions of students' 'primary goods' is seen as a requirement for the labour force capabilities required by the flexible economy,

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31 Foucault (1991, p. 59-60) suggests that for a given period of time there are socially constructed discursive formations which limit and form:
1. what is sayable - what it is possible to speak about
2. what is conserved - what disappears and what is repeated and circulated
3. what is remembered - what is recognised and validated, what is regarded as able to be dismissed
4. what is reactivated - what is transformed from foreign cultures or past epochs and what is done with them
5. what is appropriated - what individuals and groups have access to which discourses, and the institutionalisation of discourses and the struggles for control over them.

Foucault says that discourse always operates in social settings, in particular times and places. A study of discourse is a study of power and knowledge which is inextricably welded together.

32 See Connell et al. (1991) for an historical analysis of equity policies. I am unsure of the origin of the notion of 'commodifiedisation' but can recall it being used extensively in historical accounts of equity policy.
attention must still be paid, not to particular groups, but to distribution generally. Government argues that an overall reduction in the levels of differences in school achievement is vital to the state and it is the 'lifting' of the floor of particular kinds of learning achievement (such as literacy) that equates to equity. Thus we currently have a policy emphasis not only on the utilitarian value of knowledge but also on both individuals and overall system and school performance.

This has particular effects. In the first instance, the stand alone school as a single unit becomes the site where the choices of individuals must be met and an aggregate improvement in the distribution of achievement must be made.

School effectiveness and the 'new equity' in education

Educational policy in general and the 'new equity' policy approaches in particular are constructed by the quality movement and the effective schools literature.\(^{33}\) The argument goes that there are 'more differences' in achievement, measured through student achievement data, within schools than between schools.\(^{34}\) This variation in achievement is often presented as if it is a 'discovery', a new research 'finding'. This remarkable 'new' within schools difference is called, in other literatures, the effects of sorting and streaming. It is hardly surprising that the gap between the 'top' students in 'disadvantaged schools' and the 'top' students from privileged schools, or a statistical approximation of the range of spread between two such schools, is less than the range of difference within any one school. Any classroom teacher who has thought about the matter for more than a few seconds would say the same thing. What is more at issue for teachers is the concentration of particular achievement levels in particular regions (Teese et al., 1995).

This 'between schools' difference is that caused by socioeconomic and cultural factors. What the 'new equity' policy argues is that since schools cannot change the social context, which accounts for the 'smaller' difference between schools, they need to focus on what they can change - what happens within the school, which just happens to be the bigger difference. Focussing on what individual schools can do, the effectiveness advocates argue, will produce the redistribution of achievement, that is, will lead to a

\(^{33}\) Drysdale and Gurr (1998), in a paper describing their work as reviewers of Schools of the Future, argue that the reform policy has merged the school effectiveness and school improvement literatures, with the measurement of school performance as a central component. They argue that this has led to an increase in the use of quality assurance programs in education.

\(^{34}\) See P. Hill (1995) and Goldstein (1991) for example and for a moderated view, Ainley (1998, August 6). The difference research extends to 'between classroom' differences but I do not discuss that here, although it too suffers from the same problem as the 'between schools' research, that is failing to investigate what it is that produces the 'results' and failing to be reflexive about the assumptions and limitations of the research methods employed. I am not suggesting that this research is not useful. Rather I am saying that the inferences and recommendations that result from the applications of this research are often hastily and ideologically drawn. Such data has little explanatory power.
more equitable school system. It is 'distance travelled', what 'value' is 'added', that must be the measure of effectiveness and equity. Now, herein lies the rub of the 'new equity'.

Firstly, this line of reasoning ignores the possibility that the very things which make the differences 'between' schools may also be implicated in making it difficult for individual schools to make significant improvements 'in' school. For example, let us pretend that the nature of the external examinations systems privileges some students with particular knowledges concentrated in particular locations. It is true that all 'disadvantaged schools' will have to work with the same system and it may well be true that some of them can help their students do more within it than some others. But does helping students do better in a system that is irrevocably skewed against them constitute 'doing justice'?

Mathematically screening out socioeconomic factors in data analysis is not going to reveal how it is that the examinations system is working to advantage some students over others (L. Angus, 1993). It renders such systemic practices invisible and keeps them safe from investigation. At the same time, it maintains the curriculum relations embedded in the examinations system that produce differential results beyond school capacity to change and beyond the efforts of individual students to overcome. This hypothetical example makes clear that what is measured in 'value added' is the progress that individual schools make within an inequitable system, rather than it being a strategy for change.

Secondly, the measurement of 'like' schools suggests that a statistician has screened out all the factors that account for contextual variables. This is next to impossible. Factors such as mobility of students, enrolment turbulence caused by the effects of market choice, stability of staff and school administration, level of resourcing in the school neighbourhood are all highly school specific. Schools that appear to be the same using broad brush population data may be very different if this kind of lens is used (Hughes et al., 1996; Thomson, 1998d; Thrupp, 1995a, in press; Townsend, 1998a). Such data is rarely taken into account in the centralised development of statistical processes and yet there can be very significant differences between schools that may appear on the surface to be 'like'.

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35 Lauder and Hughes (1990) argue that in order for working class schools to make a significant difference, rather than some difference in the post school destinations of working class students, then altering 'school mix' is the most likely policy lever rather than looking for internal school improvements. Thrupp (1998c) reviews the school effectiveness literature and cites a figure of only 8-15% as the 'school effect' on social class achievements and destinations.

36 Fitzgibbon (1998) suggests that "to find the value added for a pupil, you have to compare the progress of that pupil with the average progress made by similar pupils. In a national system, you need to know how much progress is made, on average, by all similar pupils in the national system...pupils of a similar type, or in a similar neighbourhood, or from similar backgrounds", together with their prior achievement. Value Added = Actual Grade minus Predicted Grade.
Finally, effectiveness advocates clearly rarely have to face the students and parents for whom they are ready to accept 'distance travelled' as adequate and equitable schooling. As Rea and Weiner (1998, p.30) curtly observe:

> Whilst the concept of value added may acknowledge progress made in urban schools, it does little to increase the life chances of the children it inscribes. The concept is patronising in its communication to working class communities (students, pupils, parents, teachers) that DESPITE being working class with the odds stacked against them, they can still, with effort and work, do 'quite well'.

In sum, the school effectiveness advocates:

> re-centre the school as the focus of causation in explanations of students' performance and variations in levels of achievement: displacing or rendering silent other explanations related to the embeddedness of education in social and economic contexts. (Ball, 1998, p.74)

and thus uphold the status quo. Given this, why does the model have such wide appeal?

Perhaps the seduction of such an approach is that it appears to be scientific, logical and commonsense, constructed as it is within the positivist paradigms of knowledge and rationality and the myth of progress (J. Smyth & Dow, 1998). Perhaps there is also an appeal to more progressive sentiments? What is emphasised in the school effectiveness 'new equity' are the processes that go on within the school to distribute benefits (and therefore capabilities) and this seems to support the notion of the school as important and teachers as empowered actors. However, what slides from view is the content of the 'primary goods', the systemic processes that contribute to skewed distribution, the impact of the wider socio-economic and cultural context and broader questions of redistribution.

I contend that the 'effectiveness' frame constructs a thin and meagre version of equity in education. In the remainder of this section I suggest that this model produces a particular version of curriculum, in which the 'content' takes on a new 'content and nearly practice free' form. I argue that this does not equate to 'doing justice'. To begin with I look specifically at the 'new equity' and curriculum.

**The Distributive Curriculum**

The 'new equity' in education has come to mean the proportional representation\(^{37}\) by designated 'equity groups' in predetermined curriculum outcomes. The eight key learning areas, (state varied) statements and profiles and syllabi, have become the stable and fixed grid in which students, teachers, and schools can fail or succeed. Perhaps curriculum can be thought of as a cake - a morning tea slab of cake cut up into little squares, looking rather like a set of boxes.\(^{38}\) 'New equity' consists of ensuring that particular groups get the same number of squares, that is the same ratio of the cake, as

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\(^{37}\) Proportional representation equity was noted by Fitzclarencce and Kenway (1993) as the discourse of corporate federalism (ALP federal government). It has come to have new and noxious implications in the neo conservative radical market which has no place for redistributive justice strategies.

\(^{38}\) This is congruent with a 'commodified curriculum' (Power & Whitty, 1996)
they are in the population. Shares within each group are given out in a regular distribution pattern (presumably a bell curve).\textsuperscript{39}

The New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program (Equity Programs Unit, 1994) explains it this way:

The objective of "equality of outcomes" does not imply that individual students in the system should perform equally well......(It) does imply that groups of disadvantaged students in the system should perform as well as the student group as a whole so that representation at all levels of participation and attainment in all Key Learning Areas is roughly proportional to the size of the disadvantaged group.

For example, if the government school system has a 40% enrolment of low SES students then we would ultimately expect that about 40% of Unit 4 Mathematics participants to be low SES students.... And roughly 40% of the top 100 students in Unit 4 Mathematics to be low SES students....and so on, for every major indicator of achievement at every level of the schooling system.

What does this mean in policy terms? There is a federal equity policy called the National Equity Strategy (NES). The NES consists of measuring progress by plotting, over time, the aggregate performance of specific groups. This is not in itself problematic, and indeed such information has been vital to equity reform over the last thirty years. The issue is that this is all there is. At the federal level concerns for equity have shrunk. From a national program that supported system and school based projects and research, has emerged a slight project, one that does no more than regular monitoring and reporting of the distribution of the cake and designates funding be directed towards literacy, vocational education and citizenship. These are the goods which 'count' even though at the state level there are still varieties of attention paid to programs and levels of funding.

The distributive curriculum is a positivist object of desire. The object seems to be to create the ultimate calculating machine, an educational electrocardiograph that stretches from the desk of every Australian child, through the school office, and the state head office to one big computer screen in Canberra, aggregating data at each step. Let me elaborate on some of the work that this arrangement accomplishes.

**Within the black box of the school**

The effectiveness approach demands that social inequity beyond the school is seen as beyond the capacity of the schools to influence: it is not 'core business' and attention needs to be paid to in school capacities to reduce differences between students (P. Hill, 1995). As I suggested earlier, at first sight this is an attractive enunciation of an equity strategy, because it appears to reinforce the importance of the role of the teacher and the capacity of the school to make a difference. However, what happens in the 'new equity' plays out somewhat differently. When equity, meaning failure reduction through improved school and pedagogical technologies, is combined with the school effectiveness denial of the social context, educational disadvantage only means failure in

\textsuperscript{39} The same distributive equity occurred in England in the development of the National Curriculum, see Troyna and Vincent, (1995).
the designated distributive curriculum by individual students. What's more, the remedy is to be found entirely within the school and the resources it can muster. In addition, any discussion of social context is dismissed as 'making excuses' (which it may sometimes be) rather than efforts to seek a theorisation in which the school is still central. This is a significant rhetorical sleight of hand which has an impact on students, teachers and the resourcing of schools.

The 'new equity' policy plays out together with effectiveness approaches into a raft of technologies that operate in and on:

- Individual students
  It is recognised that some students may have 'disabilities' that prevent them from learning or they may have been subject to 'poor teaching'. Regular testing is required to locate these students and individualised interventions developed to remedy learning failure. Regular state wide testing simultaneously positions each individual student relative to the 'norm' on a continuing basis, rather than at the completion of schooling. Teachers are required to monitor and record the progress of all students against standards to ensure underachievers are identified.

- Teachers
  'Disadvantaged schools' research that focussed on the ways in which deficit discourses among teachers were part of 'the problem' has been selectively used to argue that schools and teachers are all of the problem.\(^{40}\) Thus equity, which equals failure reduction in the predetermined curriculum cake, requires that the performance of teachers is monitored, better teaching approaches are developed and teachers trained in them.

- The school
  Designated equity funding is no longer directed to specific groups and schools on the basis of sociological-educational evidence and explanations of school failure, rather, it is on the basis of alleged literacy failure (Comber et al., 1998). The school must therefore engage itself in testing and data aggregation and compare itself against 'like' schools, as well as 'standards', arbitrary benchmarks of system and national performance.

None of these things are of necessity bad in themselves, and indeed they may well form part of a more comprehensive equity approach within schooling. My argument is that, as the single, 'one shot' policy approach to equity, they have some particular and unfortunate consequences (I will indicate only a few). The focus on teaching, and teaching as documentation of students' performance, has shepherded in a new regulatory regime for teachers, characterised by intensified workload and less capacity to exercise professional initiative (Reid, 1993) which is integral to 'doing justice'. The 'new equity' has provided the impetus for the production and distribution of a battery of diagnostic tests that 'label' students. Staff responsible for dealing with students with learning disabilities have huge administrative requirements that effectively minimise their capacity to deliver programs. There is prepackaged school effectiveness software that reduces the concept of parent participation in schooling to consumer satisfaction

\(^{40}\) See for example, the use of research by Freebody and colleagues (Freebody, Ludwig, & Gunn, 1995) in Literacy for All (DEETYA, 1998b).
and receipt of test data. This is perhaps the beginnings of an apparatus of a regime of conformity and distrust that seeks to work its way invidiously into the school bearing an equity banner alongside its flags to effectiveness.

The presence of entrenched socio-economic and cultural patterns of failure, strongly correlated with locality, gender and race, is explained in current 'new equity' policy as the failure of schools, teachers and previous policy regimes, rather than, as others (e.g. Welch, 1996) suggest, combinations of under-funding, unjust school and professional practices and long standing macro social and political organisation. Questions, such as how much and how else it might be possible to wind back ongoing patterns of educational inequality, are off limits.

What I suggest is that this 'new equity' arrangement, the distributive curriculum within the effective school, far from being an equity strategy, actually works counter to 'doing justice'.

I now look at the implications of the distributive curriculum for knowledge and pedagogy. While these do not constitute all of the problems associated with the distributive curriculum, they will suffice to illustrate how it is that the logic of the new equity of the distributive curriculum, far from working for justice, might actually work against it.

Knowledge

In the distributive curriculum, knowledge is made un-problematic. The distributive curriculum depends on having the slab of curriculum cake, baked according to a predetermined recipe, available to be consumed by individuals and targeted groups. The emphasis is on how the cake is doled out and distributed, that is on some of the 'process' questions. This obscures the role that the cake itself, that is, the 'content', the knowledge that is the stuff of the curriculum, has in the production of inequality.

Curriculum is a materialisation of how the world is known and what is known about it. It is a political arrangement of included and excluded knowledges and narratives. And the development of the national curriculum that constitutes the cake for distribution was nothing if not highly political. The national statements and profiles were developed and managed politically through the Australian Education Council (AEC) and were always about political compromises, not inclusivity or coherence. Each learning area was developed individually without an underpinning philosophy. Curriculum development began with a mapping of what happened in each state, the goal was to find the

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41 I have deliberately not chosen assessment. The critique of competitive assessment offered by Connell (1993) still applies, and I choose knowledge and pedagogy as a complementary, rather than as replacement, critique.

42 Curriculum might be seen as a technology of governmentality, a problematisation constructed from: "certain knowledgeable discourses that both represent and constitute objects of knowledge, confer particular identities and agencies on political and social actors and make identifiable problems to be solved". (Dean & Hindess, 1998, p. 9)
commonalities. What followed was a committee based process of development, and a hasty consultation period.

Despite the policy rhetoric of social justice at the time, professional representatives of disadvantaged groups had little say in the development of key learning areas and their contribution was confined to tinkering around with what was produced. They got to argue about the particular composition of little squares within the overall grid, suggesting a little more Aboriginal perspective here, or the addition of more women's contributions there. Some key learning area slices were developed with more consultation than others and some were less prescriptive and left more room for teachers to improvise in the light of their particular students. Kenway and Willis (1997) have detailed how it was that policies to improve the education of girls were contained by the emerging human capital definitions of 'primary goods', and within the national curriculum grids. Participation in Maths and Science came to dominate gender equity policy and was, and is, used as the measure of 'effectiveness' and equity. The achievement of these curriculum 'outcomes' by some girls has become the justification for competing (rather than complementary) strategies directed towards redressing the curriculum 'disadvantages' of boys. This example illustrates how important is the 'content' of equity strategies. What are defined as the benefits of schooling become the measures of equity.

The development of a national curriculum was justified using economic, political and administrative arguments (McCloy & Graham, 1997). Policy makers were not motivated by the desire to create a new curriculum that met the needs of the future, but rather to develop something that was standardised across the country and that would cause minimal upset to all stakeholders. This does not deny that many of the curriculum writers were highly motivated by educational concerns - the fact that the statements and profiles are as coherent and professionally acceptable as they are is a testimony to their efforts. But at the same time, the ideas of a new and holistic, 'just', democratic and common, futures oriented curriculum were lost (Bartlett, 1993). The national curriculum, as it stands, is a curriculum of continuity and compromise, representing established practices and interests. Questions such as - What does everybody need to know in order to exercise the capabilities necessary for a decent life, for material and emotional/physical well being? What literacies are important? What kinds of scientific and mathematical learnings constitute 'primary goods'? What do people need to know in order to choose to be responsible social citizens? - which are fundamental to a just conception of schooling, were not the driving force. As such, the national curriculum can be said to be framed within and by dominant knowledges and narratives, despite having internal heterogeneous and contradictory discourses.

And, what was being increasingly asked was - How relevant is this knowledge to the economic recovery of the nation? What use is this curriculum to employers? The result was the national production of 'key competencies' (Mayer 1993) deemed necessary for all workplaces, and a plethora of vocational 'subjects' particularly at the post compulsory level. This development has consequences for the equitable distribution of learning, I focus only on two, vocationalism and identity.
Vocationalism
The emphasis on human capital formation led not only to the introduction of new vocational 'subjects', but also furthered the instrumentalism of the whole curriculum. It is usual to conduct arguments about general and vocational education as if they are subjects - English is general, and Woodwork is vocational. This creates an unhelpful binary based on the historical practices used to divide teachers and students into Vocational and General streams. The general/vocational can better be understood as alternative views of schooling and knowledge, as generalist and vocationalist paradigms whose borders are overlapping and porous.

Generalist education does not equate to the curriculum of the old elite high school, nor to those subject divisions that now constitute the prerequisites for university entrance. Rather it represents the knowledges that are supportive of fully participating citizens in a democratic society. Sometimes it is suggested that to adopt a generalist education paradigm is to argue that schools should not get involved in vocational education. This is misleading. To employ the discourse relevant to the paradigm of generalist education is not only to assert that subjects such as the humanities, literature and liberal arts should be directed towards the development of mind that participation in social life requires (Apple & Beane, 1995) but is also to argue that vocational subjects should always incorporate some opportunities for reflective understanding and critical examination of the genesis, context, norms and values of the world of work. Conversely, to use the vocationalist paradigm is to stress the market values of all school subjects and to restrict vocational subjects to providing the knowledge and skill required for successful market participation (Carr & Hartnett, 1996).

The following table outlines, somewhat too simply, as such schemas always do, the dimensions of the two paradigms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political orientation</th>
<th>Vocationalist Education</th>
<th>Generalist Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main reproductive function of education</td>
<td>Economic regeneration</td>
<td>Public participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political and social values</td>
<td>Meritocratic (old form) Individualistic (new form)</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding educational metaphors</td>
<td>Relevance, enterprise</td>
<td>Participation, collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy exemplars</td>
<td>Australian National Training Agenda</td>
<td>National Goals for Schooling World of Work Curriculum Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of school</td>
<td>Technical/vocational schools and colleges</td>
<td>Comprehensive community schools and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School organisation</td>
<td>Managerial Self managing</td>
<td>Democratic Part of mutually supporting and participatory community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Cherry Collins (1989) noted that the postcompulsory curriculum was severely constrained by non academic purposes and the general 'matriculant' pattern of study included very little general education, being mostly technical, positivist and instrumentalist.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum organisation</th>
<th>Differentiation of subjects. Grouping on the basis of vocational needs. Weak division between classroom and world of work</th>
<th>Differentiation of subject matter around common activities and student negotiated needs. Weak division between classroom and community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Curriculum knowledge    | Technical knowledge and practical skills  
Vocational applications  
Utilitarian value  
Competency based  
Arbitrary standards  
External syllabus management  
Competitive assessment | Critical knowledge, cultural awareness and social understanding  
Negotiated standards always under review  
Broad negotiated frameworks |
| Teacher’s role          | Managerial, maximising and testing learning outcomes | Coordinator, organising learning around common tasks  
Rich assessment processes |
| Teaching Methods         | Practical instruction  
Self paced | Projects, group work, collaborative enquiry.  
Authentic tasks |

(Adaptation from Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p. 24)

At present, the Australian vocational curriculum is controlled by industry and training providers and operates within the vocationalist paradigm. School teachers often find it difficult to come to terms with a vocational competencies based curriculum, not because they are hostile to work education, but because they operate within the parameters of a generalist education philosophy. Teachers want students to know more than the competencies required to work in automobile manufacturing; they want their students to understand something of the nature of the industry, the debates about the car, and the changing nature of work itself. Defenders of the vocationalist paradigm suggest that such learning can occur in the general education subjects that are left to the discretion of the school and the teacher, but this is a simplistic response to a more complex dilemma of credentialling, patterns of subjects, and the organisation of knowledge in the senior secondary years, also controlled outside of schools through state credentialling authorities. What may seem to be teachers’ rejection or subversion of the vocational agenda is more aptly described as resistance to courses over which they have little control, and which they would wish to see considerably changed.

The debate is not about whether education should prepare students for either public life or work, but whether education should respond to the current political demands to reproduce the particular world of work on which recent educational changes have been erected and legitimised (Arnold, 1996), that is, move from the generalist paradigm to the vocationalist, and from a long term holistic to a short term 'supply' perspective of work. Nevertheless school practices generally now include a blend of both paradigms with increasing pressures to add more and more of the vocationalist (Stokes & Holdsworth 1998). The resulting combination of a 'compromise' national curriculum and an increasing instrumentalism has significant effects.
• Identities
Students form their understandings of the world and their identities at least in part through the knowledges and narratives available to them in the curriculum. Privileging a particular dominant version of the curriculum positions those students whose home and life resources consist of the same dominant knowledges and narratives that are the school curriculum at an advantage - they have less to learn and more resources to use in learning the school 'subjects' (Comber, 1997). Students who find fewer positive resources available to them in the dominant knowledges and narratives, since they are 'othered' or rendered invisible by it, are put at a disadvantage. In contrast, students whose outside school lives are represented in the curriculum will not only find identity affirmation but also further resources for identity formation available to them. They are advantaged as 'subjects'. In addition they will progress more quickly through the curriculum.

The knowledge goods that are available to be distributed in the national curriculum have built in biases. The distributive curriculum consists of dominant knowledges that allows some students to achieve results more quickly, and which also affirms some identities and not others. This might be seen as the 'capillary' workings of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1982), trickling in and through the various curriculum strands and levels. It is not 'doing justice' for those who miss out. The distributive curriculum 'content' does not constitute justice in education. Nor does it move significantly towards education for justice. As Fitz Clarence and Kenway (1995, p. 93) put it:

The possibility that knowledge itself may significantly shape an unjust society or has the potential to reshape society more justly seems to be out of consideration.

Pedagogy

The distributive curriculum also has implications for 'process', for teaching and learning. Underpinning the statements and profiles is the rationalisation that the focus is moved from one of instruction - what will I teach the students - to one of learning - what should students know and how will I know if they know it. This construction is based on an either/or of teaching or learning. It is argued, using a range of progressive research and professional practices, that many students failed because they did not know what it was they were meant to learn. Teachers did not make explicit what it was that students had to know because they were focused on what they had to teach. The profiles seek to reverse this by making the focus on what students have to learn. Explicit teaching, as it is articulated in the distributive curriculum, is stating the predetermined learning outcome and teaching in such a way so as to enable students to acquire the piece of knowledge or skill that has been specified. Learning and teaching are maintained as separate, albeit overlapping, spheres. This separation has three effects:

44 For a detailed explanation see for example Fairclough (1989).
45 Such binary constructions are characteristic of Western thought according to Derrida (1976).
46 See for example the writings on negotiated curriculum Boomer (1982; Boomer, Lester, Onore, & Cook, 1992) which always left open both some of the 'content' as well as the 'process'.

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• the actual pieces of knowledge, the outcomes, cease to be the subject of concern, and become *The Outcomes*, the object of action (see comments on knowledge)
• the ways that teaching/learning might construct each other are ignored, and
• teaching becomes a matter of effective transmission and technique rather than one involved in politics and ethics.\(^{47}\)

There are undoubtedly benefits to be derived from reversing the teaching/learning binary: teachers are forced to look at their professional practices and to consciously attempt to use their repertoire of professional practices to enable all students to succeed. Many of the so called inclusive teaching methods\(^{48}\) were developed in precisely this way. The focus on how teaching might be complicit in excluding some students from the benefits of schooling did bring to light many of the ways in which particular teacher behaviours could shut out or privilege particular raced, gendered, and (able) bodied students.

However, there is also a down side. When teaching is seen as a search for the 'right' techniques there is an immediate and obvious effect. Because techniques can be effective or ineffective at producing the desired result, the hunt is always on for the better, brighter piece of teaching magic that will do the one trick - the one where all students learn as they are supposed. This leaves schools and teachers vulnerable to both public and commercial hawkers of pedagogical packages with catchy titles and acronyms. Pedagogical solutions that operate like instant cake mix - look for example at the sheer volume of 'fail safe' literacy packages - suggest that all that needs to be added to the ready made solution is a trained and compliant teacher and a docile learner. In addition, the reduction of teaching to technique delineates the space for teachers to succeed and fail because of good or poor technique. This is the space of and for performance management processes that focus not only on drilling teachers in 'effective' methods, but also on their scrutiny and assessment.

There are many versions of outcomes based education, but the way that the fixed and distributive curriculum operates within an effective schools frame is based on behaviourist and transmission paradigms of teaching and learning. What is available for teacher action and negotiation with students is how the content is to be learned, not the content itself. This particular view of outcomes and explicit teaching owes much to Tyler and Skinner. Cherry Collins (1993, p. 30) has argued that:

the intellectual tradition ....is drawn from Behaviourism. It is about the pre-specification of end points and the shaping of behaviour to fit these.

The relationship of outcomes based teaching and student profiling to older theorisations of teaching to objectives can be clearly seen in this statement from Tyler (1949):

The process of evaluation begins with the objectives of the educational programme. Since the purpose is to see how far these objectives are actually being realised, it is necessary to have evaluation procedures that will give evidence about each of the kinds of behaviour implied by each of the major educational objectives... This means that the two

\(^{47}\) This has a long history, see Gramsci (1971).

\(^{48}\) Cooperative learning, team work, small group work, thematic curricula, experiential and applied tasks for example.
dimensional analysis which served as a basis for planning the learning experiences also serves as the basis for planning the evaluation procedures. (Tyler, in Hamilton, Jenkins, King, MacDonald, & Parlett, 1977, p. 30)

A curriculum based on predetermined and non negotiable outcomes, expressed as a linear set of strands and boxes through which a child is meant to move, is based on the beliefs that:

- learning happens by linear accretion, by adding individual elements of skills and knowledge, rather than learning happening through active grasping and organising of wholes and/or through more chaotic progression
- learning can be seen in performance, rather than inferred from evidence from multiple sources (C. Collins, 1993). The notion that some learning cannot be easily measured or may not be readily apparent is ignored.

Where teaching is technique and learning is linear, attention shifts away from the interpersonal relations between teacher and students and focuses strongly on making sure students learn the ‘stuff’. Students are afforded little agency, their assigned role is to learn when the right teaching technique is applied. Whether they see the designated learning outcomes as relevant, interesting, insulting, or inequitable is not up for question. In reality, teaching/learning cannot be so easily separated. What happens in classrooms is above all relational - studenting and teaching are socially constructed, mutual practices in which students have power, just as do teachers. And if teachers do not recognise this, students may well choose to use their power against the teacher, or against the process of learning, thus often appearing to work against their own long term interests. This is a question to which I will return.50

If, as I suggest, that the distributive curriculum construction is one which is weak on equity and works against the principles of 'doing justice', how are we to best understand such a policy?

**Utopian (ir)rationality**

The 'new equity' and school effectiveness have a series of potential injustices hard wired into their conception. Because the 'new equity' is constructed by the effective schools literatures and operates with problematic conceptions of curriculum knowledge and pedagogy, its claims to equity and justice can be seen as both ir-rational and utopian. This becomes quite apparent when looking at the way that the policies consider instruction, the delivery of the distributive curriculum, as divorced from the institutional setting of schools. This national curriculum seems to takes place in an institutional vacuum, and in an absence of time/space. It is as if, once the curriculum goals are determined, properly skilled teachers will do their job unaffected by any other considerations. Curriculum reform has long had this utopian spin. In the current conditions of neoliberalism where considerable cost cutting has increased class sizes (at

49 Collins is clear that these are intersecting axes, not unrelated binaries, and there are thus many possible combinations of epistemological positions.

50 See Chapter 8.
the same time as teachers and schools have been publicly castigated for alleged failures), neither the national goals for schooling, the national curriculum nor the state curriculum documents reflect the impact that such institutional factors have on the capacities of teachers and students to teach/learn.

In an analysis of the Finnish school reform movement Simola (1998) dubs this 'wishful rationalism', a scientific process of generating rational goals to be achieved by students and teachers alike regardless of who they are, where they are, or under what circumstances they may be working. 'Wishful rationalism' enables curriculum reformers to entirely ignore the potential limitations on their prescriptions. Simola (1998, p. 741) argues that in Finland:

> It was only through forgetting the mass character and compulsion of schooling that the promise to respond to the individual learning needs and capacities of every pupil could be considered. It was only through the exclusion of the everyday reality of schooling that individual-centred didactics could become the core of the teacher's professional knowledge. It was only through underestimating the institutional, historical, and cultural frames of schooling that the goal rationalism could be seen as the omnipotent basis for educational reform.

'Wishful rationalism' seems an apt term for the Australian national curriculum policy, for its advocates too forget institutional settings, histories and demands. Collective amnesia and myopia has enabled curriculum reformers to avoid the ineluctable ongoing paradox of schooling - that its institutional role is to both simultaneously enable all children to learn, at the same time as sort and select. There is simultaneously an expectation that schools will produce a hierarchy of credentials for higher education and employment, lift the 'basic standard' of all children and 'fulfil everybody's potential'. It is only by facing such dilemmas that the difficulties of managing a common and binary curriculum, cooperative and competitive arrangements, student failures and successes can be understood. Being blinkered to this problematic is indeed not only utopian but also constructs the disjunctions between policy rhetoric and the possibilities for action.

**Consequences**

The consolidation of the distributive curriculum, that privileges some knowledges and stories over others, that distributes cultural and social capital according to old patterns, that treats the school as if it is a 'technological black box' that is "an adaptable machinery of curriculum, instruction and assessment geared to mediate and moderate quantifiable differences in behaviours, skills and competences" (A. Luke, 1997, p.5) and that de-limits what can be known and said by and about subordinate groups and identities, has tangible, material unjust effects. Whitty, Power and Halpin (1997, p. 87) suggest that: there is some evidence that the emphasis on student attainment rather than learning process is leading to an increased fragmentation and unitisation of the curriculum, the marginalisation of non-assessed fields of enquiry and a more rigid compartmentalisation of students.

Ultimately these conflicting and idealist policy expectations produce recipes for maintaining the status quo, a point recently and perhaps inadvertently made by Federal Schools Minister David Kemp (1998), who said:

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...it is an enormous challenge to us to ensure that education reinforces equity and equality in this society. (my emphasis)

According the federal minister, schools have no mandate for educating for justice, for broad social betterment. Perhaps this explains why it is that all national policy texts have been stripped of references to justice since they would immediately invoke discussions of issues wider than the black box of the school, and call into question the self sustaining internal logic that constructs the distributive curriculum. The national curriculum exercise, once hopefully imagined by progressive educators as an entitlement curriculum has ended up as a sortie in utopian positivism, a curriculum of 'treating them all the same' and 'responding to individual needs' and performances (Troyka & Vincent, 1995).

The model of school reform current in Australia then, despite variations within states, is predominantly one of market devolution married to the distributive curriculum that becomes the backbone of quality assurance processes.\(^5\) This varies significantly from the kind of approaches fostered by the old DSP. As the conclusion to this contextual chapter, I briefly compare the most significant differences between the two. This then establishes the kinds of policies to which school administrators in the schools in my study were encouraged and those to which they are now directed.

MODELS OF REFORM

The DSP was a relatively small program working in a minority of Australia's schools. It was an ameliorative program, even though many of the theorisations of class and poverty that were popularised throughout the life of the program were transformative in desire.\(^6\) There was no single model of school reform that was ever proposed 'officially', other than the notions that new ways of 'doing school' must be found at the local level, new ways involving local 'stakeholders' - parents, teachers and students. However, in South Australia at least, from the early 80s, some key points began to crystallise.

The prime commitment was to participation - in decision making, in the life of the school, in the operations of the school as an institution and in the curriculum. Democratic processes were the key to involving parents and teachers, and sometimes students, in examining how it was that the broad questions of inequality and poverty appeared in their local setting, in determining priorities for action and in finding local ways of proceeding. There was an acceptance that the dominant curriculum was implicated in the production of inequitable school results and that the curriculum and pedagogy needed to change. This should start, not from a set of predetermined learning

\(^5\) Performance management is also part of this policy complex but this is not the focus of my research. There is research in this area (e.g. Reid, 1998; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998; Shacklock, 1998; Starr, 1998).

goals, but from goals of social citizenship. The curriculum thus was seen as permeable and contingent rather than fixed. Teacher learning was a key priority and most schools devoted considerable energies to supporting teachers to establish better relationships with students, in order to understand the home and peer resources they brought with them to school that were the basis of a more 'just' curriculum.

Identified tensions, around the issues of whole school versus side stream change, how to manage both individualised and collective assessment processes, how to guarantee some common entitlements while working from 'counter-hegemonic perspectives' (Connell, 1993), were hotly debated in many locations. The DSP was supported at the state level by advisers who often mediated scholarly work on equity and justice, and by an informal network of school based activists. However it was at best patchy in its overall impact on schools and would have required ongoing and systematic national leadership as well as increased resources to make greater impact (Connell, 1993; Connell et al., 1991).

Later interventions, in particular the National Schools Network (NSN) sponsored through the union-government Accord process of the early 90s, reinvigorated school based reform with a new emphasis on the institutional practices of schooling. Drawing on both American and German research and reform school networks, issues such as curriculum domains, timetabling, and student grouping were married to an interest in middle schooling, 'teaming' (post Fordist work practice) and justice.

The broad direction for reforms enshrined in the DSP and NSN differs quite markedly from that of market devolution and the distributive curriculum. Firstly they cannot function as a quality assurance process since not all of the 'goals' or outcomes are known at the outset. They must be negotiated with the people concerned and be developed through collaborative and political processes. Secondly, some of the goals espoused by the DSP and NSN do not readily lend themselves to measurement since they are broad and long term and deal with matters such as social citizenship and social action. Thirdly, DSP and NSN reform begins from the premise that disadvantage is socially, politically and economically constructed and as such is beyond the reach of schools to dramatically alter, but it cannot be screened out to become a simple 'educational disadvantage' that can be compensated for. Fourthly, in DSP and NSN reforms teachers are seen, not as necessary for their technical expertise, but as powerful resources whose intellectual work, in partnership with local parents and students, is the only way of 'doing justice'. Finally, and most importantly, the notion of democratic practices of planned change underpins DSP and NSN local activity.

What the two models have in common is that they both work at the level of the imaginary\textsuperscript{53}, that part of discourse that is a utopian fiction. Both the DSP and the

\textsuperscript{53} An imaginary is a story, which like language can change meanings depending on which discursive formation it becomes a part. An imaginary works discursively to bring itself into being. In image and consumption based societies, the imaginary has an important role in shaping actions because it mobilises desire, connects discourse to memory, history and pleasurable parts of present experience.
conservative 'new equity' call on a social imaginary of a better and more equitable society, that Australian 'fair go' at that its most abstract and idealised level still works its old magic.

The other story that both reform models tap into is that of decentralisation. The imaginary of decentralisation is one that was held strongly by many in 'disadvantaged schools'. It was phrased in terms of local democracy, involvement, participation and community development – the discourses of former justice and equity policies. Sometimes it took the form of a romantic 'village' view of the local (Featherstone, 1998) where harmonious and homogeneous communities operate as they did or might do in some mythical golden age.54 Sometimes it involved sophisticated community development processes and quite often in reality achieved levels of school democracy - staff, student and parent participation in the life of school - that would be the envy of American commentators who write about site based management. The DSP explicitly worked at the local level, harnessing the energies of school staffs and parent bodies, inviting them to determine their specific needs and priorities and work collaboratively to find local solutions which could then be shared with the wider system.

This same imaginary of local 'responsiveness', local 'empowerment', 'trust' and 'synergy' in the school and local community is at work in market devolution - see Caldwell and Spinks (1992) on the culture of self managing schools - married to notions of effectiveness and efficiency. This shared imaginary and language makes it possible to have agreement at the broadest policy levels about goals, but considerable disagreement about practice. It may also account for the seductiveness of market devolution.

I return to this and the question of reform after I have discussed my research findings in some detail in the next four chapters.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

In this chapter I have looked at education policy through the lens of equity and justice. I have argued that there was a comparative loosening up of curriculum and teachers' work that occurred during the 70s with the emphasis being on school based development and local democratic decision making. Over the last decade and a half, schooling has been gradually re-regulated such that there are now loose central controls on staffing, buildings, budgets, and student enrolments and tight central controls on curriculum and teacher 'performance'. The central system assumes total responsibility for monitoring and accountability thus 'steering' the work of devolved schools. These changes have been decided more and more away from schools and parents; the importance of ministerial processes of policy making, both state and national, has increased.

At the same time both federal and state governments have adopted competition, choice and market policies and have used New Public Management as the apparatus of

54 Nostalgia is common to both the right and left of the political spectrum and may be symptomatic of our more uncertain times according to Beilharz (1994).
implementation. Corporate managerialism and methods of accounting, quality assurance and risk management have created a plethora of routines and requirements which fill up some of the space potentially created through devolution. The Howard federal government has enthusiastically embraced neo-liberal privatisation agendas and has actively supported competition between systems and schools as well as funding the growth of the private school sector. This places the public system under considerable strain.

The quality assurance and equity framework have become synonymous, the distributive curriculum the manifestation. This curriculum is couched within an effective schools framework which denies socially produced disadvantage and relies instead on looking at 'value added' by the schools to individual students. The curriculum has become instrumentalised and through the political processes of national curriculum making the curriculum reform proposals of equity advocates have been contained and framed and separated from their subaltern publics (M. O'Brien & Penna, 1998). This curriculum is incapable of delivering the 'primary goods' necessary for all students to achieve equitable capabilities to function in society. Because questions of knowledge and pedagogy are rendered invisible by the designation of fixed outcomes against which progress must be measured, the distributive curriculum works to privilege particular children with particular social and cultural capital - those who indeed have always been privileged. Thus, far from delivering equity and making the difference suggested in the effective schools and school improvement literatures, the distributive curriculum actively produces dominant power-knowledge relations. However, there are important differences between states that make it possible for there to be some modification to this federal agenda.

I concluded that the reform and equity strategy of the current government - market devolution and the distributive curriculum - differs profoundly from that envisaged by the DSP, which held questions of knowledge and participatory democratic practices as the keys to change. What is common to both reform models is the connection to an imaginary about decentralisation and a fair go.

Policy however does not get neatly translated into schools. They work to both refract and diffract policy intentions. Policy becomes a discursive framework that seeks to position schools, staffs, students and neighbourhoods in particular ways, but its trajectory is rarely uninterrupted. The capillary actions of power-knowledge do not just flow from the top down. Schools have ongoing lives as institutions, as do the teachers and students within them, and changing policy discourses become part of their ongoing narratives. It is to those ongoing stories that I now turn, with the understanding of what it is that current policy texts and apparatus seek to achieve in schools.

In the next four chapters I look at what is happening, according to school administrators, in former DSP schools in the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide.
I begin by looking at issues in the schools that are related to their particular location, move on to look at issues arising from the particular positioning of schools in an unequal society and how that appears as everyday social relations, and then look at the effects of current schools policy and how that places schools in relation to 'doing justice'.
In the next chapter I go back to the northern and western suburbs for a closer look at the social geographies of schooling.
watching, shopping, gambling, drinking, playing, talking, messing about in water

Recreation
Millions of poor jump in welfare fraud net

16,000 homeless

North Adelaide tops list

Our rich suburbs

and poor population

Where should support line be drawn?

Income support just below poverty line.

The number of homeless in Australia is set to double.

Our poverty state, in the nation's eyes.

Poor State Affairs

shock jump in

Welfare
draw

Millions not below poverty line.
It's a really depressed area, there's generations of unemployment... there's a large number of people who've lived here, their parents have lived here, their grandparents have lived here -there's people like that, and people moving in and out all the time.

There's a lot of health issues — I've never seen so many people who look ill, and they are ill...

And people who haven't had any work experience whatsoever,

The population's got poorer. The students coming in are all poor or they are on the run or both...

It is very depressing in that way...

The redevelopment will knock houses down and rebuild. People are really a bit worried about that, anxious about getting chucked out of their house and getting shifted off somewhere else where they don't want to go...

Lots of them don't have a car. There used to be a bus that went to Arndale but it was a long walk to the bus stop, and then you'd have to do the circle line and keep changing.

When the Parks closed, bus routes went, bus stops went, it was bit by bit... and you see some of our parents pushing a trolley down the street to Arndale, from near the school, doing the shopping and pushing the trolley back. It's long way to go, pushing a shopping trolley back.

Quite a lot have phones, but it's not uncommon for them to be cut off... from time to time... some of them have phones where you can ring in but they can't ring out...

It is very depressing in that way...

The students from Vietnamese and Cambodian background brought with them a kind of hope... They think if they work hard they'll get somewhere... (Transcript 22)
I have recently been part of a discussion about the reconstruction of a dreaming trail around Port Adelaide. It was suggested by one member of the group that disagreements within 'the Aboriginal Community' appeared likely to prevent even a submission for funding being written. In one of my less unsuccessful interventions I suggested that we change our language to 'the Aboriginal communities'.

As we used the new phrase, the discussion became much easier. It was implicit in the construction that no-one was going to be forced to agree with something they couldn't in all conscience agree with. It soon became clear that the projects should start from a positive position of diversity and difference.

What we needed to do was to think about how difference and commonality could be represented, with integrity, through the physical artefact of a trail, rather than fight over re-readings of a 'truth' that was destroyed last century, beyond everyone's living memories.

Despite the differences in, among and between, the signs will still be able to read,

Ngai wanguandi marni nabudni Kurna yertaanna - First let me welcome you to Kurna country.
CHAPTER 7

HERE COMES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD:
THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF SCHOOLING
GETTING DOWN TO EARTH

In this chapter I begin to look at life 'on the ground'. From the giddy and abstract heights of policy analysis and the wide sweep of the heterogeneous northern and western suburbs I move closer to everyday activity. In the previous three chapters I looked at processes of globalisation, government public policy responses and changes in families, patterns of work and migration and indicated how they were written into the social, cultural and material landscape of the north and west. I argued that Australia as a society is becoming more unequal, but that, as education policy attempts to deny the importance of the social context, it establishes a weak equity framework that will do little to change the trajectories of inequity and injustice.

I now engage with the stories of sixteen schools. In this particular chapter, I look at issues that arise in the schools because of their physical location. I make the argument that the specific location of each school can have a profound impact on what it is that schools do. As well as indicating some general locality related matters, I focus on transience, concentrations of families placed under pressure, the employment/future-school contract, racism and National Action, and the processes of sub-urban redevelopment. I begin by looking at the conceptual frame that I will use for the next three chapters.

CONTEXT AND LOCALITY

Popular discourses, particularly in schools and education policy, often conflate neighbourhood with community. The notion of school-community relations and community representation are often written into quality assurance documents and principal selection guidelines for example. Such a discursive construction allows the election of a few people onto a School Council to represent a 'community' which is perceived as 'one'. A similar rhetorical conflation occurs between community and race. The notion that there is one Greek, or one Italian, or one Vietnamese community, obscures the very many significant differences within the category of race and the ways in which communities overlap and interweave their way in and through the discursive 'box'. What also slips from sight is the fact that a neighbourhood generally contains many communities, that people often belong to more than one community, that communities are formed on different bases (Plank, 1996), and that communities may stretch out well beyond the neighbourhood of the school - increasingly they are virtual. Because of this confusion it is necessary for the purpose of this study to pin down the words a little more - not by providing an exact 'scientific' definition, but delimiting them somewhat. Taking the caveats mentioned above, I have turned to anthropology for assistance.

Appadurai (1996) suggests that we use the term neighbourhood to describe a material site such as a suburb, but use the notion of locality to refer to the primarily relational and contextual aspects of that site. So a study of a particular neighbourhood would focus on the built and natural landscape, whereas a locality study would look at relational and contextual issues. Clearly the social relations are in part constructed by the material and vice versa, but they are not the same. A neighbourhood is inhabited by (some) materially situated communities in which locality and subjectivity are realised. In other words, we can
look to a particular site and research both the broader social and cultural relations of the locality as well as those of specific communities and subjects. Neighbourhoods are made up of places, sites where communities, discourses, teleologies, histories, and subjectivities meet. Specific places and the broader locality of which they are a constituent part, have symbolic meanings that are significant in the formation of both subjectivities and communities.

Neighbourhoods consist of many such places, of which the neighbourhood school is one.

Some of the literature on globalisation asserts that the neighbourhood is no longer significant, that its sense of locality has been emptied out by time-space compression,¹ that it can no longer support the formation of subjectivity, communities, teleologies (Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1993). Massey (1994) dismisses this as a totalising (male academic) fantasy. The local neighbourhood is still important she says, and I agree. As she succinctly puts it:

Much of life for many people, even in the heart of the First World, still consists of waiting in a bus-shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes. Hardly a graphic description of time-space compression (p. 163).

This study looks at the sixteen neighbourhoods, material sites, which are themselves part of a broader materiality called a region - to be precise two regions, the north and west of the city of Adelaide. The study is focussed on the neighbourhood school as a place where communities, subjectivities, teleologies and histories meet, and are produced. A study of this kind is primarily a 'locality study', in that its overall focus is the relational and contextual. In particular, it is the social relations of class, race, and gender, as metaphorical categories (Bourdieu, 1990), with which I am concerned as a means to discuss inequality(ies). An analysis of a neighbourhood school as a place therefore needs to encompass the physical and economic conditions of the neighbourhood; the multiple class, gender and race communities as well as religious, familial, affiliative, and friendship communities that make up its enrolments - what we might call, with Thrupp (1995) and after Coleman (1966), the 'school mix'.

There is one final conceptual 'tool' that I need to make explicit and it goes again to the question of the school. I have suggested that the school may be thought of as a place. A place is formed out of the particular and site specific set of social relations which interact at a particular location (Massey, 1994). No place is exactly the same as another, although some of the same relations, such as class, gender and race, may be at work. Actual physical places, such as schools and neighbourhoods, are the sites of social interaction.

¹ The condition of knowing more about and being affected most by places far away, rather than what goes on next door. Analysis of what is called time/space compression, or the stretching out of social relations over thousands of miles and fractions of a second, is often Eurocentric. Wrenche (1996) vividly documents how it is that large numbers of the world's poorest people in Africa barely have access to telephones and radios, let alone television and the Internet. Massey (1994) argues that what is often missed in stories of time-space compression is the penetration of the centre by the margins. See also Allen and Hamnett (1995) for a similar argument. In national politics it is a different story. In conditions of postcolonialism the colonisers can no longer ignore those whom they have invaded and exploited (Gelder & Jacobs, 1998; Jacobs, 1996).
and they are unique to that location because of the particular conglomerations of people, histories and subjectivities that come together. This particularity of relations meeting in a place Appadurai (1996) calls 'context derived'.

In a place there are ongoing relations. Places are fragile, and neighbourhoods and local institutions can be threatened by social and physical changes. Even in the most stable situations, local places require constant maintenance and there needs to be a range of local technologies and teleologies for the production and reproduction of neighbourhoods, social relations and subjectivities (Appadurai, 1996). It is through the agency and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990) of people engaged in everyday/evernight (D. Smith, 1990) social activities, that global trends and social relations of class, gender, and race become localised and these, in turn, create further social effects. Appadurai (1996) calls this positive construction 'context generative'. He maintains, because the local is 'context generative' as well as being context driven, that is, in the local place not only are people affected by social context, but they also they create social context, that, "neighbourhoods seem paradoxical because they both constitute and require contexts" (p. 186, my emphasis).

Thus, local institutions such as schools are not only shaped by global, national and state events and forces but they are also shaped and maintained by and shape and maintain locality, local social relations and local subjectivities, knowledges and narratives.

This premise is the axis around which the next four chapters turn.

THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF 'DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS'

In Chapter 5, I sketched the two regions with which I am concerned. I mentioned histories and local traditions, patterns of migration and settlement, recreation and leisure. It is not hard to imagine how it is that the nature and condition of school facilities are related to the period at which a particular neighbourhood was built. Nor is it too difficult to see that the income level of a particular neighbourhood may well have an impact on the level of school fees and fundraising that a school can undertake. But there are other ways in which the locality of the school makes a difference.

Because of my concern with class and economic inequalities, where an important consideration is related to changes in work and unemployment, with lone parenting another important issue, I have been particularly concerned with changes in the labour market, the family and public policy, viz.:

- Changes in the labour market
State and national governments are increasingly engaged in bidding wars to attract companies managed offshore while at the local level, small changes in multinational ledgers cause the loss of thousands of jobs, individual and family security and increasing distrust in the capacities of those elected to take charge. These global/local changes in the labour market create unemployment, and casualised employment, and also force many people to change their social relations – they drop out of work related activities, abandon expensive social leisure pastimes, move house or go on the road to
look for work or to find a cheaper dwelling, confine themselves to a new and isolated domestic idleness.

- **Changes in the family**
  Increasing divorce - South Australia's is the highest in Australia (Half of SA's marriages, 1998) - and separation often leads to at least one partner moving away from the established home and its social supports. Blended and re-blended families are increasingly the norm. Significant numbers of female headed families are dependent on barely adequate welfare payments, and women and children are often re-located in public housing, some of it specifically reserved for emergency placement. They find themselves far away from extended family support structures in neighbourhoods with large numbers of other children and adults in similar circumstances.

- **Changes in public policy**
  The global/nation state policy switch from the welfare assistance state to a minimalist safety net philosophy has led to the reduction of the social wage\(^2\) as well as reduction in the income levels of people living on wage substitutes and modest incomes (Fincher & Nieuwenhuysen, 1998; Travers & Richardson, 1993). Policy practices, such as contracting out and privatisation, combined with reduced government expenditure (in real terms), has led to a significant decline in public infrastructure, in health, welfare, and public transport (Carroll & Manne, 1992; Crooks, 1993; Webber & Crooks, 1996). This has had, and continues to have, very deleterious effects on social networks. Some of the key changes are:
  - public housing policy increasingly concentrates people in crisis in particular locations, at the same time as it breaks up established social networks through the redevelopment and sale of public housing stock in what are considered to be the 'more desirable' areas
  - health: low income people now have a less reliable and trustworthy public health system and are increasingly forced to manage their own situations. Community health services have been subsumed under regional bodies less sensitive to local variations and needs and their capacity to respond to the huge range of crisis demands means they have minimal time for preventative and social health programmes
  - the widespread increase in the user pays principle works against those struggling to remain just above the poverty line and many families now find they have no income for anything but the bare necessities. They withdraw from many social activities, most of which involve some cost.\(^3\)

This is the broad context in which neighbourhood 'disadvantaged' state schools find themselves. The neighbourhoods which they serve are becoming more tenuous, as

\(^2\) See Watts (1997), P. Smyth and Cass (1998) and Chapter 4 for an explanation of why Australians are peculiarly vulnerable to attacks on the social wage.

\(^3\) See for example state and federal Budget submissions by ACOS and The Brotherhood of St Lawrence on their web sites.
public policy threatens to withdraw more and more services at the same time as they are made more vulnerable by global economic and social changes. The city in which they are located is more (multiply) divided. The students whom they serve have a greater likelihood of tenuous employment. But what is of interest is how these issues play out in each place.

In this chapter I examine issues affecting some of the sixteen schools. These are 'context derived' issues that arise from the particular locality in which the schools are situated. These are not issues that arise because of 'who the students are' and 'what they do', rather it is how students and their families are positioned by particular sets of trends and relations and how that manifests in the schools. My goal in this chapter is to show how it is that specific local issues can colour the life of school and place boundaries around what is possible to achieve. These differences are often not visible to policy makers and to policy. These issues or 'problems' play out differently in separate locations as they combine with other trends, local people and pressures. These school differences are also 'context generative', as school decision makers respond differently to the issues, as they are able.

LOCALITY MATTERS

Despite the commonalities in experience of the schools that are at the heart of my research they are profoundly, and differently, affected by their location and the issues their students bring with them to school.

One northern suburbs primary principal reflected on the differences between the 'disadvantaged schools' in which they had worked, and the particularity of their current place:

My schools were one in the country and then several in the western suburbs. The student profile here is very much Anglo, with lots of families in generational poverty. I came from the west which is really multicultural, with a big influx of kids from Vietnamese and Cambodian backgrounds. I reckon one of the big differences is that for some groups education is still an avenue for social mobility. Whereas I reckon for large numbers of parents at our school they no longer entirely believe that. They want better lives for their kids, for their kids to have an easier life with more options than they've had, but I don't know that they are really confident that the school system is going to deliver that. And there is the hostility here, and its also a very violent community. I was really shocked when I first came out here - and all my teaching had been in DSP schools. I'm not sure I can make sense of it, I just know that it is different. There's not the extended family support. Lots of the families are headed by women but without their parents' support. Perhaps that contributes - the isolation... It is really rare for kids to talk about going into the city... And also the position of women, just the attitude towards women... I don't know if its different in other cultures, just more hidden... and the divisiveness between people is I think is different. (Transcript 13)

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4 Neoliberal policy does support some community networks particularly in welfare, heritage and environment. These are perhaps best seen as the cooption of the community sector to state goals (Brennan, 1998).

5 I discuss this common positioning in more detail in the next chapter.
The easiest locality generated difference to 'see', and one that is recognised in public policy, is that related to patterns of migration, global diasporas and colonial occupations. These are writ large in the northern and western suburbs. The major migrant hostel in South Australia is located in the western suburbs and its occupants attend nearby local schools. At the moment most of the occupants are refugees from Eastern Europe, the media headlines about Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia brought into our midst. But the history of migration is patently apparent. It is not uncommon in the north to hear the varied accents of Great Britain among older people in shopping centres, pubs and school offices and foyers. The western suburbs on the other hand have large numbers of Greek speaking people. Eastern European cultures pushed out from postwar refugee camps and Vietnamese, predominantly from the South. The north contains concentrations of people with Italian connections many engaged in the vegetable industry, German, Cambodian, and recent Polish and Rumanian communities. These are reflected in shops, churches and clubs and also in the Languages Other Than English (LOTEs) offered in schools, the translating and interpreting services required at parent meetings, levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) staffing, school newsletters and curriculum content.

Since the early 60s Aboriginal people have also moved into the metropolitan area in significant numbers, into the lower income and public housing areas in the western suburbs first of all, and then into the northern suburbs. The most comprehensive indigenous services were developed in Port Adelaide under a more benevolent state; whereas communities in the north are not nearly so well served. Particular schools in the west and north have high numbers of Aboriginal students and this is generally reflected in curriculum, in school buildings - where Nunga⁶ rooms are common and Aboriginal murals a feature - and in school programmes, such as homework centres and antiracism procedures, and in special staffing provisions.

Specific school differences to do with language, race and culture have been acknowledged through multicultural policies and specific differential staffing allocated to individual schools through tightly centrally controlled formulæ. It is arguable that such measures failed to acknowledge the breadth and depth of difference in schools, but they were predicated on the notion that each school was a different cultural 'place' and had to work out local racial/cultural solutions to its 'equity problems'. However there are many other specific differences that are not institutionally recognised in this manner. What is also important is that it is the combinations of different factors that make each site unique.

**Locality themes**

I will deal with five particular locality based themes that emerge from the sixteen schools. These are a selection of examples from transcripts that serve to indicate how New Times and changes in the labour market, public policy and families work their way through schools. Those themes are:

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⁶ Each state has different indigenous words to describe Aboriginal and white people. In South Australia it is Nungas and Gunyahs (that's we whitefellas).
transience
\* concentrations of families placed under pressure
\* the employment/future - school contract
\* racism and National Action
\* urban redevelopment and redeveloping neighbourhoods.

In this discussion I use some of the words of school administrators to give a little of the flavour of their schools, and their particularities. I will show what these issues mean for the schools and for the schooling they are able to offer.

It is important to stress that this is by no means a complete list of local issues. From the sixteen schools I examined, I could equally have chosen to look at what it means to be located in a neighbourhood where at a particular time/space there is a culture of vandalism and setting fires in local schools, what it means when the cultural mix of the school is suddenly changed, or what happens when schools are amalgamated. These particular examples are only illustrative of the argument that neighbourhood locality issues can dominate a school agenda for considerable periods of time and that this is rarely taken into account by central policy makers.

**TRANSIENCE**

It seems that more people are moving about in the current economic climate than in the recent past. The majority of the sixteen school administrators had the view that there were more families splitting up, more people losing houses, defaulting on rents, moving to look for work...just generally on the move. Their general impression was that more people were less settled and the social relationships that supported them were more fragile, if not fractured altogether. This caused increased numbers of transient students in their school populations. Two schools stood out as having remarkably high numbers of transient students coming from highly mobile families:

25% of the students this year were transient. You cannot predict it - so it means class sizes can vary hugely from the beginning of the year to the finish. The kids' learning is disrupted. One child in Year 4 had been in eleven schools. (Transcript 2)

Transience is a major issue. We have about 80 kids move out and about 80 kids move in during a year. Our school population is fairly even over the whole year but the number of kids moving in and out is just astronomical. I mean we've only got 200 kids... so when you have 80 moving in and 80 moving out in a year it puts a huge pressure on what's happening. Some kids have had seven or eight schools too and they're only in Year 4 or 5... and the parents have a negative attitude to education because their kids haven't learnt. And it doesn't actually occur to them that this is actually a result of the kid's never being in a place long enough for anyone really to understand what their learning needs are. (Transcript 18)

Transience is often related to the breakdown of families:

I have never seen so many parents who are in hiding, from violence, involved with drugs...they'll ring and say, can't tell you where I am...might be back.....there's one at the moment, Mum is off in hiding somewhere with the youngest and the older boy in Year 7 is dossing around the place with friends. (Transcript 2)
Such families are often at the edges of the city, newly re-located in emergency public housing, cut off from previous social networks, emotionally traumatised: women and children cope in different ways. One small school in the west found it just couldn’t cope with the number and combination of families who arrived:

We've got one family who've caused us considerable grief and have caused themselves considerable grief this year ... Mum's linked in with a group of particularly unsavoury friends and the boys are having all sorts of problems coping with Mum's drug addiction, the parties, people falling through windows, this sort of thing. One of the girls was previously with Mum and Dad in their own home out north somewhere I think and things were fine and then Dad went off with Mum's best friend and the family split apart and Mum's moved into Housing Trust accommodation down here and the older daughter's got into drugs and .... yea, they've just really taken a tumble. Previously they weren't ...now they are... (Transcript 9)

Family breakdowns are often connected with the economic pressures caused by prolonged unemployment or the shock of retrenchment. Drastic loss of income leads to people having to abandon houses they were previously buying. Sometimes this means moving into emergency housing, sometimes to rent free options.

Unemployment is really high. We have a number of families who become unemployed, and we have two areas - we have the houses who are buying, there's quite a percentage of our families, probably about a third, who are in their own homes that they can buy - and the rest are in rental - Housing Trust. A lot of them are not actually living in their own homes, they are actually living with other people. Like this morning I did four enrolments, two of those are living with friends, they've just moved here from somewhere else. Sometimes they've been kicked out of housing, we've had that, they've been moved out because of the state of the housing, like it's been filthy or whatever. And others who just live with friends until the friends get sick of them and then they move to the next set of friends until they have a fight and then they move to the next set of friends. So we get a fair amount of that. Also house swapping. You know, you don't get on with your neighbours and somebody else doesn't get on with their neighbours so you just swap... (Transcript 18)

One school in an area used for emergency housing was also close to a women's shelter:

We have a refuge - a shelter near here, so there a lot of little kids coming through too... the kind of anxieties that they carry round with them are pretty awful... (Transcript 22)

Schools with concentrations of transient students do not receive additional resources. Every student who enrolls has to be given books, usually free on School Card, and if

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7 All recipients of a Commonwealth Health Care card are automatically entitled to School Card, a cash allowance to help pay for schooling. (A Health Care Card is given to people in receipt of unemployment and sickness benefits, parenting allowance, and partner allowance.) Other families can make special application for School Card on the basis of hardship and these applications are assessed individually. School Card allowance is worth $110 for a primary school child, and $170 for a secondary student. The money is given to the school at the beginning of the year and adjusted after lists of names are sent in to Central Office. School Card operates as a line of credit in the school and can pay for fees, excursions and books. Schools thus receive a standard
they have been enrolled at another school that year, the allowance is not transferred in accordance with principals association policy. This policy was made to prevent unnecessary bookwork and clearly is sensible for the vast majority of schools. It penalises the small number who have disproportionately high numbers of mobile students who, by very their location, are the 'disadvantaged schools' least able to afford such largesse.

Furthermore, because transient students are not 'counted' in the current statistical collections - it is the number of students present on any of the three census days that matters - this transience may be invisible to head office. This means that centrally allocated additional resources which are distributed on the basis of numbers and School Card percentages, such as primary school counsellors, do not automatically flow. It is thus possible, as is indeed the case with one of the very small primary schools in this research, for a school that is next to a refuge, or located in an emergency housing area, to miss out on the very counselling support it needs so desperately, because 'the formula' doesn't take transience into account. Transience literally isn't counted.

The principal of a small western suburbs school was clearly pushed to the limit by this systemic blindness:

There have been some very difficult students move into the school this year, who perhaps weren't so difficult on their own, but together... one class took in three new Year 7 girls, and together they've just been absolute dynamite. So yea, this has been a really torrid term for everyone. We don't have a counsellor and we lost our Deputy this year, so I'm it. That is very, very challenging. Trying to keep a hold on all of the administrative things plus the counselling job... It's such a drain, you can't keep going that way. I actually got a Personnel Counsellor in last Tuesday and she spent the whole day with the staff and all of us just offloaded everything and she's given us some feedback and acknowledged how difficult it is. And the DS came in and spent some time at staff meeting with us, but people here are just plain worn out. And with very difficult clientele and very large class sizes... All schools are staffed the same. I went to see about getting extra staffing. I had it all documented, the numbers of kids with ADD, the number of Aboriginal kids, the number of kids being supported by case work and the Behaviour Support team, and I said, 'We don’t have an AEW, we don’t have an AERT.'

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per capita grant which covers non salary, utilities and maintenance expenses, plus the additional per capita School Card allowance.

8 School Card now costs the state about $10 million, but it drives another $60 million of resources, according to a Departmental officer.

9 DS is District Superintendent, line manager for about fifty to seventy schools, preschools and children's services in a geographical area.

10 ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder, a condition previously known as hyperactivity that usually involves medication with Ritalin. A significant trade in Ritalin is now reported in some secondary schools as older siblings sell off the younger children's pills.

11 AEW - Aboriginal Education Worker, a para professional position for an indigenous person who supports Aboriginal Studies and liaises with parents. These positions only exist in schools with concentrations of Aboriginal students, are poorly paid and casual. Some AEWs are engaged in preservice teacher education.

12 AERT - Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher - a usually white qualified teacher who teaches Aboriginal Studies, offers additional support to Aboriginal children often in the form of ESL and
we don't have an ESL teacher, we don't have a counsellor, we don't have a DP. We're just stretched so tightly you expect people to get uptight, and stressed. You know it's really, really hard.' And they just said, 'Oh there's lots of really hard schools around the state.' And the DS who came with me said, 'But not like this one.' (Transcript 9, my emphasis)

The increased mobility of the population is experienced differently by schools. Some, more than others, have demands made on their finances and counselling support that are unknown in other schools. Continued re-organisation of classes, and additional demands on classroom teachers to establish relationships, assess learning, design individualised learning programmes to fill gaps are required - but not resourced.

The major locality issue for these schools is place specific and unseen by central policies that homogenise and universalise across the category of disadvantage.

**FAMILIES PLACED UNDER PRESSURE**

The majority of the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' have a range of students, children from moderate income two parent working class families right through to welfare dependent families living in highly stressful circumstances. None of them have many parents with high incomes, and only a couple of the schools have parents with professional qualification available to their School Councils. All sixteen of the schools have significant numbers of children and young people for whom schooling as it is currently organised is inadequate. Many of these children and their families have very hard lives indeed. Dealing with these children and young people takes up substantial amount of everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', which is the topic of the next chapter.

However, schools in neighbourhoods that are more stable, where there are more mixed populations, and where there is less pressure, have less constant 'crisis as everyday'. They also often have local infrastructure and social networks with which to interact and on which they can call. Neighbourhood state schools located in the low income public housing estates of Adelaide where employment security is tenuous and where communities are currently reeling from the rapid shifts in public provision and the decline of public infrastructure, are subject to the pressures of their local neighbourhoods. There are six such schools in the sixteen I have researched. They are in familiar locations - Enfield B, the western side of Elizabeth, Le Fevre Peninsular, and Smithfield Plains - those the Social Atlas, the Health Atlas and labour market data designate as 'highly disadvantaged'.

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works to 'Aboriginalise' the curriculum. They are allocated to schools with very large numbers of Aboriginal children.

13 DP - Deputy principal. Only primary schools of a particular size are entitled to a DP.

14 The school was given a couple of extra days per week teacher time for the remainder of the year after this plea for help, but it was seen as an oddity requiring amelioration rather than a systemic policy problem that such 'oddities' were invisible.
The 'school mix' in these locations has extremely high numbers of children whose families are experiencing hard times. Parents and children under pressure often take their anger out in and on their local school. Depression and despair, sometimes translated as lack of motivation, cynicism, and lack of commitment by the psychologically inclined, can be readily seen in classrooms and in the offices of 'out of class' staff placing huge welfare demands on the schools.

Principals commented on a range of pressures on their students. One drew my attention to severe health problems:

We have a really high level of health problems. That would include mental health and some I think are undiagnosed - nobody's actually looked to see if they are in fact mental health problems..... We have huge numbers of parents who are quite ill, and quite a lot of our kids have dying parents or have parents who have recently died. You know there's a huge number of kids who only have one parent due to death, rather than to family breakdown. We have - there seems to be an inordinate number of accidents as well, with people in motor bike accidents as well. I'm not sure how that links to poverty- maybe it links to drinking. (Transcript 18)

And we speculated together whether the public housing authority staff deliberately placed people in this particular area, close to a public hospital, or whether it was just that poor people had poor health.

Another noted the comparison with their previous disadvantaged school:

there were quite a lot of people that had jobs, they might have been poor paying jobs but they had jobs...they had a kind of dignity, whereas here people don't have that, or they've lost that or they've never had that. (Transcript 22)

One commented on the way in which the housing-poor reputation-stigma connections were produced and reproduced,

Something about the dynamics. I was talking to the local Housing Trust ....its a self perpetuating cycle.....when somebody comes in crisis to the Housing Trust.... 'We've got some houses in (Elizabeth)', 'No, I don't want to go there'

And if they can afford to they'll go elsewhere, they'll go (south) or (west) and they'll get a place there, but if they're really desperate, a real emergency - a crisis, they'll accept it and they'll come here. And so you get a whole street full of people in crisis. And I think that's what it is, it just perpetuates it doesn't it. People don't want to come here so the only people that come here are those that get real emergency housing. And I think that's a lot of what happens. (Transcript 14)

Enormous demands are placed on these schools and their staffs because children bring their lives and their families' lives with them to school. Lives are not left at the school gate in the morning and picked up on the way home. Children from families in crisis deal with stress in different ways, but anger and frustration is a common response:

I had a girl at lunch time, half an hour ago, at lunchtime, and she'd had a flare up, pushed another kid over, so I brought her into the office and I was chatting to her and she had hardly any sleep last night.

"OK why didn't you have any sleep?"

"Because Julie was playing the radio all night."
"OK. Well what can you do about it?"
"Nothing. My parents don't care."
"Who's Julie?"
"Oh, she's my sister. But she's sleeping at home now."
Julie shares the room with her at home, plays the radio loud all night, she can't sleep and so she comes here and then is oversensitive, and where do you... you can't intervene in that. I mean she's obviously not learning. And this kind of thing is all the time. (Transcript 14)

Sometimes there is no time to even find out what is going on before a crisis erupts. The same principal tells me:

Last week... there was this kid who wanted to jump off the roof. Now this kid just went off and swore at the teacher and then was sent down to the office to cool down, just ran off and climbed up on the roof and so we had to get the fire brigade and the police and all that... And it turned out that he's off living with his grandmother, his real mother was just put in hospital, and we didn't even know any of that, and he was just at the end of his tether. This is a 9 year old. (Transcript 14)

The principal estimates that at any one time about 12% of the school population are in acute crisis. The school has a half time counsellor and they have allocated scarce resources to buy additional administration time. Despite this, almost 100% of the principal's time and that of the counsellor and Deputy, are consumed by emergencies. They say:

We try to manage as best we can within the school but we still have the highest referrals and the highest number of exclusions of any school. (Transcript 14)

Another school principal also had cause to reflect on the crisis, counselling and discipline nexus:

We have quite a few children who we believe are suffering from mental health problems, .... emotional or physical problems... it's time consuming with all the meetings that are necessary to support these kids. You don't get any extra admin time for doing it and you have to try to fit that in during the day as well as monitoring the students during the day as well. We've had twenty or twenty one suspensions this term. Now I don't suspend easily. If we can find a way of supporting the children to make some changes, give them the opportunity to come and cool down before they blow and do and say things they shouldn't, we do. But it's just been a signal to some of these new families in particular that this is not acceptable behaviour, something has to change here.. so that's the largest number of suspensions I've probably ever done. In one term I've done more than I probably have over three years... So it's been quite hectic with return from suspension meetings, student development plans, all that sort of thing. (Transcript 9)

The demands on school staff for counselling are often beyond not only their time and energy resources but also those that are available in the neighbourhood. Diminution of the public sector has led to significant cuts in health, welfare and interagency programmes which equate to huge waiting lists, and a rapid turnover of staff in what over-extended support services there are:

I really think that in this community you need a coordinated look... It needs education, heath, housing, all those people need to look. When I came in that's what made the difference. This was happening on the macro level and I'm Principal of a school within this context and yes, we can do something... But over the five years I've been here that's
all disappeared, and the Social Justice Project has disappeared, and the CAMH$^{15}$ there’s a six month waiting list to get any support, (the CAMHS worker) is running up and down the corridor and social justice is hardly talked about these days. (Transcript 14)

FACS$^{16}$ is next to useless and people don’t even bother going through them any more. There are some very serious issues here, some very serious psychological issues that some kids have got - you know we’ve had kids that have pulled out knives at home and threatened their parents with a kitchen knife and whilst they haven’t brought a knife to school, their behaviour’s been fairly beserk, and then you’re sitting round and saying, well the earliest time we can get them in to see a psychiatrist is a month’s time.... what are we going to be doing in the meantime at school? The crisis response, the crisis care and the respite care is down to zilch. If you’re a parent, there’s almost nowhere you can go to just get a break from your kids if they’re going nuts, and most of the kids that have behaviour issues at school are having them at home, there’s very few that aren’t... So there’s whole parts of the community that are actually in crisis themselves just dealing with the stuff that they are dealing with and what to do about it, they feel so powerless. (Transcript 16)

Neighbourhoods and schools under pressure need substantial additional support. Some manage to do quite a lot by themselves, but their programmes are operating under duress in current conditions. One secondary school with a focus on catering for early school leavers found their programmes increasingly under strain:

The students set up a student network, its kind of like a cooperative, op shop place where they actually gather in foods and that sort of stuff and give it to students when they are in need. So there’s foodstuffs and clothing and a bit of trailer help in moving... They had steady demand but in the last couple of years they just haven’t been able to keep up, they haven’t had enough food which is an indicator that the poverty situation has got worse and worse.

And we used to put aside funds for emergencies which the students could access through the counsellors and we had to replenish them a number of times last year because they just got used up. They made ends meet the year before. It was just simple things like a student would break their glasses and not be able to afford to get new ones but couldn’t read, or see the work without glasses. Our students who were parents themselves would feed their kids, and in the end wouldn’t have enough to feed themselves and we’d help them out a bit... so it was real emergency stuff.

The Child Care Centre is under threat, the funding was extended till the end of last year, the subsidies that DETE$^{17}$ gives... so it was under review and the fact that TAFE$^{18}$ had become part of DECS$^{19}$ was a big problem in the sense that the Department saw that if it did something for us it would have to do something for TAFE it would have to subsidise them too and it was looking like we were going to lose the funding. If the subsidy goes then the students can’t afford to pay normal child care costs to study and in general, they don’t have family support systems who can look after their kids, so if they can’t bring

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$^{15}$ CAMHS - Child, Adolescent Mental Health Services.

$^{16}$ FACS - Family and Community Service - a.k.a. 'the Welfare'.

$^{17}$ DETE - Department of Employment, Training and Education, the current agglomeration of which school education is part.

$^{18}$ TAFE - Technical and Further Education - the name of the public institutions that deliver training and some adult education.

$^{19}$ DECS - Department of Education and Children's Services which was recently amalgamated with the training and employment sector to become DETE.
them to school, they can't basically come. That centre takes, over a week, probably fifty or sixty children, some of them of course from the same family, but there would be large number of students who would just drop out of education simply because of child care if that closed so that's a pretty delicate line there.

To try to talk that up when Social Justice isn't a concept any more, or with politicians who don't see the importance, well don't understand Social Justice in the way that we do. ...they think if the student really wanted to they would have finished school before, they'd find a way. And life isn't like that. So it's really hard in this day and age to argue for those sorts of things when the concept of Social Justice is gone. (Transcript 6)

The everyday realities of lives in the neighbourhood irrevocably colours even the routines of the school:

We schedule our school events around welfare payment days, that kind of stuff...you know you can't just organise something. (Transcript 22)

A lot of parents and kids don't venture very far. I mean there's no transport at home, most don't have a car, and the bus route has been cut right back. It now only runs on an hourly basis and not after six o'clock at night. It's a bit of a ghetto, not a safe place...the people who live here don't go out after six o'clock. They won't venture out onto the streets. We have to have School Council meetings straight after school at three o'clock. Any function we have, like the getting to know you we have straight after school and we have a barbecue tea, because people won't walk - and they do have to walk - they won't walk the streets at night because it's not safe. (Transcript 23)

Such pressures are not easily captured by statistics. To all extents and purpose, the School Card percentages in these schools are not substantially different from those in other locations. School Card is merely a measure of income. In these communities what is at issue are other factors that contribute to well being. Long term unemployment strips families of their material assets and reserves of hope. According to their neighbourhood school principals, large numbers of families would meet the criteria for social deprivation (Travers, 1997) - living under financial stress, going without meals, pawnning or selling belongings, being unable to heat the home or to pay electricity, gas or water bills, having to delay optical or dental treatment, simply not having enough income to get by. While such data would be highly intrusive to collect, general understandings about 'what life is like' in this 'place' does reside in the schools who see children and parents daily. Unfortunately, such evidence is not taken seriously by policy makers who trust the sanctity of numbers and formulae rather than qualitative professional judgements.

There is another cost too. While a few principals and staffs in such locations stay in their schools for long periods if time, often with spells out doing other jobs, many cannot deal for extended periods of time with the contradictions they experience:

It must have been about three weeks ago that I had one of those flashes where I thought, "What am I doing here?" and I thought about it and I realised that the past five years I've had the belief that I could make a difference. I could have some influence over the cycle of disadvantage in this community, in the school. There are students going through the school, that in a few years time I would be able to say, "Hey, the school being the only stability in kids lives and the nature of our activities and programs, I've really contributed to making a difference."
And about three weeks ago, I think it was one afternoon after things were a bit rough, I suddenly realised that that was not true. In fact, I felt that I was just an agent of the system that was reinforcing the disadvantage and all the dysfunctional stuff that was happening because we don’t have the resources to effectively manage and support students so what I’ve ended up doing …
I end up suspending kids, excluding kids and all that’s doing is just perpetuating…and the school is just an institution that’s continuing and reinforcing all the impact of poverty and I saw myself…. here I am, I’m an agent, I’m part of this process that’s reinforcing that. And that revelation…at times its been rough here, I’ve had the same experience in the past and I’ve had some really difficult, challenging times, but it really made me sit up and think and as a result of that I’ve made a decision that I’m not going to stay here any more. I think I’ve had my time. And given that perspective on things I think it is time I moved.20 (Transcript 14)

Out of the sixteen schools I looked at, five of them were dealing with high concentrations of families placed at stress. What is also significant is that each of the five schools was dealing with other issues at the same time and each was differently able to deal with the children and families. One had high numbers of mobile families and had been facing possible closure or amalgamation because of declining enrolment. They were told in mid 1998 they would (probably) close, thus (nearly) ending four years of uncertainty.21 Another had a principal who had been in the school for well over ten years, a relatively stable staff, and well established routines that were known throughout the neighbourhood. One was in an area scheduled for redevelopment and faced an uncertain future, its principal had moved on and its well documented innovative curriculum was left in doubt. The school taking in adult students had evolved a particular and unique set of programmes that were dependent on additional funding and staffing which were slashed in the 1998 state budget, thus throwing doubt over their capacity to continue to act as a poverty circuit - breaker. The fourth is expanding in enrolment with not enough facilities left after an amalgamation five years ago (from which it has not fully recovered) and has large numbers of alienated students (I deal with this in the next section). The fifth has worked hard on innovative curriculum approaches but the continued whittling away of supporting public and neighbourhood infrastructure is making life in the school increasingly difficult.

All of these schools are well managed. None of them are ‘out of control’. Stability is fragile, highly dependent on continuity of staff, funding, enrolment and external support structures to cope with the particular ‘school mix’ of their locality. Each school is extremely vulnerable in the current economic and policy context, just like the multiple communities they serve.

THE EMPLOYMENT/FUTURE AND SCHOOL 'CONTRACT'

All 'disadvantaged schools' have parents and students who strongly believe that twelve years of education are necessary for a secure future. The seminal research conducted by

20 The principal has now transferred to another disadvantaged school, but one that is differently positioned socially and geographically.
21 At the time of writing they were still waiting for the final word.
Connell, Ashenden and colleagues (1982) suggested that working class parents saw a strong link between education and the labour market, and therefore wanted their children to do well at school. That connection was not as strong in the minds of their children and the researchers speculated about what might happen in the future. Nearly twenty years and a significant rise in unemployment later, the picture has not altered out of sight, but the differences between those who believe there is a point to staying at school and working, and those who don't, has got much sharper.

The picture plays out differently in different schools. In one primary school the principal remarked:

We have families where nobody knows what it's like to go to work any more - there's just no ethic of going to work, so there's no understanding, going to school for some of them is like, well it's like going to prison... there's all these rules, and for some of our kids, they're the only person in the whole household who has to go anywhere during the day and that makes it really difficult because the child who's coming to school sees it would be much nicer to just be home. Well, eventually we do get to a point where they'd rather be at school. There's this thing of wanting to take days off whenever they feel like it. I'm talking about a small percentage of families because a large percentage of our families whether they're on a pension or unemployed or whatever want their kids to do well at school - but we have small percentage of families who don't feel any commitment to school. They really can't see any benefits in it and they'll actually say in meetings, 'I didn't do any good at school.' And 'What's he want school for, there's no jobs anyway'... there's that kind of reaction to school, so there's not a positive ethos about coming to school for quite a number of our kids... So homework, and things like that associated with school, are quite a problem. (Transcript 9)

The belief that secondary schooling no longer guarantees a job is reinforced by the constant media announcements about the loss of jobs, not just in unskilled areas, but for those who have 'trades':

Today - television news showed footage of 2,300 people queued for 70 jobs at a new cinema complex in Salisbury, and covered the loss of jobs at a local television station, a fruit juice company, a shoe manufacturer and an engineering firm. The Premier announced 200 new jobs over the next three years with Motorola, less than the losses, and plans for a new tertiary training program for software engineers. The new state Minister for Employment announced a series of regional job conferences to try to work out what to do. (Field notes, October 12-19, 1998)

While much of the literature about early school leavers rightly focuses on what it is that schools can do to make schooling more attractive and relevant (e.g. Batten & Russell, 1995) there is a suspicion in the schools that contextual factors are increasingly very important. One northern secondary school has had a recent past of extremely high retention. The school philosophy was one of 'keeping the students in', rather than letting them leave or 'pushing them out'. As unemployment has worsened, and as a school in the region has enterprisingly marketed enterprise education (Mulraney, 1997) complete with a 'guarantee' of employment for students and a 'retraining guarantee' to employers (Lloyd 1998c), this school has struggled to come to terms with the ethics of competition and cooperation, plummeting retention and students' future prospects. The principal suggests that the students have little faith in the capacity of the school to deliver 'the goods':

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It's the view that many students have as they get older about their prospects on leaving school, and the lure of very short term, temporary, casual, part time employment that exists, that will, in an environment of young people thinking that nothing much will happen, this little bit looks better than nothing, you might as well take it and leave school.

What we know from them revisiting us and doing a bit of research and talking to that group of 16 or 17 year olds about what's happening to their friends and so on, is that those jobs last for a few months and then they lose them and they have, unfortunately somehow lost the drive to come back to school and start it all again. I think that's particularly the case that kids who leave midway or near the end of their first year of the SACE\textsuperscript{22}. There's not too much that can be salvaged from what they've done, generally speaking, so it means that they have to come back to school and start it all again with a group of kids who are one or two years younger than they are, and all that, and that's a pretty hard call...

And it's a particularly hard call for kids and families who don't have some reasonably deep rooted academic motivation and understandings about what it means to be successful. So youth unemployment casts a big shadow. (Transcript 8)

The dilemmas around trying to keep students at school, their likelihood of getting any employment and the immediate consequence that they may well transfer to the nearby vocational option colours a range of decisions in the school, from designing curriculum options to small interactions. The principal struggles with the issue:

The pull of schooling is not as great as the apparent opportunity. I reckon every kid who goes into all those service industry jobs believes that they're going to be the chosen one from the crew to get management training, because they'll talk about it - "This is a real opportunity for me" - and I find it really difficult to argue with a 16 or 17 year old when they might be right and that might be the only opportunity they're going to get for the next five years or whatever... We're jammed in a cleft stick on that one.

We should of course be encouraging kids to stay on at school but sometimes you ask for what, they get their SACE and what happens then? And then they are too old to have any opportunity of getting in at this lowest rung of the ladder and however politically biased one might be against some of the operators in the service industries, for the kids who actually make it, they get something they would be very happy to call a career.

I think we have to be really careful not to see that through our set of filters about schooling and academia and everything else. (Transcript 8)

There is unlikely to be a single or simple explanation for the phenomenon of falling school retention nor any magic bullet to fix it. Recent studies in Australia indicate that young people act in ways that assist their own marginalisation, and that acts of resistance vary, with gender, location and cultural factors creating observable specificities (Wyn & White, 1997). The degree to which young people exercise agency through the act of leaving school or through acting in ways that ensure that they are required to go, is situational and contingent, dependent on the young person's "time, space, activity, resources and identity... and upon their own biography and psychological makeup" (p. 143). As this principal put it:

The dynamics of retention rates tend to be worse in schools which are located in areas of higher than average youth unemployment and it's no accident like everything else about the differences between schools is no accident. (Transcript 8)

\textsuperscript{22} The SACE is the South Australian Certificate in Education - the Years 11 and 12 credential.
Another secondary school in the sixteen is indelibly coloured by the spectre of youth unemployment, and the alienation of young people from schooling is palpable. Large numbers of the students have almost, if not entirely, given up on the connection between the life, labour market and school success. They seem to see no point in any schooling. In response to my question about the key issues in the school, the principal said:

There's absolutely no doubt about what would be key from the staff's point of view and that is kids who don't want to work. Work as in don't want to work in class and who find all sorts of ways around it. It is the most important issue in the entire school. You could say there are all sorts of elements to that including truancy, but there are many, many kids in the school who see absolutely no point in doing anything. And that shows up in class and just takes the hugest amount of effort on the part of teachers to just drag stuff out of kids. I'm sure they try a whole range of things, and it's a very complex set of issues... but that's the key. (Transcript 8)

The principal is concerned that some staff can no longer see those students who not only want to, but also do, achieve:

In reality what they're doing is that they're focusing on groups of kids, I think, to the exclusion of others. When you look at our overall results, at each year level, I don't think it is getting worse. In fact, we're getting some improvement I think... the number of kids who get 'Ns' are actually decreasing. I think it's a perception sort of thing. I think the kids who the staff perceive don't want to do the work are actually becoming more of an issue because they're more disruptive, they're more vocal, they are less amenable to anything you do with them, they're more entrenched, they're more determined. (Transcript 8)

However, the successful students are used by some staff as the exemplar of what all students should be, and some teachers also use the work habits and curriculum engagement of the 'good' students to not only justify that their pedagogy does not need to change, but to focus on the 'bad' students' 'attitude'. They ascribe individual and group deficit explanations for the passive and overt rejection of being schooled - its 'who the kids are' and 'what they do' that is the problem. The difficulties experienced by many staff are a vicious and self perpetuating downward spiral of attempting to motivate the students, meeting resistance, lowering expectations, trying to motivate the students with less challenging work and so on:

It's... a reinforcing sort of cycle with the kids... the kids don't do any work, so therefore "Why would I do anything different, why would I put any effort in, do anything different, because I put all this effort in and the kids won't do it anyway... I try a few things, I try what I know, I think when they come to school they should want to do work, they should see that they could get good marks at school and that would help them get a job... I'm still in control of what I teach and they don't want to do that"... there develops quite level of anger that some teachers have directed towards the kids - "you make my life a misery, you make it really difficult for me to come and do anything, you make it so frustrating. I go home and I'm really tired, I don't want to put in any extra time to do anything different"... so I keep cycling round the same stuff year after year. (Transcript 8)

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21 In Stage One of the SACE, a failure is recorded as an N for Not Met Requirements.
There is considerable pressure in the school for alternative programs that will channel the reluctant groups into courses that are 'relevant'. The principal is determined that this will not happen and that there will not be a dual system sorting students out in their school. They acknowledge that the dual system is operating anyway, particularly through the welfare and disciplinary channels, and that while there is a desperate need to change the curriculum, there are still those contextual issues over which they have no influence:

Most of those students will end up being suspended or excluded - well not most, but many of them... so I'll probably be in meetings with them and their parents. Their education is not related to anything. Whatever we are teaching is not related to their lives or anything basically, and the most common thing is that they have no idea about what they will do when they leave school, or any idea about what's possible really, they might be able to come up with some vague sorts of things but have no information really, have no idea... I'm talking about Year 8s and 9s. And almost without fail, almost every kid that's involved in some incident about disrupting the class or not doing their work, or truanting or whatever and you say, "Now what is it that you think you might be aiming for?" and it's blank. And you know, the same thing the parents say, "I wasn't very good at school either" or "I think you should be stricter with my son, he's hopeless at home too, I can't control him, I think you should do something here." (Transcript 8)

The principal's description of the school resonates with that of Wexler's (Wexler et al., 1992) 'urban underclass' school of alienated staff and students. The underclass school, according to Wexler, was a highly regulated environment that used therapeutic and educational language and disciplinary procedures to take control of a potentially uncontrollable situation. It was characterised by a 'minority culture of achievement', that is, only a few students were convinced that school success was both a necessity for the future and worthwhile. The alternative courses that the 'underclass school' had established, to retain and interest students, emphasised social relationships at the expense of rigor: they were 'dead end' courses. Wexler suggests that the students' oppositional activities, the verbal put downs, fighting, tough talking, cutting classes and the like, that occur in the underclass school, are attempts to 'become somebody', to realise the self. Staff in the school who focus on the students' 'whole attitude', do thus 'see' what is happening. They see the 'somebody' and the 'somebody's' moral orientations formed in opposition to the institution. It is precisely that which makes it hard for teachers to do their jobs in both old and new ways and it is precisely what teachers in the underclass school target.

There are echoes of Wexler's theorisation in the principal's words:

There are more kids here... and the teacher will quite politely and calmly say to them, "Look what are you doing, can you get on with your work", "Why? Why would I?" "Please don't go and stand there in the yard, that's out of bounds." "Why? Why? What's it to you?"
And that's, I'm not trying to say that it's out of control, but it's one of those things that contributes and keeps eating away at staff's confidence to deal with things. (Transcript 8)

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24 This is Wexler's term. I use it advisedly.
Wexler suggests that the underclass school is a particular form of the 'erosion of the social', oppositional, resistant, alienated. And, even if this is only a partial picture of this particular school (which it is), as the other nearby principal said, surely this is no accident in an area with one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country?

These schools are located in a region of well publicised, high overall unemployment. They offer a comprehensive education to all comers, making no claims for specialisation in either higher education courses or vocational training. It seems at least some students who are highly motivated towards university or employment do not end up at these two schools - there are of course some in the two schools who are highly successful and many others who do 'moderately well'. These students tend to be located in particular subject and student grouping combinations that often focus on the 'setting' of Maths, Science and to a lesser degree, English. The range of difference of achievement in these schools is very wide and is the 'within school' (and 'within classroom') difference noted in the effective schools literature.

However it is simplistic to suggest that school reform efforts constrained by the current resourcing and curriculum policies will substantively alter the directions in which students and teachers are travelling. The combination of marketisation, students' disillusionment with their future prospects and the inadequate curriculum is potent. This kind of school culture, and the dilemmas produced by the effects of the declining labour market on students, is reflected in plummeting school retention rates and in parent satisfaction surveys.

Neither of these phenomena has any explanatory power, and the schools are left vulnerable to ideological problematisations, rather than policy development based on careful analysis of evidence.

RACISM

Recent race debates in the broader community have had tangible effects in schools where there are high numbers of students of both Aboriginal and non English speaking background. The spate of multicultural programs, promoted and funded during the last decade to support schools to better understand and accommodate students of varying races and cultures, have been variously adopted by schools. Ironically, some of the most documented and celebrated exemplars of inclusivity and supportive school environments now face difficulties not experienced by their less welcoming colleagues.

As some schools have worked hard on becoming more inclusive and supportive, their encounters with racism also increase:

25 I make further comments in Chapter 10 about the resistance/containment binary.
26 The degree of 'take for granted' status of subject and timetable arrangements is illustrated by Lipman (1998) in her study of the re/production of race in restructuring schools.
27 I discuss vocational education as 'the answer' in Chapter 10. The other 'answers' are to force the students to stay at school by raising the age of compulsion (a state policy proposal) and removing income support (current federal policy).
The number of Aboriginal students in our school has gone from 6 to 42 in the last 3 years, so the culture has changed and a number of the (white) students are enormously racist... One girl in Year 12 – she’s the only person in her family that’s ever got to Year 12 like extended family, all of that stuff - she been suspended twice for violence towards the Aboriginal girls. Now that’s usually not one way or the other, its pretty feisty kind of stuff, but in this case... on both occasions when she’s had a reentry meeting she’s brought in her Mum or her Dad and they make her look moderate. They are violent, aggressive and incredibly racist, so there’s a lot of fertile ground for the Pauline Hanson view of the world in our community. (Transcript 21)

Secondary principals in particular report increased tensions in the school yard and the neighbourhood, requiring rapid shifts in school program priorities to take account of the immediate need to engage, not only in conflict management, but also in strong and active intervention and education. One school with large numbers of Asian students had had incidents between enrolled students and ‘outsiders’ that were widely reported in the media as western suburbs race based violence. The end result was a “huge uproar” and widespread concern from staff, students and parents about whether the school was a safe environment in which to work:

This was written up on the front page and it was just awful. There was a big drama happening with the government and we got full colour front page. It was just the most damning, damning thing... because it fed the stereotype and the hysteria and the paranoia around gangs. I’m not disclaiming that they’re around. They’re certainly there in the community. But that hasn’t manifested itself other than those couple of incidents. (Transcript 17)

The school is located in an area where there are a number of Catholic and non government schools, together with a couple of state schools that are unzoned and not ‘disadvantaged’. One of the state schools has a new principal who has upped the marketing ante by publicising their school Year 12 ‘results’. The combination of marketing by competitors and adverse publicity is potent:

In reality, the perception, and we know that reality is in the eye of the beholder, has done enormous damage to the school and how you go about undoing that is an issue for us. Because we suffered dramatically in terms of about 15 to 20 students, which as you know are about a class and maybe even a couple of teachers if you’re on the cusp of that staffing ratio – and it has affected us dramatically. (Transcript 17)

The principal has considerable expertise in anti racist curriculum, pedagogy and professional development and they commented:

It really makes me angry because I believe it’s fed deliberately by certain people who are feeding on racism. Now we are all racist in some way. Sometimes because we don’t know it, and sometimes because we have our own prejudices and how we confront them for ourselves is different, and is an issue for each one of us. But systemically, as an organisation, that really worries me. And I think we just have to keep revisiting that issue. Keep up the training and development.

Look I have no illusions, the Liberal government has totally sold out the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity, but I also have no illusions that a Labor government would in fact bring it back onto the agenda at this point because I think the economic issues have overtaken and overwhelmed and superseded all other political thought and direction. In a sense Australia is in crisis and we’ve taken a different pathway, the European Union has seized the opportunity of harnessing their diversities and their strength in coming
Local youth workers comment that this school has become harder to work in, that it seems to have 'battened down the hatches' (Transcripts 3, 10). They find this hard to understand, given the very real student needs that exist within the school. My reading of the situation is that this is a closing off to sort out and heal. The school has established new programs for particular groups of students with particular needs, such as potential early school leavers, and these have been initiated by a relatively new school administration. While they would undoubtedly be better off with more resources and expertise, the principal is reluctant to have an overt focus on welfare matters because they see:

dangers in a welfare mentality and state. I think we need to, because of the current public perception of teachers, the most important thing we need to do is to try to separate it, to reclaim our curriculum expertise and professionalism and knowledge and not highlight welfare. (Transcript 17)

The principal also worries "what the Vietnamese Australian community perceive about the school" given what they see as the conservative agendas about schooling and education amongst a significant number of the Vietnamese families. The principal is concerned not to lose enrolment. They muse:

The most successful kids here are still the Vietnamese Australian kids. Now why is that? Well, all the reasons you and I could cite immediately... You see them in the yard looking at their books, they're in the ESL Room, they're doing Science tuition, they're in the Resource Centre, its very interesting, because there's a support structure from home with parents busting a gut outsourcing garments at 4 am in the morning - the kids see that, they know there's covert pressure on them. And then there's another lot of Vietnamese families where there's no control, and the community gives up on them. (Transcript 17)

Within 'my sample' of sixteen schools, two with high concentrations of students from Vietnam and Cambodia have been subject to racist attacks by National Action, their principals named and harassed, their school communities cringing in the glare of National media attention and its aftermath. If media panic coverage of so called 'gang fights' is damaging, then the full onslaught of National Action is overwhelming.

**National Action**

The tactics of National Action appear to be to target particular schools with high numbers of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian students. The organisation moves into the area and tries to secure a house close to the school grounds. This is used to 'spy' on the everyday activities in the school. Disciplinary issues, within those schools that are 'in the gaze' of National Action, become the regular stuff of information flows, from school students to the older National Action members lurking in the local neighbourhood. Once they have recruited a few locals, spats between National Action members and Asian youths, including some who are in the school, pick up in intensity in the neighbourhood and inevitably culminate by spilling over into the school itself.

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The situation is complicated by the fact that many of the Vietnamese and Cambodian students in the schools are in fact not adolescents, but young men in their very late teens and early twenties who are engaged in adult activities after hours. They are the same age group as many of the National Action members and associates and meet them in activities and locations not frequented by younger school going adolescents. They all have access to cars, and alcohol. A spat at a local shopping centre or night club can turn nasty very quickly. It may then be carried on the next day or the next week and be brought into the school when the 'non school' adults turn up seeking retribution.

Eventually there is a flashpoint. A fight escalates in full view of the school population, the school administration intervenes, and several students, both 'Asian' and 'white', are suspended. The police may also be summoned to deal with the non school 'intruders'. This is only the beginning of events. It seems from the accounts of the people in schools that, because National Action see only one solution to any problem - the expulsion of the 'Asian' students - as acceptable, any school response is inevitably interpreted by them as unfair. When what they want, mass expulsion of all Asians, does not happen and the school administration is evenhanded, this is the trigger for action.

In one such incident at a school, National Action decided to intercede on behalf of the 'white' side and released a statement to the television media about gang warfare. Fortunately for the school, a journalist decided to ring the principal concerned to check out the details, and after a lengthy conversation decided against proceeding with a story. On another two occasions, schools were not so fortunate.

In both situations, there was an incident in which school students, both 'white' and 'Asian', were suspended. The next day, National Action letterboxed the local area and plastered posters on stobie poles28 and walls. Their leaflets represented the school's disciplinary actions as a clear indication of favouritism towards 'Asian' students and a disregard for 'white' students. The leaflets urged community members to take action by telling the school principals concerned that this was unacceptable, and by urging the Education Department to sack the principals. At the same time this information was released to the media.

In one of the two incidents, National Action members demonstrated outside the main city Education Department office holding placards naming the principal and demanding their dismissal. In the other, National Action picketed the school grounds accompanied by national television. In both cases principals had to simultaneously deal with the media and concerned parents who had received leaflets in their letterboxes, inform staff of what was happening and develop a common 'information' strategy that would be followed in all classes, send a letter of explanation home the same day with all students, as well as deal with concerned central office and district office staff who needed to be briefed. The aftermath involved managing ongoing concerns from frightened students, staff and parents.

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28 Stobie poles - a uniquely South Australian (and ugly) type of light pole.
SCHOOL INVASION

In recent times there have been an increasing number of attacks upon White students in Adelaide schools by Asian gang members. These attacks come both from groups within schools and from outside. They nearly always involve the use of weapons like knives, machetes and clubs. As you well know, school administrations and the Education Department are not concerned by these attacks. Several White students have been severely injured, and it is only a matter of time before someone is killed in one of these attacks.

In fact, they are more worried about White students who stand up for themselves (recently, the principal of XXXXXX High School told a student who complained of constant harassment by Asians to "keep out of their way"). At XXXXXX High School late last year, teachers were almost in tears about a National Action picket, but said nothing about a group of Asians who had to be arrested by police and removed from the school an hour before, because they were roaming the grounds looking for White students to attack with machetes!

XXXXX HIGH SCHOOL

This school is the subject of National Action's latest effort to stop Asian school invasion. A gang of Asians entered the school at lunch time, bashed two students with wooden clubs, hospitalising one, and were forced off the grounds by other students. Teachers watched on doing nothing. National Action was approached by students to publicise the incident, which we did. The response of the principal, XXXXXX, was to deny there had been any racial brawl at all: "The student hurt his head by falling down a flight of stairs", XXXXX said. XXXXX lied! Now XXXX is the target of a Nationalist campaign which will see XXXX sacked like XXXXXX. Watch this page for updates.

More news at XXXXX

The latest news from XXXXX High School is that more White students have been bashed by Asian gangs. Again, these groups of Asians are involved in selling drugs, and have friends from outside the school who participate in the intimidation. Once again, the school administration refuses to admit that these incidents took place. The result is student frustration and more recruitment for National Action.

Snip from National Action Web Site:
http://www.adelaide.net.au/~national/na07.html

LOCAL RACISTS AT WORK
One of the schools subsequently embarked on a large anti racism campaign in partnership with another local school and the local council. One principal won a promotion to another school. The other is, at the time of writing, still dealing with bouts of posters and leaflets. Both the union and system have so far been unable to initiate legal action against National Action. In head office, legal advice seems to suggest that there may be some difficulty linking the activities of the organisation to any particular person thus making prosecution impossible. Departmental officers are also worried about reprisals, and some are concerned about further adverse publicity. Meanwhile, the two principals have had to have police guards on their homes for extended periods of time, one has had their home address printed on a pamphlet distributed to all and sundry, and a total of four principals have been named on the organisation's web site.

The topic is difficult to deal with. In late 1998 a (possibly well meaning) report (McGarry & Mankelawo, 1998) prominently featured in The Australian newspaper, trumpeting, "Call to arms for white students", saying:

Right-wing extremist group National Action is calling on white children to form self-defence groups at schools to combat Asian gang violence, with back-up information on the Internet. According to their Web site, self-protection groups have already been set up in some schools. Under the heading How To Start Up A Self-Protection Group, National Action says: "Do not believe your teachers. They are not interested in your welfare. They support an Asian future for your country and regard your refusal to back down to intimidation by Asian gangs as annoying." Patches would be made available to people who joined self-protection groups, and associated themselves with "several other Australian students who don\'t feel like being intimidated and attacked by gang members". If people felt threatened they should join a self-defence class. "But always remember that the best defence is in numbers and sticking by your mates," it says. Schoolchildren were advised to contact National Action "if the problem at your school cannot be solved".

The news report then went on:

The organisation said (name of principal), principal of (name of school) High School in Adelaide's northern suburbs, had left the school after a series of confrontations over alleged Asian gang violence at the school. A statement on the Web site also said another principal, at (name of school) High School, had not acted on alleged racial violence at her school and would be targeted by National Action. National Action chairman Michael Brander said yesterday students were being intimidated in schools and some had asked his organisation to become involved. "We're not aiming to intimidate others," Mr Brander said. "We just want to stop all this, because otherwise sooner or later someone is going to get killed." He said there was a lot of guilt-mongering by authorities against what he termed the "white Australian identity". "They are not teaching kids to be proud of their white heritage," he said.

The education union was also heard on national radio discussing the issue but once again, there was no legal action against National Action as a result. For the principals, this is an ongoing nightmare. Even my own actions, continuing to publicly pressure the executive of the principals' association and the union to do something to stop National Action victimising particular schools, students and my colleagues, have constituted a form of harassment. The double bind is whether continued conversation and possible legal action will have any effect, or will not only further the cause of National Action by
giving them free publicity but also continue to expose the principals and students to public speculation and private grief.

Some joy arrived in early 1999 when Justice Andrew Cannon overturned a libel case taken out by Michael Brander, the leader of National Action, against a critical editorial in Messenger newspapers:

"Michael Brander and his associates in Australian National Action are racists," Mr Cannon said. "They are willing to pursue their objectives by the incitement of racial hatred and the use of Nazi symbolism, aggression and threats to intimidate those who oppose them. "Mr Brander and Australian National Action have exploited instincts of tribalism by inciting racial hatred, using Nazi symbolism, aggression and threats to intimidate those who oppose them and it is my finding that this robust, lampooning and satirical article is fair comment. In a democratic, tolerant society such as ours, to deprive opponents of people who use tactics like Mr Brander of the right to mount the word attack in this article is to put at risk the very fabric of society." (Right winger a racist, 1999)

However, the campaigns go on. Another principal lives in the knowledge that their turn could come at any moment. All the signs are there:

We are occasionally picking up leaflets which kids bring from home. We're certainly dealing with waves of increases of racist taunts. That all goes with Pauline Hanson et al. being in the media spotlight, not just her but the bunch of stuff that talks about intolerance towards others. There have been threats of retribution by National Action after there's been some incident out at the shopping centre, the street, on a weekend or on a Thursday night. It's never amounted to much more than a couple of cars prowling the neighbourhood, they're the same cars and the same people and they're known to us.

(Transcript 7)

The principal explains that this is part of the local and national scene in which the school and staff are placed:

We inevitably deal with entrenched racist attitudes involving Anglo and Asian kids and we're getting that from their parents more than from the kids, but basically you'd expect that. I think the bottom line is that we live in a fairly racist community and events nationally have given greater permission for those racist sentiments to be verbalised more openly and many teachers find that really distressing and I can understand why, and of course the kids parrot what their parents say. We certainly are now spending a lot more time dealing with racist comments and racial taunts. But again that's exactly the sort of thing you'd expect to experience and do, you've got to be able to plan to do that. There's been a minor increase, it seems more on odd days, but I'd take a bigger picture, a minor increase in physical aggression between Asians and Anglos but rather refreshingly it frequently doesn't come down to gang stuff outside of school, it's just two kids not getting on with each other and push leads to, etc, which we're dealing with every day of the week. (Transcript 7)

There is a sense of powerlessness in the words:

We haven't had anything like the confrontations that neighbouring schools have had, thank Christ, I mean I keep on expecting it to happen and hoping like hell I'm going to be able to deal with it for the best of the school because it's pretty slippery pole to have to grab hold of, but I don't have an explanation for why it hasn't happened, certainly kids' parents at the school are members of National Action there's no doubt about it. The
bottom answer is I don't know, surely it's got to be our turn soon, but if it's not we're happy, there's nothing good comes out of it, you can't win those I don't believe. You can behave absolutely strategically and intelligently and the school still loses and I reckon the school up the road is still feeling the after effects of that, 15 months on. (Transcript 7)

What is also significant is that these incidents are locality related. They occur in the schools where there are the highest number of recent migrants from Asia, the country towns with the most well documented histories of racial 'trouble', and in the 'disadvantaged schools' where principals are deliberately selected for their expertise in equity and justice and are more likely to be both relatively new to the position and also more likely to be female (Blackmore & Sachs, 1996). Ironically, it is also the schools that have worked hardest on the "politics of difference" that become the victims of the "politics of misrecognition" (Fraser 1997a).

Policy has no way of dealing with these matters. There is no compensation for the school administrators who have to manage such events. No matter how sympathetic officers in the system are, they do not have to deal with the issues directly, do not have to face the fear and the strain of responsibility, nor the ongoing consequences. Recent changes to the principal pay scales and teacher transfer point system take no account of such locational demands, relying instead on a formula that privileges gross student numbers and budgets. There is no additional bucket of resources (that might be use flexibly by the principal) that is available to schools that report increased difficulties with racism.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPING NEIGHBOURHOODS

School enrolments in neighbourhood schools are absolutely tied to demographic trends and planning responses to those trends. South Australia has a low population growth (ABS, 1997b), with low immigration levels (Beer, 1998) and a rapidly declining ratio of children to adults of whom a large number are reliant on welfare (ABS, 1999). Many parts of the city are declining in population - Elizabeth for example is the one of the most rapidly declining areas in the country (ABS, 1998a). The Commonwealth policy encouraged growth of low fee non government schools adds even more pressure to state school enrolments, declining due to demographic change as they attract only some of the dwindling number of young people and children. Expanding enrolments in outer suburbs, in areas where there is redevelopment of existing greenfield sites, or after the renovation of public housing areas, cause pressure on inadequate facilities because there is always a delay between the students and the resulting temporary rooms arriving. The reverse picture however is much more difficult.

The aging South Australian population, and their concentration in public and low income housing in particular suburbs built in the sixties and 70s, means that many neighbourhood primary schools and some high schools in low income areas are declining in numbers. They have difficulty in maintaining programmes and are vulnerable to closures and amalgamations. For such schools, maintaining enrolment

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29 A country 'disadvantaged school' in my wider sample had also been subject to a series of difficult media affected racist incidents during which the principal was personally threatened, and a home made bomb put on their front lawn. The school got no specific additional assistance.
sufficient to stay open and to run programmes that will attract enrolments, is the major preoccupation. Sometimes there can be a small pocket of decline close to an area of expansion:

We’re the only ones with falling enrolments in the cluster. ... Our particular area is actually aging, just the immediate streets around our school. They’ve actually all been in their Housing Trust homes - I don’t know if they’ve taken up the option of buying - but they’ve been there, and their kids have all been through the school and they’re all looking after their grand kids or they’re on the old age pension. So it’s just that sort of area. If you go up the road, less than a kilometre, or down the main road to the high school there’s been a new Housing Trust influx. It’s interesting, you actually have to look at the hundred, to get it down to that level. (Transcript 13)

Four of the schools that I encountered in my research have been profoundly affected by declining enrolment, impending review and possible amalgamation and closure. One had had such a possibility as part of its ongoing life for the last six years. No new physical improvements were undertaken in the school during this time, and there was little planning beyond that particular year. Staff were reluctant to engage in major curriculum reform beyond that which they could take with them to another location and enrolments fluctuated according to the level of rumours about the possibility of closure. One faced an amalgamation of the primary and junior primary school. Another found out a few weeks ago that it was to close and amalgamate on another site some kilometres away and yet another was still trying to fuse a new identity from an amalgamation five years previously. In these situations, schools struggle to maintain relations with parents and students and some find that the processes of curriculum reform and the quality of teaching and learning are difficult to sustain.

Two others face major redevelopment of public housing stock that might change their enrolments or indeed mean they have few children enrolled at all. One of them is recently amalgamated from a primary and junior primary school. It is perhaps an 'emerging' school:

The decision was made to close both the primary and the junior primary school and there’s been a lot of grief in the community about that loss, and the decision was made because of declining enrolments to create an R-7 school. And the interesting thing was that they anticipated that the enrolments would never peak over 300, and we’ve never been under 400 ... So that’s caused its own issues... So there was all this grief and loss and the relocation, moving on to this site only to find we don’t fit. (Transcript 19)

Amalgamation was compounded by the inability of the system to provide staffing stability:

In 96, we had 65% staff turnover, half of whom were contract, with increasing enrolments and limited facilities. So that’s tough in any community and it was particularly tough here. So we’ve done a hell of a lot of work with staffing and personnel and we’ve actually managed to keep our staff turnover rate for the last two years down to 9%, from the beginning of 97 and the beginning of 98... We’ve done some of that through the (cluster) and we’ve done some of that independently and we’re at the point where we actually have staff who want to be here and they’re choosing to be here and they want to stay here. And that has made an enormous difference for community and kids.

Some of the stories, and you’re not hearing them so much now, but in 96 kids would be saying to their teachers at the end of or beginning of term four, 'Are you going to be here
next year, are you going to be here?" and its like they don’t trust you until you’re there, until they know that a teacher’s going to be there and want to be there and stay. Both schools had had considerable changes in the leadership as well and that doesn’t help either, that’s tough too for everyone – to the point where one little kid said to me, the other day ‘Are you going to stay here forever with us?’ and it was just that business of knowing the people and knowing that they’re going to be here… that’s been a huge issue I think. (Transcript 19)

That school is located in an elderly public housing area where the decision was made to upgrade some of the stock through a private development company. The implicit assumption is that the solution to ‘problematic’ housing areas, those with poorly maintained housing stock, and high numbers of particular kinds of residents like the unemployed and single parents, is to change the mix of ownership and residents. Anderson (1998, p. 38) puts it this way:

In South Australian the focus in undertaking redevelopment is on social class segregation as the major problem. A principal aim of the projects is to break up the concentrations of poverty and other problems such as high crime rates in the area, to obtain the upgrading effects claimed for a more balanced mix of social classes... to aim to change the tenure mix in the redeveloped area through substantially lowering the concentration of public housing in the area. Redevelopment involves permanent relocation of many existing tenants to attract new high socioeconomic status residents.

That the responsibility for failing to maintain the buildings, for concentrating particular kinds of people together was a policy decision, not due to a set of personal behaviours and difficulties of the people concerned is obscured in the fanfare about change:

The way in which powerful institutions like developers or development corporations create a sense of place which marginalise the already existing interpretation of that place held by less powerful groups can also be understood as an example of creating others through a sense of place, for example, compared to the gleaming new development, the rest of the area (and its communities) is represented by those developers as a decrepit anachronism. (G. Rose 1995, p. 104. my emphasis)

The development process involves the public housing agency putting some houses on the market and hoping that their occupants purchase them, engaging a developer after a competitive tendering process and undertaking a prolonged planning process involving some consultation with some residents and local agencies, leaving vacated houses untenanted and issuing publicity that basically denigrates what exists.30

Teachers in both the schools have made the actual processes of community consultation and the planning ideas and documents a curriculum project. In one school, the project grew from a class teacher listening to their students:

I think the reason the project came up and grew was because the kids had heard grown ups talking about the changes and the kids were concerned about what was going on. There was talk about houses being knocked down, and having to shift out of the area.

30 One newspaper report (Weir, 1998a) on one of the redevelopments cited a figure of 40% public housing, of which the redevelopment would sell 700 properties, demolish 500 buildings, renovate 476, and construct 75 new dwellings. Another earlier report (Weir, 1998b) on the project cited the Chief Executive of the Housing Trust saying "The area developed a high level of social disadvantage" - as if there had been no human and policy involvement at all!
When I talked with the kids about it, there was a lot of doubts about what was happening, but that was because parents weren’t being informed either. There’s still no decision made on the project. It’s been like hovering for about four years and before that for umpteen years it was in the development process. But there were kids in my class who were going to have their houses knocked down, traffic redirected through their houses - I mean they’ve grown up there for most of their lives and that’s a big thing to have your house knocked down...
They were really interested to find out more about it, they wanted the facts, they wanted the information. (Transcript 23)

Place has important symbolic function and the meanings of place are important in the ongoing construction of identity (G. Rose, 1995), and one can only imagine what it means for young children of five and six years old to be in the situation where their house might not exist any more:

The thought of having a new house was nice - you know maybe you wouldn’t have to share the room with your sister and your brother, you might have a large yard - they were the things that they thought might be good if they had to move. But the thought of losing their friends, losing their school, losing the place you knew, the thought of losing the house where you’ve grown up in that’s a frightening thing for anybody, let alone a little kid.

There’s a little girl here, right on the corner (next to the school) right where the development’s going to go, the road swings around (through her house) and its all going to be lakes and wetlands... We got the plans, and it was just like, “Well that’s where my house is”...
But they were interested in what it was going to look like, even if they weren’t sure that they were going to be moving back into the area. They know what they like and they know what they don’t like. You know just walking around and looking at the state of the trees... that had come up because somebody had said that they had trees in front of their house that were broken down and somebody said, "Oh Yeah, somebody tried to burn the tree in front of my house down", and "Oh Yeah, our trees got broken down" ...well they don’t know about the council, but as we talked about things, it came up, "Well who looks after these trees?", "Well we just rent", and that sort of thing. "It’s the government and they don’t care." You can hear a lot of clear opinions coming through. (Transcript 23)

The critical literacy project undertaken by the students says a lot about class and ‘this place’. The children valued being close to their school and living in a neighbourhood with other children with whom they could play. They didn’t like living in houses where there are cracks, rats, holes and people outside who steal, yell at them and pick on them. What they told the developer, whom they contacted as part of the project, that they wanted in a new neighbourhood was modest by any standards - trees, drains that don’t flood, electric light to see properly at night, a park with lots of play equipment and an ice-cream shop close by.

The principal, who has just left the school in part to avoid the redevelopment process, commented:

the school exists as part of a bigger community, it is part of the wider community and the students live in all the different bits of the community not just in the school. (Transcript 22)
The school was for a time leaderless, uncertain, marking time, totally dependent on decisions made first in Cabinet and then in the central education office.

The consequences of school closure can clearly be seen in the aftermath of the Parks High School. In 1996, after a short period of consultation with the local community, the Minister for Education and Children's Services made the decision to close the secondary school located in the Parks Community Centre, thus simultaneously stripping the centre of the bulk of its rent derived funding and leaving a few hundred students to find another school. The closure of the Parks is widely regarded within teaching communities as iconic. It is used frequently as a symbol of the intentions of current government policy - a narrowing of the criteria of who is considered worthy of schooling, an abolition of the commitment to social justice, and testimony to the punitive aspects of government intentions towards young people. A local youth worker put it this way:

The Parks has always been big on diversity, on difference, and it was the only school in the western suburbs that catered for those kids that were different, including those kids that were physically challenged, and other kids that had learning difficulties, behaviour problems, etc, etc. (Transcript 10)

The closure of the Parks school was publicly rationalised by the government at the time as due to its lack of viability (numbers), evidenced by the fall in Year 8 enrolments from neighbouring schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the more the different youth communities accessed the school, the less parents who saw their children as 'normal' would enrol their children there. The school increasingly catered for a number of 'others'. These were literally dis-counted as students, their enrolments were hard to calculate. It was argued that there were adjacent schools that could cope with the 'numbers'. They could not however cope with some of the numbers as bodies when they appeared. While the mature age women found a place in a local girls' high school, and some of the Vietnamese students successfully made the transition to another school, the remainder did not manage to cross the main road barriers for very long, if at all. A principal of one of the schools where ex Parks students were intended to go says:

The Year 11s didn't come back after the Christmas period. Most of them hung in for the year but didn't come back, I'm not sure what that's about. In order to chase those kids you need lots more resources than we've got. We did do some of that chasing at the beginning of this year and towards the end of last year... One of the teachers here used to be at the Parks and she took on that role, visiting kids' homes and stuff and they weren't actually there. That's a long period of time over Christmas and lots of things happened and they just weren't around. That was hard to take, just to let go and keep beating yourself up that you weren't quite as successful as you could have been. We picked some up too from another closure. Just a bit sad that in this central strip so many schools have closed. And for kids in that corridor are now there really are limited choices (Transcript 20).

The youth worker talks about the impact of the closure:

For the first couple of months we had them back every day here in tears - we were run off our feet with counselling Parks kids. I mean its horrible to call them Parks kids, but that's what they were. That's what they were, they weren't just going to school here, it became a part of them and you could see that by the way how they fought to keep the school open. That was the young people.
What happened with that was the battle with the school closing, and no-one listening and the kids put so much work into that... And then of course it closed and those kids that were attending the Parks ... I'd say, as high as maybe 40% of those young people are not attending school now because they tried to fit in at other schools in the local area and just got hassled. I mean really hassled about their difference. We're talking kids, some had mohawks, nose rings...and the Parks provided a creative learning environment for them and an environment for them to be who they are, and once they'd been to, you could almost say mainstream schools, they didn't fit, putting them into a so-called normalised environment with other kids just didn't work (Transcript 10).

The closure was indeed 'context generative' - cutting education off from significant numbers of the most marginalised young people, and thus placing their acquisition of the benefits of schooling, a prerequisite for developing "capabilities to function" (Sen, 1992) in society, severely in jeopardy.

RESPONDING TO LOCALITY ISSUES

I have argued that each schools is a unique 'place', and that 'disadvantaged schools' are profoundly and differently affected by the ways that social, cultural and political changes work their way through the neighbourhoods they serve. I have suggested that this set of 'context derived' factors are not clearly seen by policy and this affects the capacity of the schools to be positively 'context generative', which I take to be 'doing justice'.

The primary school that is located in the middle of an emergency housing area, where the sheer volume of children with troubled lives force classroom teachers and the school administration alike to spend every available minute on dealing with them, needs immediate and substantive support from welfare agencies. The primary school that is located in a more stable part of the west is frustrated by the bureaucratic management and curriculum imposts that prevent them getting to grips with the serious business of reinventing the curriculum. The secondary school catering for adult reentry students faces withdrawal of funding for its child care centre and the possible loss of seventy or so students who depend on it - no prizes for guessing where the administrative energy in that school is going! Another secondary school has a student body over half of whom have given up on schooling and any hope of getting work.

What is required is some kind of policy approach that recognises the very special circumstances of each location.

I conclude by proposing that there are a series of 'context derived' local issues that need to be taken into account by policy makers. I put forward this list of issues as the beginning of a process of thinking about the 'context generative' capacity of schools. It is a list to which I will add in each of the next three chapters.

'Thisness'

Each school has particular combinations of issues, congruent with each being a distinct and unique 'place'. This understanding is 'common sense' in schools where teachers and
principals regularly begin to explain their needs, situation and/or programs with sentences beginning, 'This school'. Then they proceed to discuss the neighbourhood, the particular students that attend the school, specific local concerns and/or attributes and strengths. Locality issues that matter in schools are related to 'school mix', resources, and local cultural politics.

These 'context derived' issues are not always negative. Schools can also be advantaged by their specific location. They may have a large employer close by and thus be easily able to use that workplace as the base for a vocational program. They may be in a unique ecological setting and be visited by scientists who involve students in their projects. They may be located in an area where there are large numbers of parents able to afford the time to be involved in daily school activities and thus have a huge reserve of volunteer labour. The point is that 'thisness' makes a difference to what it is that schools can do.

To get a sense of 'thisness' in any school it would be productive to look at the following:

1. **School mix : Students and their families affected by**
   - changes in labour market - levels of unemployment/underemployment/tenuous employment. This is connected to changes in the global economy
   - changes in families - separated, blended and extended families
   - changes in public policy - health issues, public housing, transport
   - concentration of families in crisis
   - patterns of migration and diaspora
   - increasing or declining enrolment

2. **Resources available to the school in the neighbourhood**
   - community infrastructure - also affected by public policy
   - employment and employment networks - affected by globalisation and microeconomic reform
   - availability of voluntary labour, related to un/employment and local geographies of mothering
   - age of locality - age of school facilities

3. **Neighbourhood issues that impact on the school**
   - specific local events - racism, culture of lighting fires and vandalism against school properties
   - neighbourhood change - redevelopment, change in demographics, external review, possible closure.

These issues can have a profound impact on the local school, often for a long period of time, and consume considerable time, energy and emotion in their management. Often their management becomes the dominant activity in the school, rather than the

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31 This example emerged in the work of another local PhD student, Mark Witham, who is looking at school resourcing.
particular 'context generative' activities demanded by policy makers, or the longer term project of 'doing justice'.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD.

In this chapter I have combined a locational analysis with five snapshots of how social trends and public policy work through some neighbourhood schools. I have argued that the locational context of schooling is important. It is not a question, as some educational 'experts' would have it, that the school and the teachers operate anywhere - out of place - and all the teachers have to do is teach. There are substantive issues that arise as a result of the particular locality in which the school is based. These issues arise from the particular sets of social relations at work in the neighbourhood, generated by ongoing changes in public policy, changes in the family, changes in the labour market, histories, biographies and local teleologies, narratives and knowledges.

By looking at five specific examples - (a)transience, (b)concentrations of families placed under pressure, (c)the employment/future-school contract, (d)racism and National Action, (e)urban redevelopment and redeveloping neighbourhoods - I have provided some illustrations of how it is that 'locality' works in schools. Some issues such as transience and concentrations of students living in high stress situations, appear as 'school mix' questions; others, such as the impact of racism and urban decline and redevelopment, impact on the capacity of the school to direct energies towards the 'main game' of teaching and learning. I have looked at how those issues are largely invisible to policy central office because they are not counted, and how it is that this invisibility translates into a lack of the kind of support that the schools desperately need. Schools with transient students miss out on counsellors. Schools in neighbourhoods with large numbers of Vietnamese and Cambodian students get no additional resources to deal with incipient racism. Central policy visual impairment limits what it is that the schools can do, that is their capacity to 'generate context'.

I have begun therefore to make a list of issues that need to be taken into account when thinking about the capacity of each school to be 'context generative'. This list looks at school mix, neighbourhood resources and neighbourhood cultures/politics.

Looking at and listening to voices from 'disadvantaged schools' has already begun to undermine the effective schools discourse about social context being unimportant, to undermine the assertion that there are 'more differences within the school than between schools'. How is it possible to screen out issues that are specific to each school? Perhaps the idea of a 'like school' is an oxymoron. Effective schools theorisations are perpetuated by those far away from material localities where racism, unemployment, ill health, inadequate housing, and uncertain futures make it impossible to 'scientifically' calculate the impact they are having on teaching and learning. The myopia that ignores such issues calls into question the reform agendas that claim to promote equity and justice and points to the ways in which such a policy might need to head.

I continue this project in the next chapter in which I look at the question of 'everyday' social relations in the school, and the knotty problems of discipline and welfare.
Homes of the Better off

Above and below: privately owned dwellings

& homes of the Working class

Above: Public housing in the western suburbs
AVERAGE HOUSE VALUES

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

JANUARY 1999
Public blam schools for poor literacy

New chapter needed on pre-school reading

Graduate the jobs in general

New target for literacy after skills test slide

Literacy lack product of school flaws

Teachers ‘wasted’ in tests

WORDS FAILING OUR CHILDREN
One small thing can take hours and hours and hours.

On Monday a girl's glasses went missing. This is the third time that they have gone missing, and this time there was a reliever in the classroom.

Well, the classroom was searched, bags were searched, trays were searched, cupboards were searched, bins were searched, and there was absolutely no sign of the glasses.

They were found in the bin first time and they were moved on the teacher's desk the second time, this time there's no sign of them.

So we contacted her parents and her Dad got home from work, found out, and they were $300, which is a lot of money for them, and also it's the third time and it's got beyond a joke.

And so of course he comes in really riled up, understandably so.

He wanted to go to the police and he might still do that.

I spent a lot of time trying to find out from each of the kids what they knew about it. I sent a letter to all of the parents, saying ...look, these are expensive glasses, could they talk to their kids about it... and got the parents to sign the note and bring it back to show that they've received it....

so that incident... documenting it....

One small thing can take hours and hours and hours. (Transcript 13)
A spring day. Lesson time. The school is humming with work noises. Out on the winter green ovals, games of softball and cricket are in progress. In the animal enclosure, students sit quietly sketching the wallabies and ducks. Another class is weeding the vegetable garden, calculating the growth of the new tomato plants. The school grounds are liberally planted with eucalypts and acacias now in bloom, ensuring that the noises of play and work are accompanied by the peculiar rasp of Adelaide plains parrots and the cheeky interruptions of honey-eaters. I stroll around the school seeing productive work going on where-ever I look. On such mornings I think I can be principal here forever.

There is a north wind. It is overcast, hot and nose-tickling dry. Clouds of red dust from farmlands far away swirl across the yard, picking up eddies of leaves, scraps of paper, chip and lolly papers. A strong gust whips layers of papers and lunch detritus out of the bins and the yard becomes a whirl of rubbish. Children in their classrooms are restless, teachers await the inevitable. Suddenly the corridors are full of students sent out of their classes for misbehaviour. Several sullen and smirking groups are sent to the office for the attention of the two admin people on duty. One staff member angrily shepherds two swearing and flailing adolescent boys into the Deputy’s office, then lurches into my room blunting out that he has had enough. Secretly, I agree. I can see the hours of interviews, parent phone calls, and supervision of punishments mounting up. On such afternoons I think that I can hardly stay here a moment longer.
CHAPTER 8  DIVIDES AND RULES
THE COMMON EVERYDAY

The last chapter focussed on issues in 'disadvantaged schools' that arise from their particular material location. I looked at how issues that affected the neighbourhood, such as a threatened urban redevelopment project; issues that affected the communities such as the rising level of racism; and issues of public policy such as decisions to concentrate families in high stress situations in particular public housing areas, were disregarded by central schools' policy. This myopia negatively impacts on the capacity of the local school to deal with their particular circumstances and to be 'context generative'. I proposed that the effective schools literature that ignored social context and that informs current schools policy thus had a reform agenda that was flawed. I suggested that the 'place' (derived from their locality) of each 'disadvantaged school' is unique. This chapter also looks at the place and position of 'disadvantaged schools', but uses the notion of place and position as a sociological metaphor to examine commonality.

In this chapter I look at the everyday that is constituted by the positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediator of unequal social relations. I take as read the argument made in Chapter 4 that Australia is an unequal society and that that inequalities are growing. I take as read the argument that those on low incomes have less formal education and are less likely to complete schooling. I build on the understandings established by researchers such as Connell and colleagues (Connell et al., 1982; Connell et al., 1990a, 1990b, 1991; Connell, 1993) that many parents and children from low income families are alienated from formal schooling. Rather than focus on the processes of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, (e.g. Comber, 1996; Freebody, Ludwig, & Gunn, 1995; Hatton, Munns, & Dent, 1995; S. Hill, Comber, Louden, Reid, & Rivalland, 1998), I look instead at the everyday social relations of discipline, welfare and remediation. I do this with the intention of adding to the body of scholarship, rather than providing a new, alternative understanding.

I firstly establish the case that this is a very substantive issue for 'disadvantaged schools' and then look at some of the manifestations and workings of the disciplinary, welfare and remediation processes. I argue that it is the particular 'place', the positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediators of the social relations of inequalities (class, gender, race, dis/ability?) that makes them places where discipline, welfare and remediation constitute everyday life. I suggest that the disciplinary and welfare processes of the school are significant in both normalising and individualising and through this activity work to render the workings of the curriculum less visible. This revisits the concepts of 'context derived' and 'context generative' introduced in the previous chapter (Appadurai, 1996). I conclude by arguing that in order for 'disadvantaged schools' to be 'context generative', to 'do justice', in the way that the 'disadvantaged schools' literatures suggest, then it is important to understand how the everyday not only works to exclude

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1 I repeat the point made earlier that it is not the school as an abstract body that mediates but rather the combined and ongoing actions of those who make up the school, positioned by habitus, materially/discursively.

2 That is, people who are neighbours in the same broad social space and have in common the experiences of the relations of symbolic violence, strategic condescension and material hardship (Bourdieu, 1990).
particular students, but also how it shapes and constrains relationships within the school and constructs and delimits pedagogy through institutional practices. It is by seeing these in an holistic way that the imaginarities of transformational literatures can be realistically approached.

ARE 'DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS' DIFFERENT?

I need to begin by briefly visiting the notion of privilege and how it is that educating those who are privileged differs in its daily demands from the daily routines and demands in 'disadvantaged schools'. While this may appear to construct a binary, it is better thought of as a continuum, because there are many schools which sit in between the two extremes.

A close colleague of mine recently shifted from the northern suburbs to an affluent area in the eastern suburbs. At my request they mused about the differences between the two sides of town:

The School Card holders are tipped the other way, so at my old school, there was 60% School Card and at my new school there's 30%. The cultural mix is the same, but they're a different class group of kids, and it's really fascinating. When I look at it I keep thinking, "Well, what is about this school that keep those kids, that 30% of the kids, that keeps them hanging on in there and being successful to Year 12?" I think that it is true that there are kids who had they gone to my old school would have tossed it in, not hung on in there... And I reckon in the end, I just wonder whether that's the community and the parents' faith in the school, that it's going to be successful, rather than if the game gets tough you get angry with the school. (That tends not to happen as much, that's only a small section of the community). Some of it drags those kids along... and keeps them hanging on in. (Transcript 7)

The administrator stresses that it is the 'organic' connection between the parent, student and teacher (cf. Connell et al. 1982) that is the crucial difference:

I reckon it's every teacher having some sort of understanding and real connection with the parents so that in the end there's a faith in the school that means you can keep the triangle going, the kid, the parent and the student... when I've thought it through, its something about that relationship with that community and the community having confidence in the school being able to deliver what they want for their kids... they may not know what that is or how that looks it's almost like but there's a confidence that that will happen... It's different. (Transcript 7)

In the eastern suburbs there is a seamless quality to the everyday, a sense of everything in place, as it should be:

There's a sense of tradition and order about the place, so staff and kids know that this is the way we do things here, and so there's not that sense of furlough from one spot to the other, but I reckon the cause of that in DSP schools I've worked in, it's the needs of the kids, their personal needs, are just demanding whether they're behaviour or particular social issues or just personal things, unless you can get that right or at least some thoughts about that... then learning's like, not...

Yeah, the difference is that the focus can be consistently about learning. (Transcript 7, my emphasis)
The issue is not that teachers work harder in 'disadvantaged schools' but the hard work is different in the eastern suburbs:

Teachers spend hours and hours of their own personal time... I reckon the time's probably equivalent but what they're doing is significantly different. They get a personal reward out of it, instantaneously, whereas when you work with kids in DSP schools you have to have a sense of the greater good of all, and you mightn't be able to do anything at all but at least you're going to give it your best shot. Whereas if you're working with a kid tutoring them, or doing dragon boat racing or whatever, it adds up to the same amount of hours but you're getting back a whole lot of things that are personal that keep you wanting to do it and do more of it, whereas you don't get that in a DSP school, you just get exhausted. (Transcript 7)

The administrator identifies that the task of DSP schools, in their experience, is that they have to do more:

I think you do two layers in DSP schools... you have a layer about relationships and the community because that's distinctly different from the culture of the staff, and then you have another bit that's about learning and the formal curriculum. In schools like the one I'm in now, there's much closer congruence between the culture of the students and community and the culture of the teachers so you can not have these sorts of demands. (Transcript 7)

And the doing more on relationships is unavoidable. They describe the everyday of student discipline, what happens when the relationships and the learning 'go wrong' in the northern suburbs, as a 'daily onslaught':

In DSP schools, it's just non stop. Regardless of what kind of system you put in place, no matter how happy everyone is about it, it doesn't mean that things go away, it means you can learn to manage them better, you manage them but they'll still be there. Its not like you can forget about it all. (Transcript 7)

In this chapter I contend that the everyday disciplinary and welfare demands of 'disadvantaged schools' are significantly greater and different from those schools that might be designated 'advantaged'. This is not my view or that of my colleagues alone (Transcript 11a,11b,11c,11d,11e,11f,11g). Connell and colleagues (Connell et al., 1991, p. 269) suggest that 'disadvantaged schools' are difficult for teachers because they:

are likely to have the highest proportion of school 'resistes and academic 'failure', most occurrences of malnutrition and neglect, the most physical aggression and the most discouraging environments.

Thrupp (1998a) has detailed the amount of time taken in working class schools in dealing with homework and lateness (other 'disciplinary questions) compared to more affluent schools, and described the different kinds of disciplinary cultures that develop in differently positioned schools (Thrupp, 1995, 1998b). Other researchers also indicate

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A recent telephone conversation graphically illustrated this. Another experienced principal who moved from one side of town to the other told me that they had suspended two children during all of 1998. The year before in a disadvantaged school they had exceeded that in a single day, on several occasions. And, a recent newspaper article about a selective state high school in New South Wales (Armitage, 1999a) entitled 'Brightest and Best' quoted a teacher as saying that in 11 years at the school she had never once had to raise her voice.
that discipline and welfare demands are most acute in poor/low SES/working class areas (e.g. Anyon, 1997; Chamberlain & Mackenzie, 1998; Cibulka & Kritek, 1996; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996; Donmoyer & Kos, 1993; Dryfoos, 1998; J. Ellsworth & Ames, 1998; Kozol, 1991; Maeroff, 1998), and it is on that basis that I proceed.

DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOLING.

That schools are concerned with discipline and welfare is a truism. The purposes of schooling include the management of bodies and the inculcation of self discipline as well as 'delivery' of the designated national curriculum. The sheer numbers of young people and the significantly lesser number of adults, the mandated requirements that children acquire specific kinds of knowledge, the legally enshrined requirement for children to spend a set amount of time receiving instruction,\(^4\) and the expectation that schools keep children safe while their parents are off at work, all ensure that the school will have to develop rules and routines that control and regulate. Teachers are placed in an hierarchical relation to the young in their charge, and they too are subject to hierarchical discipline as they discipline their students.

Discipline is a normative activity, it designates what is acceptable behaviour and who requires additional attention because of their lack of self control. Teachers and schools are also expected to exercise care by attending to the emotional wellbeing of students. In addition, it is expected that they will ensure that those who need additional assistance, because of their life situations or particular biography and biology receive it. This welfare and remedial assistance relies on norms and operates by isolating those individuals and groups that are operating ab-norm-ally.\(^5\)

A note on the everyday.

In order to talk about school discipline I want to call on theories of the everyday. This is a term that is used variously in scholarly literature.\(^6\) Those who write about the everyday share, despite their differences, a concern to understand how it is that those who are not in positions of social/economic/political/ cultural power live their lives in

\(^4\) The required instruction time in South Australia is 1200 minutes per week.

\(^5\) See Foucault (1977) for a genealogy of the panoptic disciplinary power-knowledge apparatus of the prison/school/army barracks.

\(^6\) Some examples are its equation with:

- popular culture, the mass media and the proliferation of commodities such as 'low brow' novels, films and art (Fiske, 1993; Giroux, 1997; C. Luke, 1996; J. O'Brien & Howard, 1998; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997)
- the quality of life experienced by the 'common' woman and man. The critique of everyday alienation constituted a separate plane for cultural revolutionary activity, joining the economic and the political planes (LeFebvre, 1947, 1971)
- the totality of life experiences from which there is only the illusion of escape (Cohen & Taylor, 1992)
- the sources of the practices of resistance, the exercise of tactics against the strategies of the Enlightenment and its institutions and high priests (de Certeau, 1988).
the material world. Bourdieu (1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) uses a notion of the everyday to mean the taken-for-granted, habitual, repetitive nature of culture in which individuals act through the 'habitus'. Feminist theory has been particularly concerned to deal with the mundane, repetitive, familiar and routine, things that are absolutely necessary to the doing of 'real' and 'important' things, such as paid work.\(^7\)

Managing the behaviour of students, making sure they are at school, stay at school, are compliant when they are there and are in sufficient physical and emotional health to be able to participate in school are never ending tasks. In 'disadvantaged schools' they form an iron cage of routines and rules that shape time and spaces, that govern interactions and profoundly position pedagogies. The tasks of managing social order in the 'disadvantaged schools' are like housework, in that they can never be left undone, must be attended to daily and no matter how well the tasks are performed, there is always the necessity of having to do them all day, everyday.

In this chapter I draw on the work of Smith (1987, 1990, 1993, 1998) whose focus is on how it is that the relations of ruling constitute everyday lives. Smith argues that power and knowledge are not linked in some mystical communion, as Foucault would have it, but power is made abstract by the actions of people turning everyday acts into knowledge through the transactions that constitute, and are constituted by, the relations of ruling.\(^8\) The effect of this abstraction by people in positions of power is to refocus away from the embedded social nature of lives. In the relations of ruling, lives are re-narrativised, individualised, and often made pathological and deficient. Such abstract exercise of power are for example the operations of policy in the everyday. I do, however, despite Smith's concerns, also call on a Foucauldian theorisation of pastoral discipline (Foucault, 1977)\(^9\) and adopt a Foucauldian methodological approach by starting from the practical and local and working towards the disciplinary practices of school and system 'discipline' and welfare policies and practices.

**EVERYDAY IN 'DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS'**

This section focuses on the everyday housework of 'disadvantaged schools' - those interrelated issues of discipline and welfare, attendance, retention and school-parent relations. It is not possible or desirable to separate these; as they appear in schools and in the wider social space they are highly interconnected. I look therefore at some specific 'crunch' points:

\(^7\) There is in my mind, no clearer example of this concern with the everyday than the attention paid by feminists - scholarly theorists and activists alike - to domestic labour, which is never ending, and on which paid work, the health and well being of families, and schooling depend (e.g. Grumet, 1988; Luttrell, 1997; Sikes, 1997; Walkerdine, 1997).

\(^8\) This argument it seems to me is Bourdieuan. Bourdieu (1990, p. 190) suggests that one of the problems of social science has been to describe social phenomenon as things or persons rather than relations.

\(^9\) However, the question of agency is particularly problematic in Foucault (e.g. Fraser, 1996; Sawicki, 1991, 1996; Weeden, 1987; Zipin, 1998). Feminist and postcritical theorisations adopting Foucault rely on some version of agency in order to effect change (Hartsock, 1990) as I do.
• getting a grip - establishing social order in a 'disadvantaged school' and the time consuming nature of day to day discipline
• dealing with the minority of students engaged in 'risky' behaviour
• support from outside
• dealing with angry parents
• Student Behaviour Management policy.

The purpose of these sections is both to give some idea of the ways in which the everyday is manifest in the DSP schools, but also to allow the voices of school administrators and welfare workers to advance explanations. In addition, I provide some re-reading of the issues to gesture at the ways in which these commonplace matters construct and are constructed by inequitable social relations. I pick up these threads in the concluding section of this chapter.

GETTING A GRIP ON SOCIAL ORDER

The disciplinary routines that are established in schools typically consist of a set of overall school rules, with separate classroom rules and consequences established by classroom teachers. An overall school policy outlines the procedures for removing 'difficult' students from class or the playground and details the various misdemeanours and breaches of rules and procedures that lead to 'time out', suspension and exclusion. In addition, in orderly 'disadvantaged schools' there are usually practices such as the appointment of year level coordinators (in secondary schools); the formation of teacher teams; the introduction of specific student groupings that separate or put together particular individuals (managing the concentrations); combined with ongoing inservice in classroom organisation and teaching methods that promote order. Teachers new to 'disadvantaged schools' often need specific induction programs in handling challenges to their authority, and in basic counselling and conflict resolution methods. It is not uncommon for 'disadvantaged schools' to spend much of their staff meeting time on matters that are primarily concerned with order - yard safety, improvements to the withdrawal room, changing the drugs policy and so on. There is a considerable apparatus for, and expenditure of resources on, the development and maintenance of order.

Gaining control

Many of the sixteen school administrators in my research have had the experience of taking over a 'disadvantaged school' after a leadership vacuum or a series of crises that had weakened the social order. Their reflections provide a window on the importance of discipline in the disadvantaged school and the time it takes to establish. One primary principal tells me:

When I came here eight years ago, we could not have had this conversation without kids out there screaming out abuse at me, they'd be banging on the door. This school was totally out of control. They had no discipline, no policy, things were dealt with on the spot - they were just reacting to crises, nobody had looked at any of the new behaviour management stuff whereas at my previous school we had actually trialled the policy. Here they still had corporal punishment minimally, it was still being used because that
was the last year it was legal - 1989. So when I took over here it was a shambles. The kids were so angry. Teachers were angry because they'd lost the one part of the discipline that had been effective. It was awful... it was really, really awful... and I think the fact that I brought three teachers with me when I came here because there were vacancies and even after that I still had 4 vacancies that the Department couldn't fill. When I won this school somebody in the Department rang me and said, "Have you got a death wish?" And that was after my other school! And believe me it was twenty times worse than that had ever been. And now it's not. (Transcript 18)

Things are different from when I first came here. The place was in crisis. I remember when I first came there were kids running on the roof, there were brawls on the oval, it was just horrible. I think the changes that we've made are that we manage it better. Our staffing arrangement has enabled us to bring, rather than having teachers placed here, we have teachers who've applied to come here. Generally younger people. And we've put people in collaborative teams so that they can support each other and that's worked really well. But the problems haven't gone away. They haven't been fixed or anything. We're better at controlling and managing the behaviour, if there wasn't that in place, this place would be just as it was five years ago. And basically my success is just a better control. (Transcript 14)

The task of establishing order in a school that is 'out of control' takes years rather than months. One primary principal in their third year at a school reflects back on the sheer volume of discipline issues with which they, a Deputy and student counsellor had to deal:

In my first year it was 80% of the time, it's eased off now, three years later, in the sense that I think that there's well established procedures, and kids and parents know that there will be consequences and things will happen, things will be followed up. (Transcript 13)

But maintaining social order is still an ongoing issue:

There are weeks when it goes up and weeks when it goes down. I think a realistic figure is 40% of the time now. (Transcript 13)

Another primary principal tells much the same story of reducing amounts of time spent on establishing the parameters and routines necessary for teachers to teach and students to have sufficient calm and quiet in their classrooms to have the opportunity to learn:

In our first year I would say easy 70% of the time in our first year. Last year, 50%. This year 30%. (Transcript 19)

What is clear from their words is that, in 'disadvantaged schools', getting a grip on order is a necessary pre requisite to any other school reform, is hugely time consuming and is an ongoing task of considerable magnitude. It is also apparent from my research that increasing pressures are currently being placed on the capacity of 'disadvantaged schools' in relation to the maintenance of social order. I illustrate this by looking at two specific aspects of the maintenance of good order - school uniform and classroom practices.

10 It is timely to note, since I have used the word reform several times already, that it is a modernist term tied to ideas of managed change and 'progress'. However, I have been able however to think of no better substitute so I use it anyway.
• Uniform
An interesting adjunct to the processes of getting a grip on discipline and order is the school uniform. According to the Chief Executive Officer of a large non-government welfare agency, schools are now more concerned with discipline, and having the appearance of a disciplined school, than they used to be (Transcript 5). This is certainly reflected in the sixteen schools I researched where all but two primary schools have recently spent considerable time on the introduction of school uniform. Principals offered a range of explanations for the introduction of uniform - it's cheaper for parents, it promotes school pride, it's what the parents want.

One principal in a school where there had been an series of incidents involving 'outsiders' coming on to the school grounds told me that uniform helped staff tell who belonged to the school and who didn't. Another in a school where many staff felt they were fighting an uphill battle against student alienation told me that the successful reintroduction of school uniform helped the staff to realise that they could 'do something' if they worked together (in other words getting the students into school uniform successfully positioned the staff as disciplinary agents). Yet another told me that the students who wanted to rebel still did so in small ways by varying the uniform and therefore the uniform took constant attention to maintain. The disciplinary intention of school uniform, to establish institutional affiliation and subjugation to its regimens is easily read into their words, even if they have avoided the excesses of hierarchisation associated with some school uniforms (Meadmore & Symes, 1996).

One of the primary schools without uniform, located in the lowest income area, had only an 'anti skin cancer' school hat which was purchased by the school itself and was mandatory in the playground. The principal of the other uniform-less school rejected the marketised philosophy which they saw as being behind the whole-scale rush to uniform that had occurred right across their district. Some of the principals were uncomfortable with the disciplinary intent of uniform, but argued that in the current climate, in which public education and particularly 'disadvantaged schools' were seen as the 'worst choice', that they had little choice but to join the stampede to check frocks and school branded wind-cheaters and polo shirts.

• Disciplinary issues for classroom teachers
Orderly concerns are at least in part constructed by numerically large classes, the physical restrictions of a small room with four walls in which most have to be sitting down (rather than moving around) in order for everybody to fit in, and the general expectations of what it means to be schooled, the dominant image of which equates to sitting captive for long stretches of time doing only mind work. Teachers, like their administrators, are judged by their capacity to establish and maintain good order. School discipline thus functions as a normative activity for all staff, and a point of performativity.
Not all teachers in 'disadvantaged schools' feel that it is their job, or that they are equipped, to deal with the levels of discipline and counselling often required. Staffing policy - the capacity of the system to ensure that 'disadvantaged schools' have staff who are prepared for the task -is clearly a bottom line question:

Having a reasonable number of new people coming this year (there's) a mood amongst (some of the staff) of a blame-the-kids-sort-of-syndrome, and an almost total unwillingness to look at any other reasons for lack of achievement, and it's just seems to have got worse this year and it's almost an absolute typical middle class judgement of working class kids in poverty and unemployment - and 'Why aren't they behaving in class', and "Why don't they want to lap up everything that we want to teach them?", and if they don't "It's their fault and it's time they went". (Transcript 16)

The arrival of such recalcitrant staff creates work for everyone else - colleagues and administration alike. In addition to the informal support mechanisms and subtle and not so subtle peer pressures to adapt, this creates an ongoing staff development project. Time and other resources that could be allocated to other questions have to be devoted to remediation for teachers. Such teachers often suffer from "localic" (Powell, 1993, p. 102), the belief that it is the locality that produces particular 'feral' behaviour rather than social/economic/cultural/political relations (cf. L. Johnson, 1997p. 35). What is often needed is strong direction from principals:

What we try to talk about all the time are these notions that people have in their heads about what real students are... and if they are clean and neat and polite and motivated and skilled then lots of us think they are the people we want at the school, and what I say to teachers when I have discussions about some of these students, and to the SSOs\(^{11}\) is that anyone can work with those kids, our challenge is to work out how to work with the other kids. (Transcript 21)

Teachers who are having difficulty with classroom order also require more from the 'disciplinary chain' in the school. Such teachers send more children out of class to the withdrawal room or the office as a means of getting control. One of the consequences of loss of good will in schools\(^{12}\) is that in some 'disadvantaged schools' teachers are less willing to 'go the extra mile' that is required with students on the edges of learning and school:

People are backing kids into corners more, being less tolerant of behaviour, its not appropriate behaviour I'll give you that, but by heck let's be a bit lenient and find some semblance of a sense of humour, not just "Do this, that and whatever", let's find some way of working with these kids in a different way, and yeah, it's hard, but you're the professional and you're the adult in this... The hard nosed traditional disciplinarian is kind of coming back. It's not what works with difficult kids. They don't need that stuff, they get beaten up at home. Usually literally. (Transcript 20)

\(^{11}\) SSO - School Support Officer, a para - professional used for both clerical and classroom support.

\(^{12}\) Loss of good will has been caused by a combination of poor industrial relations, an aging teacher workforce, belittling media, intrusive accountability and monitoring regimes that limit their capacity to leave the mandated curriculum, reform fatigue and a generally more confrontational milieu (Dow, 1996; Reid, 1998b; Robertson, 1994; Shacklock, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997).
Often what teachers say they want is for the most difficult students to just disappear. One primary principal comments on their strategy for dealing with this:

One of the things that people most want rescuing about is…. they want the bad boys taken away really. And we’re not going to do that, and that’s where that bind comes in. We say this is our community….we’re here for this community, we’ve chosen to be here, we’re not somewhere else… these are the groups of the kids that you’ve got, it’s our job to plan and deliver curriculum that’s matched to their needs so we do it. And we do the best we can and we enjoy it, and we keep looking for good theory that underpins our practice all the time and that’s our agenda, that’s our mission and we don’t move from it. "And so if you don’t like it, you go somewhere else, we’ve all got that choice" - that sort of thing, you know. And so, in a sense, apart from people just getting really tired, the moaning or the whinging about it is minimal. (Transcript 15)

Selection of the school administration itself is also clearly a key question.

Without a whole school commitment to justice and reform, ongoing order maintenance can degenerate into a rigid adherence to discipline policy processes. The pressure to exclude, to push students out of class and out of the school is coincident with the individualisation of the issues. It is particular students who are seen as naughty, behind, needy or pathological. A vigorous discursive formation of deficiency and deviance is the result. Such students are the first to appear in the offices of ‘out of class’ staff.

Support for classroom teachers - the role of ‘out of class’ staff

Once order has been established in classrooms (which does not equate to successful academic learning) it is the minority of students who then take up the ‘out-of-class’ time - that of the principal, deputies and counsellors. The kind of discipline issues that come to the administration and counselling staff vary with the students' age. In the early years it is not uncommon for small children to have tantrums and outbursts of anger, squabbles and fights in the yard that do not result in serious injury, and disruptive classroom behaviour sufficient to warrant their removal. In the primary years, the fights and teasing become more serious and combinations of learning issues and behaviour become apparent. In secondary schools, fights are both spontaneous eruptions and highly premeditated (both are potentially very dangerous) and the level of classroom insolence and disruption is much more directed to challenging teacher authority. The vast majority of violent incidents are between boys whereas girls tend to confine themselves to teasing and bullying, however some physical fights between girls do occur (Rigby, 1996). In upper primary and secondary schools fights between groups sometimes revolve around racism.

The principal of a small primary school reflects on the range of factors at work in discipline issues in his school:

In every classroom there are 3 or 4 kids that can be huge problems. Every classroom’s got them. But because we manage them in certain ways, only one is a real problem for me - so you might have only eight in the school that are real pains to deal with. But if you took the counsellor away there’d be twenty four. A lot of the follow up that is done by the counsellor and the school admin makes a huge amount of difference. If you can’t follow up it gets all wobbly round the edges and frayed, and it all starts to fall apart and the staff confidence starts to erode. I think it's probably... it's better for the classroom teacher
to have the skills to deal with problems at the class level, that’s the best option, but it requires a lot of skill to do that. They don’t all have it. And the classroom teacher can only take so much of it and the problem has to be moved somewhere else. And so it moves up and down the scale. And so it helps if the Principal or Deputy also knows about behaviour management. That’s some of the stuff I’ve heard from other schools where it all goes wrong. A student gets sent to the Principal or Deputy and then they’re back and staff don’t feel that anything’s happened – no magic’s happened… So we have to have procedures and we have to be clear about it, and sometimes you get it wrong too! (Transcript 22)

It is not necessarily dealing with specific incidents that takes all of the 'out of class' time, although clearly if there are incidents with numbers of students involved, then listening to all sides of the story is a significant investment. What takes more time is the paper work and following up with parents who are usually contacted in any but the most minor of misdemeanours:

One of the things we put a lot of time and effort into is following through kid issues with parents, you do it and you do it so that it is absolutely crystal clear to everybody involved - if you don’t you’re wasting your time and it will come back. (Transcript 19)

As a school we spend heaps of time (on behaviour management) and it’s by far the most prevalent agenda – and all schools like this are like that – well I think they are – it’s the prevalent agenda that’s on people’s minds. At the moment for example, at the camp last week, we had to suspend about 8 kids, it was one of those ugly ‘boys’ bullying’ numbers, and since then, for myself and the counsellor, following that through has just been about 60% of our time, doing all the parent talk – that’s what we were just doing before you came, checking with each other – where is it all up to, who have we seen, who haven’t we seen, what do we do with this child, how do we get the message across – and all that sort of stuff is going on all the time. So in a busy time that’s a lot of time, and in a normal time, it’s probably about 40%. And for the counsellor, obviously he doesn’t get to do the classroom work that he’d like to do. And that’s always a dilemma. (Transcript 15)

There is a little local research evidence to demonstrate that there are more incidents of bullying and violence in ‘disadvantaged schools’, particularly in the northern suburbs (Bagshaw, 1998; B. Johnson, 1998) and this is supported by system data on suspensions and exclusions which is heavily weighted towards the northern and western suburbs. This data shows that boys and Aboriginal students are the most significant ‘offenders’, although School Card holders are not unduly over-represented. We might well thus conclude that those who have been ‘targeted’ through the SBM process are working class boys, rather than those whose families are totally reliant on welfare benefits.13

It may seem logical therefore that there are more sociological problematisations of ‘behaviour’ and policy responses at work in ‘disadvantaged schools’. They tend to be those that simultaneously individualise and abstract social relations rather than those

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13 This supports the general line of argument that what we see at work in the everyday social relations of schooling is the broad dimensions of inequality rather than a sub group we might call poor.

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which see the social at the heart of the individual.¹⁴ I now turn to a common conceptualisation of those students who require disciplining.

RISKY BEHAVIOURS

All sectors of schooling are now enmeshed in the rhetoric of 'risk' and 'disability' to describe both the minority of students who require the most attention and those who are considered likely to be disruptive, need additional welfare support, tutoring, medical attention and so on. A battery of identification and diagnostic checklists have been made available to assist schools to identify those who already, or may in the future, not conform to the designated norms of behaviour and learning.

As I spoke to principals they routinely used the language of Special Education - medical and psychological categorisations of behaviour and afflictions - to describe their students and the dimension of the problems with which they were dealing:

One interesting aspect of our school is that 12% have a disability. And that's a really high percentage, when you think that means in every single class there's 3 or 4 kids with one or more disabilities, and I mean you can debate the validity of the Guidance assessments all you like but they are more consistent in the way they verify kids now and their guidelines are much more stringent than they used to be, and even with this stringency we've still got 12%. Apparently to be verified with an intellectual disability now you have to be on the bottom 7th percentile of the WISC3 test. And I think that has a real impact on the school. Then we have, I had come across autism before, because my last 3 schools all had Special Education classes, but in our school we've got 6 children with Aschberger's syndrome and one who we've recommended recently. That's a lot. And we've got a number who've obviously got some form of mental illness. I think there's a definite connection between disability and poverty and probably between mental illness and poverty and clearly most of the parents, most but not all, most of the parents whose kids are in special classes were in special classes themselves... But 12% is high. And we currently have 7 staff who have some form of responsibility in supporting Special Education, who have a specific role in Special Education. So the coordination of that is a huge thing for us, to keep on top of that. And then on top of that we have a large number of kids with identified learning difficulties...interestingly enough, more in Years 6 and 7, much more, than in our current 3-5.¹⁵(Transcript 13)

One of the other things that's a big issue for us is that – we did some base line data, testing, in our first year here and we found that we had 17% NCPs, we had a further 33% who were in the bottom 20th percentile – and of course that's part of the issue, but the goal posts have been changed to make it tougher for kids to get an NCP...so that actually left us with about 50% of our population operating in the bottom fifth, if you look at the old bell curve so that's been a huge business for us. (Transcript 19)

¹⁴ Bourdieu (1990, p. 190) puts it this way: "The body is in the social world but the social world is within the body."

¹⁵ Whether that meant the previous administration had more students tested, students got more 'behind' as they got older, or whether this was just a population aberration, was not clear.

¹⁶ The NCP (Negotiated Curriculum Plan for students with disabilities) policy substitutes as a category and students become known as an NCP.
It is also clear from their words that a grasp of the numbers is important. Numbers equate to extra resources.

The discourse of risk and disability

The use of 'risk and disability' discourse does a number of things. It: 17
- establishes a norm from which some students are designated as different, and therefore 'at risk' or less 'able'
- paves the way for 'risk' and 'ability' to be defined in terms of failure to achieve a predetermined curriculum, lack of involvement in the labour market and potential social disruption
- positions students designated 'at risk' and 'disabled' as separate from other students, suggests that they have no common concerns and interests and that they require a separate, rather than a holistic policy and programmatic response
- homogenises all those 'at risk' and 'NCP'd, lumping a variety of issues together in one category amenable to one solution. The solution consists of ways of becoming normalised
- locates 'risk' and 'disability' within individuals, families and cultures rather than in a set of organised institutional and social/cultural processes
- essentialises the nature of 'risk' and 'ability', reduces complexities and differences in lives to a few factors while generating a proliferation of categorisations of 'riskiness' and 'disability' available to a variety of expert professional systems
- sends the positive attributes of individuals, families and culture to the background
- directs the policy solution to things that must be done to and for individuals, families and cultures, thus obliterating and working against those things that individuals, families and cultures might do for themselves
- avoids looking at the institutional arrangements of the schools themselves.

Unattended 'risks' do have a habit of becoming ongoing social/economic/political costs. Such 'risk' behaviours also sometimes become a challenge to broader social order, as 'risky' subjects refuse to remain the individualised and essentialised problems they are represented to be. 'Risk' discourses are part of the apparatus of the disciplinary state mobilised to regulate the population and prevent challenge from the unruly (Bessant, 1995a; Castel, 1991; Rose, 1996). The 'risk' and 'disability' discourses employed in schools are currently framed in terms of instrumental economism and the basic skills of a standardised curriculum. The kinds of programmes that result from such 'risk' analyses are removal of students to alternative programmes, inoculations of instruction and behaviour modification to designated individuals and groups, work oriented programmes, and the dragooning of parents into homework helper and better parenting programmes. Such programmes are intended to 'add to' the individual, families and cultures so that they can become 'normal', that is prudent, managing their own 'risks'.

This is not to suggest that individual students and particular groups of students do not need support and assistance. Rather, the question that daily faces 'disadvantaged

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17 Deconstruction based on several scholarly analyses (e.g. Fine, 1995; Fine & Weis, 1998; Gitlin, Margonis, & Brunjes, 1993; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986; Swadener, 1995).
schools' is one of how to move beyond the individualising, differentiating and normalising processes inherent in 'disability', 'risk' and disciplinary discursive formations. What is more, there are other discourses at work that make that task, difficult as it might have been in the past, even harder now. The context of marketisation requires new attention to boundary maintenance, the making of decisions about who gets to be in and out of school (Gerwitz et al., 1995; Kenway, 1995b; Whitty et al., 1997). Attracting enrolments depends on having a more conservative definition of the norm (see Chapter 5).

'Risky' students a 'risk' to schools?

There is some evidence in the north and west to suggest that it is now harder for certain kinds of 'risky' students to 'get into' school. The head of a non government welfare agency voiced their concerns this way:

I was talking to our youth accommodation people and they say it's very patchy, about who will really help a young person, in schools now...they are becoming very anxious about results, and issues like what percentage matriculated last year and they're really very reluctant to do something particular about a young person who we turn up with and say 'This person's been staying with us and they really want to make a go of it back at school and we'll support them'. It's very, very patchy even within a school sometimes about whether they'll pick them up... and I think that's most unfortunate... The view that the right wing people have that says if we all learnt a bit more discipline we'd all fit in a bit better... you know sometimes these kids are bloody frustrating, you feel if you could just be a bit more organised, and if you could just turn up to school on time, if you could just tell us when you're not going to go... just a little bit extra, you know, would make all the difference... so there's a sense in which the right wing stuff is true and if you could get a bit of a bit of self control here...
I mean it sounds like the 60s...

The dilemma is that the schools, many of the schools are setting traps for those kids that they just can't meet and they just haven't got enough adaptability and so they're out... I think that what in effect is happening is that schools are identifying those young people when they're fourteen and especially if they've moved schools and you set up a system where they're forced to move schools, by expulsions and punishment and so when they go to enrol at new schools its made absolutely clear to them that they're not welcome... there's none of this, 'Oh great come to our school, we'll work with you, we'll try'...
That's out the window, it's a big lecture and no thankyou. (Transcript 5)

The result of such attitudes and actions are, they believe, that there are now many young people who never make the transition from primary to high school, and from one school to another:

I'm sure there are heaps of kids who are fourteen now who've never been on the roll at a high school, or they've disappeared - when they were fourteen they left and they've never made a connection anywhere else and the school hasn't done anything... but I'm sure a lot of these Aboriginal kids would be much younger. (Transcript 5)

This view is supported by one Deputy Principal who told me:

The truancy rates among Year 8 and 9s, the chronic school refusal is probably higher ... than anyone knows or acknowledges.
There are just lots of kids who aren't at school and there's nothing you can do to get them there... and who on some days you say, I'm not even going to ask, just leave it today...
what I was dealing with most in the junior school wasn't discipline it was family stuff. What the kids are dealing with on a day to day basis is a family and a community that doesn't know how to cope and the kids are acting it out on a day to day basis. (Transcript 4)

The Chief Executive of the welfare agency argues that the system has got its bureaucratic priorities about face, and that before creating water tight exclusion policies, there ought to be an entitlement system, one for tracking students under the age of compulsion, those who may be 'difficult' for schools to deal with, but who nevertheless have a legal right to schooling. Because they are currently denied access to schooling due to covert systemic neglect it amounts, they suggest, to discrimination against the most marginalised young people.

Because these young people are seen to have individualised problems that need additional support, and because they are a market liability, they are not allowed 'inside'. Their deviance is unacceptable, their position equated with lack of desire or will to improve their circumstances, and any challenge their presence might make to the norms of what constitutes a 'good' student are avoided. Kincheloe (1999, p. 234) remarks of such "oppositional identities":

Their absence of academic motivation does not have as much to do with laziness as with education's inability to convince them of its intrinsic worth, its relation to their lives and its capacity to lift them out of their uncomfortable lives.

What we might conclude then is that 'disadvantaged schools' are increasingly involved in targeting and identifying those students who are 'at risk' or need remediation. This move has been created in part by the policies of funding which link resources to individual students: the only way for schools to get additional staffing is to produce a number of deviant students according to the central policy norms.

These policies provide categories of identification which work to normalise school practices and sociological explanations thus rendering them invisible, although some

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18 What might be needed, it is argued, are alternative programmes for such students. One argument that is often made against such alternatives is that the removal of small groups of students from mainstream schools, while of benefit to the group concerned, lets the dominant school off the hook, and paradoxically strengthen its hegemony. As Fine (1995, p. 84) puts it, "The creation of alternatives, even positive alternatives, may accommodate a few, but it more fundamentally acts as a holding pond for the "mainstream" and thereby enables urban education to remain fundamentally unchanged."

I argue (Thomson, 1999a) that there are ways in which alternative programs within schools can leverage mainstream change as they provide exemplars and experiences of different pedagogical and curricula practices that start in situated and particular ways from the needs and desires of the least advantaged (cf. Connell 1993). They can also make visible and disrupt the institutional practices that are the backbone of the disciplinary structures of the school.

19 There is for example a particular South Australian interest in the notion of 'resilience'. Colleagues at the University of South Australia researching student resilience in the northern suburbs note that school personnel locate their concept of resilience in the school context and often equate it with happy compliance with school routines and procedures and general sociability (B. Johnson & Howard, 1999).
school administrators find their own ways of uniting the two ways of understanding. The policies isolate and individualise 'targeted' students and bring their parents and homes into the ambit of the school through the development of contractual processes which stipulate actions for both the home and the school. Finally, the policies are a bureaucratic impost, providing hours of form filling and meetings that work as a disciplinary apparatus on staff. Most worrying, the level of administrivia is such that it actually takes time away from delivery of the programs it is meant to support.

Schools, and 'disadvantaged schools' in particular have more than discipline and remediation in their repertoire for students who fail to meet expectations. Linked strongly to processes of maintenance of social order, and mobilised by both the discourses of 'risk' and 'attending to the whole child', are the practices of welfare and interagency support.

SUPPORT FROM 'OUTSIDE' - WELFARE

'Disadvantaged schools' are generally not keen to simply punish. The Disadvantaged Schools Program was characterised by a vigorous debate around the question of welfare support. State committees regularly refused funds for anything other than educational activities, and reports of principals advocating breakfast programs, the use of social workers in schools, and so on was often characterised as low key welfarism. There were substantive differences in the ways that schools presented the issues - on the one hand, there were tendencies to represent children and young people as helpless victims, on the other hand there were passionate advocates for children and young people who were malnourished, homeless, depressed, violent, and/or engaged in a range of addictive pastimes.

Inter-agency projects

Considerable systemic effort has also gone into developing programs in schools to intervene and support those young people who have run foul of the disciplinary system before they get to the point where the school no longer tolerates their presence. One such line of response are those programs designed around conflict management, peer mediation and outdoor education to promote team and communication skills. Bagshaw (1998) for example argues that bureaucratic, hierarchical and authoritarian solutions to adolescent conflict exacerbate the problem and suggests instead conflict management strategies. She also points out that schools in the north and west which had significant levels of reported violence needed other approaches, saying: The levels of aggression and violence in these schools would indicate that broader, community centred approaches may be needed before conflict management strategies can work in schools.

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20 Paterson (1989) for example presents a hierarchy of 'consciousness' about health and personal development which begins with breakfast and ends with the curriculum. Schools are 'meant' to move through the stages, rather than add to base level provision. The latter is the position taken by the Australian Council for Equity in Education (ACEE) in its promotion of 'full service' schools (Mukherjee, 1997).
Schools look to other government and non-government agencies to support them. Counsellors are often the main point of connection with such support structures outside of the school, but such services are also accessed in South Australia through the 'interagency referral' process. When students are perceived to be having some kind of difficulty, government services are made available through a regional referral point.21 A school refers a student by means of a written report and a discussion between a school person (usually the counsellor) and the Interagency Referral Manager. An interagency panel, consisting of health, welfare and specialist education services such as the behaviour support units and teams, meets monthly to decide on the appropriate response to each report. Schools can directly access system attendance counsellors (two per region) and the educational psychologists who diagnose and support students with disabilities. Schools also can establish networks with community and church-based agencies. Through the various reports, meeting records and visitations, each referred student becomes a 'case' for the gaze of multiple government agencies - each with their own set of professional discourses and texts in which the students become 'en-cased'.

Time out

Many of schools commented on the significant deterioration of this interagency process and the current difficulty in getting access to the kinds of support services that would make a difference - general health, mental health services, welfare services, community policing. Some believed that services, like schools, were getting more choosy about who they helped. One principal summed up their school situation with outside agencies in this way:

A number of our kids, in - what nine weeks? we’ve had more than a handful of kids where they’ve been through the apparent service providers that are there, and those service providers no longer want to know them because they are 14 or 15, they’ve missed a number of appointments...so there isn’t anything for them in terms of mental health and the parents or the care giver or the foster parents do not have the dollars to access anything else. That’s what poverty looks like for us. And it tends to be they’re fed, they’re clothed, and if necessary we can do that here, but we can’t access the health stuff that they need.... that’s the biggest bit for us.

And we’re dealing on a day to day basis with kids that have mental health issues but are also involving themselves in glue...glue is the base level stuff, some of our kids are actually involved in other concoctions as well...and we’re talking Year 8s and 9s, they’re not the senior kids, it’s more and more accessing that stuff by their own illegal activities, and they haven’t got the support structures at home or in their community or anything else. That side of it, we’ve been noticing it more and more.

Curriculum isn’t the answer.

Buying them uniforms and giving them breakfast and all those things, they’re all very nice but they’re not the answer either.

We’re actually looking at much stronger community supports in terms of that health and well-being and there’s nowhere for them to go. (Transcript 20)

Significantly, according to the accounts of school administrators, the difficulty with accessing services was greatest in the northern suburbs and in the Le Fevre Peninsular,

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21 The development of this process grew out of a way to ensure that all schools got access to available services and that there was some mechanism for prioritising the most urgent ‘cases’.
whereas the older western suburbs seemed to have maintained a more comprehensive set of services. One school in the northern suburbs reported a three fold increase in twelve months in the number of students seeking first aid at school, rather than use the local doctors whose fees had increased. Mental health services were scarce in all locations. As Mukherjee (1997a) suggests such intervention and support is critical to success at school and the retraction of such services are not just about welfare. He says:

What is social work? If attendance is a problem then it needs to be dealt with in a way that is respectful of the students. Surely it's better to have the students attending because they want to rather than force them to attend?

(name) Public School use the local high school's bus to pick students up and take them to school. They have found that this simple device has improved attendance out of sight. Is this social work?

If social work is about making people feel better about themselves in order that they can learn, it's got to be a start.

Manicom (1995) argues that having to pay attention to health and welfare matters is an integral part of the social organisation of teachers' work in 'disadvantaged schools': children who are hungry or tired or ill have less energy for school work, and dealing with such matters inevitably reduces time allocated to the curriculum. This is not the case in privileged communities. She says:

The constant recurrence of health and welfare problems means that time is continually taken, week after week, year after year. Time taken now does not mean more time available tomorrow: time taken from instructional work now to attend to health does not mean more instructional time tomorrow.

What is significant is that this time devoted to welfare, like that devoted to discipline, is not demanded of all schools. She sums it up this way:

The cumulative effects of such processes distinguish teaching in inner city schools, and are an instance of how schooling practices can be seen as classing practices, that is as constituent of class relations and inequitable schooling. (Manicom, 1995, p. 139, my emphasis)

The retraction of public social and health services exacerbates relations with parents as they become one of the few government agencies open and available. One school principal saw a direct connection between the decline in health services and the incidence of angry parents at the office door:

As lots and lots of other government agencies and services have retracted from contact with the local community and have got 1300 help lines and only central offices and that sort of thing, the school's become the only place, perhaps the only place apart from the police station, in the local district where you can go and have a go at somebody who works for the government. I'm sure another factor is the significant contraction of mental health services, both in terms of community health outreach services and outpatient services, that sort of thing. Certainly, in numbers of the more extreme cases that we've experienced ourselves at school, or know about others experiencing, is that frequently the complainant was receiving some sort of medical attention for perceived mental health problems, and you wonder whether in times past when those services were better resourced whether those people's treatment wouldn't have been significantly different from what it is.
What it is at the moment is that you can only get to see somebody once a month and you go and create mayhem in your community with public agencies like schools, and your neighbours and with people living in the street, whatever. (Transcript 8)

ANGRY PARENTS

One of the regular occurrences that occurs in all schools is dealing with concerned, disgruntled and angry parents. The usual scenario is that one or two parents will arrive and demand to see the principal. The problem is almost invariably to do either with some kind of dispute between children or a perceived injustice on the part of a teacher towards their child:

You get the full range of reactions .... from "Yeah, we don't know what to do either", to parents who are really angry at the school because that is their only reaction to everything...just pure anger... they don't know how to cope. (Transcript 4)

School-parent clashes are happening with increasing intensity across the system, to the point where both principals associations and the education union have made approaches to the system to introduce firmer rules and some protection for staff involved (Buckby & Woolford, 1998; Lloyd, 1998d). Perhaps it is one of the effects of an increasing 'consumer' rights' discourse at work in schooling, and/or increasing litigiousness (Crouch, 1998a) associated with reflexive modernisation (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), but it is in 'disadvantaged schools' where the meetings of parent and administrative staff generally come to a head. And for some inexplicable reason, known to everyone in the South Australian system, it happens more often in the northern suburbs than in the west. It was surely no coincidence that a recent well publicised case of a principal taking out an injunction against a parent was in the northern suburbs, that the principal was female, the parent a long term unemployed male and the issue an ongoing case of teasing among junior primary girls (Pudney, 1998a, 1998b).

Flash points

The phrase 'loony parent' can be heard with increasing frequency in schools and district offices as people struggle with understanding what is going on. Most 'disadvantaged school' administrators are careful to balance this view:

I suppose in our heads, when we say that people have tough lives it's because we respect the community. There's not one parent out there that you couldn't say is doing their best for their kids. There are circumstances... there are people who...maybe by our sets of values and circumstances they're not doing the best... but from their perspective they're doing what they feel is the best and they work very hard at it...

This is highly stressed community but the people are absolutely amazing in the way they don't allow that to affect their community... they're also very supportive of each other in that stress...where I live you don't know the people three houses away and I guess there's not the same opportunity for either support or feuds...You have high fences so you can't see...here there's only little fellas...you can't help it if the football goes over the fence three times a week and breaks that window. I never cease to be amazed, I go home from school at this time of day, you've got the groups of kids all out playing together in the front yards, on the footpath, and it's a bit the way it was when I was a kid, you get out and play with the neighbours... and I don't think that happens in a lot of communities. So it works both ways. Everyone gets cranky now and then and you get
that fixed up and then you get cranky again and then you get some people who come in who are cranky all the time... And in the end it sorts itself out pretty well. (Transcript 19)

A deputy principal tells me of the ongoing disputes between students that are more widespread, that involve whole streets taking sides in incidents that are of latter day Montagu-Capulet proportions:

And that's the hard thing... you can say it is the socio-economic context, they are out of work ... but somewhere along the line there's people sitting there doing this to each other... I dealt with one (dispute) over six months where I thought that the worst thing was that this group of parents were teaching this group of kids to hate... with a passion and to never forgive... and there's something there about being alive... you get angry and you feel something, you are alive, but what you're fighting against is a ... blancmange...

They live everything at a very intense level, like a drama, a soap opera, because everything is really desperate and they are concerned about their kids, they are concerned about their lives, they've got no way of getting out and you just rail against it and we often get in the way and their kids get in the way and other people and it is there... but I reckon that if you can't put that in a context what you end up with is it's the pathology that the kids are bad because the family's bad and the parents don't care... I've never come across parents who don't care but I've come across a lot of parents who have no idea how to express their caring or disappointment or their anger so they just either give up or yell and shout and scream at us. (Transcript 4)

'Disadvantaged schools' set up procedures and routines to try to head off such confrontations. Principals explain:

We say to parents "We want your feedback, we want you to come and talk about it" and so they do. And that's great and we've talked about what are the structures and what are the procedures to follow like - talk about the problem, focus on your child's learning, focus on relationships, all that sort of stuff - and so we're constantly working with parents to get them to do that. (Transcript 15)

There's areas you invest time in, like with parents, and you reap the benefits in having a more supportive parent body and having kids who are more trusting and more confident so whereas maybe in some one's terms you could be more efficient and spend less time on it, it's not as productive in the long run. (Transcript 19)

The alternative to an open approach to problem solving is a sullen standoff between school staff, School Councils, and parents. One principal remembers how it was when they first arrived:

When I got there it was the parents versus the staff stuff. The parents wanted the school to be theirs, and they wanted to get into it, whereas the staff felt that every time the parents came into it, they got hammered, verbal abuse or there were letters to the Minister, and what they thought were minor issues became huge ones. So community relations was a big issue and many staff had been in schools like this for a long time and they were worn out, they needed a shot in the arm, different thinking to get them going and they didn't quite know how to do it, although by the time I got there they had turned the corner and were sort of looking already to do something and they didn't quite know how to do it. So we spent quite a lot of time on building the community relations. When I first got here, for example, the School Council was fairly weak, and didn't really know what it was doing, it was full of depressed people complaining about kids riding their bikes on the weekend without helmets. That was the kind of level. When I left, it was

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fifteen people who understood about the school curriculum, who understood where it
was going and why it was happening the way it was... they were taking stuff on
themselves and organising events and things themselves. So that was a big change.
(Transcript 22)

This kind of intervention does not avoid the crises altogether, but it does convert many
of them into transactions of a more productive kind that are of long term benefit to
students. Dealing with crisis incidents and developing this kind of parent interaction
starts from a position of some respect and recognition of the right of parents to have and
voice concerns. However it must be remembered that schools have legislated
responsibilities to act as surveillance agents on parents and to report their suspicions of
any unacceptable parenting practices. Schools therefore are always at a distance from
parents, particularly those who are under duress. Parents are often reluctant to expose
themselves to the school for fear of such 'dobbing in'. I suspect, and this is certainly an
area for further investigation, that at least some of the hostility between working class
parents and schools has a long history in the practices of 'the welfare' which monitors
and controls families to the point of removing children, to which schools are now tied as
outreach moral watchdogs. What is most important to note is that the contradictory
processes of parent-school relations indelibly marks everyday life.

Supporting parents

Some parents do have welfare needs. These are often interrelated with student discipline
matters. It is hardly surprising that some students and parents under pressure appear in
the principal's office as a combination of welfare and discipline. According to school
administrators, these issues seem to be getting worse:

We seem to be dealing with more issues of domestic violence and parents with alcohol
problems, gambling is a new dimension that has hit a number of families, so all those are
impacting to a greater extent, they are more visible in the school than they've ever been
in the past, so we are getting parents who are drug addicts coming to pick up their kids
and you've got to deal with it in the yard... whilst I think they've probably always been
there, it wasn't to the extent that they were openly visible... I've had a parent
withdrawing from heroin in the passage way. I've never dealt with issues like that. So
family crises and breakups, we're getting to a stage with long term poverty that they
haven't had one breakup they've had three or four, and so there are quite a number of
different step parents entering into children's lives.

In the short term, obviously we just try to deal with it in the school. I had a custody case
the other day where the mother tried to take her kids... it was horrific for the children. So
in the short term we just try to deal with it, in the longer term, the counsellor picks it up,
tries to refer to different agencies if families want support like that, so she would take
over to help families if that's what they want.

It's a lot more visible than I've known it to be. You'd hear about it in the past from
neighbours, or children have talked, but now it's in your face... And in schools like this
you have such a mixture of families and you're conscious of this Mum out of there with
her bottle of beer and this quiet middle class family... you see them walking past and
you think, "Oh dear, what's going through their head". (Transcript 2a)

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22 I am not arguing that children do not need protection, rather that mandatory notification,
which sets up a distinct one sided power relationship, works against other parent-school
processes that seek to bring schools closer to working class parents.
Parents in crisis do often turn to the school, particularly if there is a relationship that has been established as part of the normal school routine. It is not uncommon for 'disadvantaged schools' to be called on to assist with tasks as diverse as accident litigation, divorce and separation proceedings, filling out forms and applying for benefits, advocacy with government agencies such as 'the welfare', grief counselling, health referrals and ongoing parenting advice. Such extended family support functions are not recognised nor funded, and even as schools try to cut back on this function, knowing it is not their 'core business' they inevitably end up doing quite a lot:

There are more parents that can't cope...That's a common phrase that you hear when the counsellor rings or when I ring to talk over the problems that they're having in the home and it's "What can I do? He doesn't listen"...and I think there's a feeling of certainly not being empowered with their own children, that they can't handle their own children..."You're not allowed to do this, you're not allowed to do that" ... that the state's taken away lots of their rights and the children have lots of rights. There is that feeling from lots of parents...

There's young children still roaming the streets at eleven o'clock...And a neighbour rings to tell us..."Well what can I do? I can't get them to come in...They won't listen"... that's a lot more common from parents than I've ever heard. (Transcript 2a)

Such involvement is not always, however, without its lighter moments:

I had a phone call from one Mum who suspected that her son was selling drugs at school and I found out later the reason she suspected was because he tried to sell her some!
(Transcript 22)

The public spotlight

Explaining the escalation in the confrontations between schools and parents is not easy. One principal put it this way:

I reckon it started to get worse when there was a change from Labor to the Liberal government, and the government's posture was tell us what we're doing wrong. When they first came into power... it became quite clear that the Minister's office was open to any complainant at any time, by phone, in person....

It seems that the parents have developed some quite unusual networks, even if they never meet in person they'll ring each other up and egg each other on about complaining and so the word gets round that someone will always listen... In some ways it's become rather a self feeding phenomena so that if a person has success or perceives that they've had success, and others perceive it as a victory.... frequently what they're after is the humiliation of the school or the principal or a teacher or another student - that tends to cover the range - that encourages others, who sometimes it seems haven't got anything better to do - that's a throw away line but it's probably true that they haven't got anything much better to devote their energies to... the way that they see it... getting justice from the system, and justice often means the school saying, "Sorry we were wrong and you were right"... it's certainly frequently the case that what the complainants are asking for is neither just nor reasonable for a school to be able to supply, so the argument becomes absolutely stuck... with enough feeding by the media - they do not respond to all of these people who ring them, but they trigger their reinforcement enough so that people think there's enough chance for them to get their case on television....

So it seems to me there's a whole constellation of events which maintain a culture of complaint. That's the case across the western world, as far as one can read. (Transcript 8)
In their view, a combination of the conservative "discourses of derision" (Kenway, 1990; Wallace, 1993), the use by conservative governments of parent complaints to ginger up the public sector, and tabloid journalism, were to blame.

What is clear from the stories of the school administrators with whom I spoke was that the anticipated gaze of both the minister and the media was cause for concern and constantly tempered their actions - panopticism at its best. Some have experienced it first hand:

We were seen as the terrible people who never got her child to school and we didn't teach him properly and we were horrible to her....television stations were quite prepared to listen to her and give her credence - and nobody rang me and said "What do you think about this?"... And then of course she came in the next week and said "Oh, I didn't mean to upset you, it wasn't my fault"... but she got the media on side, she got money for it and that was all she was interested in. And there it was on the television, our school, our student report held up...and that report was from the teacher who had had most success with the kid...She was quite upset. (Transcript 18)

The actions of this parent who sicked national tabloid television onto the school were far from powerless.

What seems to have so far evaded those who are calling for more stringent measures to quieten parents is what there might be about schooling itself that may be part of the production of this particular kind of parent action. The most obvious is that parents have little say in the schools. And yet all of the school administrators report spending increased amounts of time on parent interaction. Perhaps some of the explanation for this apparent contradiction lies in the ways that parent-administrator conversations are shaped by a range of newly centralised and standardised school processes. (These include the reshaping of school governance and the reduction of parent participation in curriculum and other policy making.) What is pertinent to this chapter is how parent-school relations might be shaped by discipline policies.

I now want to consider the disciplinary policies and processes with which all state schools must work.

STUDENT 'BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT' POLICY (SBM)

It is the systemic discipline policy that shapes much of the everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', governing and making coherent what it is that happens in classrooms and to the minority who refuse to accept classroom discipline and find themselves out of class dealing with the school administration.

Three strikes and out

When corporal punishment was abolished, a new systemic student 'behaviour management' policy was established. It prescribed a standard set of processes, data collection and referral procedures for each school. Its introduction was accompanied by an inservice program that recommended developing classroom rules (norms) and clear
consequences for misdemeanours. This was translated in some primary and secondary schools into a quite rigid 'step' program. For some students, progress through the steps seemed inexorable.

What was common to all schools, secondary and primary, 'disadvantaged' or not, was the increased use of 'time out' processes legitimated by the policy. The effects of repeated time outs are not locally monitored nor researched: systemic data is kept only on suspensions, exclusions and attendance. However it is highly unlikely that repeated absences from class or from school assist in reducing alienation, or assist in learning. To the contrary it increases absenteeism, failure and dropping out (Fine, 1995). One secondary principal remarked:

(We have) increasing numbers of some very, very difficult kids who, whatever you do, nothing works and it hasn't worked for three years either. We're getting an increasing number of kids who, if we suspend them or when they get excluded from here, it will be their third exclusion since Year 5. and I mean I'm not just talking about one here in a school population, we're talking about ten or fifteen. And then we're talking about an auxiliary group around them who the Deputy at the primary school had them sitting outside their office for half the year believing they were doing the right thing by keeping them out of trouble. We've got one kid who was allowed to go out and whack a tree, every time he got angry he was allowed to whack a tree with a stick, and that was his anger management program. That's not working now - it's not transferring to secondary school! He wants to whack other things... (Transcript 16)

One Deputy was very concerned that they were locked into policy processes that legitimated the actions of teachers who wished to use such processes to get rid of students. They could point to the policy and to behaviour contracts between the Deputy and the students and easily indicate how the agreements had been broken, without ever having to look at the ways in which they may have contributed to the end result. A further concern they had was related to the power of the students to refuse to engage with the disciplinary intent, to reject any remediation. And then there was the impact on other students of resistant and potentially dangerous peers. This presented as a veritable Gordian knot:

The kid's doing something naughty and... in doing the stuff to work out the reentry meeting you set the student goals, and too often those goals are interpreted, not as something the kid needs to work towards, and therefore the school needs to assist the kid in working towards it, but they're the rules...the kid must follow, and the moment they step over those rules, you do it again...so you can make the process go as short as you possibly like...but the thing against that is that some kids are real buggers... that no matter what you try they'll just not do it...It was a constant tension in what I was doing... how to keep them in and how do you protect other kids...because some of them.. getting out's the idea...that's what it's about...it's not about us or the school, often what they're trying to hit is their parents and the community and "I'll show you that nobody can contain me". (Transcript 4)

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23 At a particular step parents were summoned, at another, behaviour contracts were instituted, at another, suspensions invoked and so on.

24 See Hatton and O'Brien (1995) for research into the way such a behaviourist discipline approach re/produced dominant gender and race relations.
The policy designated procedures are very time consuming. Nearly all the sixteen schools commented on how long it took to fill out forms, send letters to parents, and attend interagency meetings. All the school administrators I spoke with referred to the way that this regulated their patterns of work and limited the amount of time they had available for other, reform oriented tasks. The growth of a standardised set of procedures for handling school discipline has had a significant impact on the everyday work of out of class school staff.

Textual practices

A closer look at the policy and its associated mandated processes is revealing. The policy text (DECS, 1989, revised 1998) talks of social learning for citizenship, individual development, self disciplining behaviours necessary for work and life, and individual learning about actions and consequences. It is an uneasy mix of psychology, both behaviourist and developmental, liberal progressive ideas about tolerance and social citizenship, human capital formation and Deweyian child centredness. This mix was articulated by one principal:

You do spend inordinate amounts of time doing SBM\(^{25}\) and the reason you do that is partly to retain some social order within the school, certainly to continue that process of developing social cohesion, given that we don't just want control, we want kids to learn something about living together, while at the same time protecting those other kids from what's going on. (Transcript 8)

The practices espoused in the policy, those which regulate the institutional actions and the work of people within the institution, tell a more coherent story. Processes and forms that standardise school action were developed for a combination of reasons - to ensure there was some equity across the system and students were being treated in some reasonably consistent way (procedural justice); to provide the basis for systemic defence against legal challenge to teacher, school and system; to legitimate actions of the school by providing a system wide set of practices (risk management); to provide information for system equity monitoring (distributive justice); and to provide public accountability through the revelation of some aggregated data about state wide patterns of discipline (performativity).

A brief sketch of the processes involved can be seen in the forms. What becomes clear is the way that the textual practices individualise and remove all but the merest traces of the social context.\(^{26}\) The data from the school records, i.e. the characteristics of the

\(^{25}\) SBM - Student Behaviour Management. This has become a verb - to 'do SBM'.

\(^{26}\) When a student is suspended from school a standard form is sent home. The act(s) committed by the students is shown by ticking a box in a checklist - violence, threatening 'good order' of the school, threatening safety, acting illegally, interfering with the rights of others, showing persistent or willful inattention. The form focuses on specific incidents, rather than patterns of behaviour, and forces all incidents into categories that apply only to that single incident and to the individual student. The additional suspension record maintained within the school requires that the school record the student's age, gender, School Card status (a poverty substitute), race/ethnicity, disability and academic achievement. It then presents a checklist of possible school actions such as drawing up a behaviour contract, home contact, psychological assessment,
students and the nature of the incident, are sent to the system so that any system wide trends can be detected. There is nowhere a suggestion in the disciplinary policy that such trend monitoring should occur at the school level, nor is such data correlation built into the school administrative computing system. The school is discouraged from looking to see what patterns might emerge.

After suspension students and their parent(s) are required to submit to a formal Student Development Plan (SDP). This describes the students’ previous record (both academic and disciplinary) and records strategies that the school may have tried before. It details the plan made at the SDP conference between the student, parent(s) and school representative(s). The aim of the SDP conference is to change the behaviour of the individual student and the form requires the school to list the actions it will take to provide alternative opportunities for the student to learn new behaviours. SDP conferences are individual and the records are descriptive. There are no checklists that can be codified and aggregated. There are no little boxes to tick that say 'student bored', 'student wants to leave school to get a job', 'student reports continued harassment from peers or teacher' and so on. There is no inbuilt mechanism, except in the structure of individual school, for any particular patterns of problems across SDPs to be identified.

Furthermore, the stories of the student's actions in suspensions, exclusions, expulsions and SDP meetings are always told in official records by the school staff. They are individualised and strongly framed by psychological and legalistic discourses. What goes forward to be centrally aggregated is a list of individual student behaviours that can be correlated with population data. The stories told by students and parents are framed in descriptive records which are held in school, district and interagency offices. The student and the parents are the object of everyone's gaze but have no right to have their version of events as the record.

This is not to suggest that there is not an opportunity to protest. Indeed failure to provide a process of appeal constitutes a transgression of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Australia is a signatory. So there are also forms for parents to appeal suspension, exclusion, and expulsion. The forms require the parents to restate the grounds on which the school suspended/excluded/expelled and then tick one of two boxes as the reason for the appeal: the process was not followed properly, or the length/conditions are inappropriate. There is no place for the parents to advance an alternative explanation on this record - this happens in the appeal conference held with the District Superintendent. The parent(s) and student version is re-told in the words of system personnel and maintained in the District Superintendent's records, whereas the minimalist appeal form is aggregated at system level.

interagency referral, counselling, and so on. Only one item - changing teachers or classes - could be interpreted as any indication that the school itself could be implicated in the production of the behaviour. The exclusion and expulsion forms are similarly individualised and focus on the acts committed by the students with no explication of reasons.

27 Recommendations about analysis of such data were made in the now defunct Social Justice monitoring procedures.
The social relations of discipline

The textually mediated knowledge about students and their families, enshrined in SBM practices, leaves behind what they know, transforming incidents into an exercise of authority that is transpersonal and seemingly 'objective' (Campbell & Manicom, 1995). The responsibility for the behaviour in question and its change are located largely within individuals. This makes the actions of the school and system appear reasonable, and beyond reproach.

Because the construction focuses only on incidents it also works to obscure the connections between curriculum and pedagogy. While there is an opportunity to record the students' academic performance and whether they have an individual learning deficiency, the relevance and adequacy of the curriculum and the appropriateness of pedagogy is not open for scrutiny. Similarly, there is no opportunity provided in the logic of the practices for school staff to reflect on how incidents relate to broader social questions. It is little wonder then that if and when teachers attempt sociological problematisations about the functionings of discipline they found on generalisations because no other information is made available within the disciplinary process.

The SBM processes do not encourage (but do allow for) patterns to be seen, namely that particular groups of classed, gendered and raced students are being excluded from schooling. But the data collected has no explanatory capacity. The fine grained and specific stories of students and their parents' experiences of the school, curriculum, and pedagogical practices are hard to collate and are already, in the SBM records, distorted representations told by those in power, framed as specific events undertaken by one person. The lives of students are discursively disconnected from curriculum and school reform endeavours by the SBM process, which works to deny school staff understandings of how it is that the raced, classed and gendered practices of teaching produce raced, classed and gendered disciplinary problems. Dorothy Smith (1998, p. 18) suggests that:

Institutional regimes seldom, if ever, make visible the everyday work that brings them into being.

The social 'relations of ruling' constructed within and by the Student Behaviour Management policies and processes, as I have sketched them, are a partial illustration of only one moment in an ongoing dynamic. Teachers are prevented from being able to 'see' and articulate the connections between gender/race/class, their own professional positioning, schooling and students' learning; they therefore continue to collapse together sociological and educational discourses that blame failure and poor behaviour on 'background' (Comber, 1997, 1998a).

Bourdieu (1990, p. 82-85) argues that in dangerous situations - such as one where the good order and authority of the institution of schooling are challenged - practices are codified. He argues that codification always involves the development of conventions and rules, formalised processes in which there are adversaries. He describes the processes of codification as those of "diacrisis", that is, a judgement which separates what is important from what is not. Thus in the SBM policy, it is the behaviour that is
important, not the social and institutional context in which it was produced. Furthermore Bourdieu suggests that such codification controls meaning and these meanings are officialised through judicio-legal procedures, a formalisation which enables you to confer on practices, ... that constancy which ensures calculability and predictability over and above individual variations and temporal fluctuations. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 83)

Thus it is that the SBM policy works to regulate and mediate inequalities by textually positioning all the people involved. Through this positioning, SBM works to produce and reproduce the practices and social relations that enable the school as an institution to maintain its position of power over working class students. As Bourdieu says, the 'logic of practice' tends to reproduce, despite how it might be that individuals transcend this logic, the dominant dispersion of the population in the social space.

A brief summation

Schools are expected to be 'context generative' institutions. The 'disadvantaged school' works with the 'context derived' social relations of inequalities - that is with already raced, classed and gendered lives, networks, teleologies and narratives of the neighbourhood. Through the (logical) practices of the school - its 'context generative' activities - those social relations continue to be shaped.

I have illustrated how the discipline and welfare policies of the school, and the discourses of 'risk' and 'disability' work to establish norms that individualise and homegenise students and their parent(s), dispersing them in the social field in ways that tend to produce and reproduce dominant and inequitable patterns of social relations. I looked particularly at the working of the SBM policy showing that, through textual practices that reduce social relations to specific incidents that are narrated by professionals in the 'voice' of authority' and as the discourse of rational systems of surveillance and self discipline, SBM is a 'context generative' practice that keeps students and their parents in their class/place. Further, I suggested that the capacity of the 'disadvantaged school' to engage with the 'context generative' activities of the curriculum is limited by the amount of time and energy that has to be directed towards the task of maintaining order.

I now consider that proposition in more detail, highlighting how it is that the 'context derived' position of the 'disadvantaged school' as mediator of unequal social relations works with 'doing justice', that is how it might engage in 'context generation' that seeks to produce different and less unequal social relations in and through schooling.

PUTTING DISCIPLINE AND WELFARE IN THEIR PLACE

In this last section of the chapter I begin by looking at the positioning of 'disadvantaged schools' trying to make a difference in the everyday, to 'do justice', to be positively 'context generative'. I conclude by considering a re-reading of some of the 'disadvantaged schools' reform literature in the light of the everyday realities of the increasing discipline and welfare tasks of 'disadvantaged schools'.

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Everyday whole school change

'Disadvantaged schools' have no alternative but to engage in the maintenance of good order. But they need to do more if they are to make a positive difference for their students, if they are to redress, even a little, the inequitable distribution of school benefits. But order and reform are in constant tension and dialogue. Principals spoke frequently about the need for them to balance how they spent their energies. Too much focus on the necessary, everyday disciplinary work meant that they ceased to spend time on what made the most long term difference to students (and indeed to social order itself), viz. the curriculum. The school principals in this study, unlike some of their colleagues perhaps, all understood there was an ineluctable connection between discipline and the curriculum. They knew that many of their students found little point of connection with the formal knowledge on offer, and that the pedagogical and institutional practices needed to change. While each principal understood this differently, they could all and did, tell this story.

One principal tells me of a typical day in the school once they had established routines:

A lot of interactions with parents about problems and interactions with the school, about kids learning - lots of time on curriculum and curriculum development, that is probably my main focus now...together with lots of behaviour management, and with that there is a lot of interagency stuff, lots of other agencies and the community stuff. (Transcript 22)

The principal reflects back on the things that they think made the difference in their school:

If I could think about the one thing that's made the big difference - it was focussing on kids' learning and doing a lot of exciting projects and getting people (teachers) involved in that, where they could be affirmed in the stuff they were already doing well and didn't believe they were, and take on new challenges and try things out...

One of the first things was doing a lot of media stuff...we got involved in projects like "Girls and boys come out to play", all the harassment stuff, we got involved in the early literacy projects - we were involved in heaps of things... the National Schools Network, that was the first big project we got involved in and we looked at working in teams, working together. And what I found there was that the SSOs didn't communicate much with the teaching staff and some of the teaching staff didn't get on well with the other teaching staff, and there was an issue with classroom teachers and support teachers. So it was a bit like...Well, we've got a job to do, how are we going to do it best and what does working together mean...because we expect kids to do it. And we got into a big project with assessment and reporting and we looked at the whole thing, and we did a big curriculum review and the statements and profiles were around at the time so we incorporated all that into it. And when I first got there the teachers were saying things like, "These kids can't learn, that's the way they are." And now they're saying, "Of course they can learn, and we're doing all this great stuff..." They just don't say that any more. They say it's hard because of all the other issues, but they can do it. (Transcript 22)

The reform work of classroom teachers and school administrators in 'disadvantaged schools' involves putting together the question of order with that of learning/teaching and with that of school cultures, structures and organisation. In a school, this is an ecological and holistic business. By contrast, curriculum, discipline and school
organisation are often constructed as distinct. In South Australia, each is the responsibility of separate central office sections with separate policies and separate processes. The administration of the welfare and disciplinary procedures in DETE belongs with School Operations, and Curriculum is a separate 'division'. Curriculum documents are often developed by officers who have little or no contact with those who manage interagency procedures.28 The umbrella policy narrative is that good social order is necessary for learning to occur, and is separate from curriculum. Good social order is usually described as the 'learning environment', and its norms expressed as individual personal qualities and behaviours, as in the policy document, Foundations for the Future (DECS, 1997):

Teachers in South Australia's public education and children's services develop curriculum programs and learning environments in which children and young people will learn to care for and respect others, to feel secure and to experience positive relationships in order to learn trust.

This sets the scene for the disciplining of those who fail to exhibit these qualities and for remediation and welfare of those who are seen to have personal baggage that needs to be shed (such as their 'background') before they can do so.

In 'disadvantaged schools', the official story that you need to 'do social order' in order for students to learn, takes a particular shape. The issue is constructed as one about ensuring discipline, and providing welfare but keeping that in balance with the 'core business' of the curriculum. A comment by the immediate past Secretary of the Department of Education in Victoria, Geoff Spring (1998) is a good exemplar:

An underemphasis on welfare can lead directly to failure in achieving our educational objective for individual students. An overemphasis on welfare to the detriment of learning achievement may deny students the means to reach their full potential through their own efforts and deny them the chance to escape from the inhibiting circumstances in their own background.

Here the individualisation of background and effort is married to a sacrosanct curriculum and ameliorative welfare system. Welfare is about 'fixing' students so they can do what 'we' have decided is important. It is a necessary task, but one which potentially takes us away from our 'real work'. There is no connection made with discipline - the discipline/welfare binary remains intact. Discipline is thus taken for granted as a necessary adjunct to the curriculum, whereas welfare is problematic. What is never questioned is that both are processes which normalise and individualise, that both aim to 'fix' students so that they can become self disciplining, self managing learners, that discipline is a mechanism for excluding particular kinds of students, and that both discipline and welfare are done to particularly raced, gendered and classed students.

In 'disadvantaged schools', what takes most effort is moving from the "pedagogies of poverty" (Haberman 1991), those focussed almost exclusively on technologies of

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28 Even when such curriculum officers are school administrators with current experience as is often the case, the genre of curriculum documents is that they discursively work in an institutional vacuum. See Chapter 6 on utopian (ir)rationality.
discipline and welfare, those obsessed with the maintenance of order through classroom technique, to a curriculum that engages most of the students and a school culture that allows most of them the space to 'be somebody'. This occurs 'with/against' the constraints of maintaining order.

It is important to note that particular combinations of the good order maintenance systems, curriculum reforms and 'doing justice' work together in different ways in different locations. Ethnographic scholarship, such as that undertaken by Thrupp (1995; 1998a) in four New Zealand schools, and Lipman (1998) in restructuring inner urban schools in America, shows just how it is that discipline and welfare function as an integral part of an overall school practices of 'context generation' that work variously to 'do justice' (and otherwise). This level of analysis is beyond this particular study which can only serve to make the point that the disciplinary and welfare systems of the school are of key concern to 'disadvantaged schools', not only because they constitute the everyday, but because they shape so much of what happens and what can happen.

Re-readings of the reform literatures

In Chapter 5, I compared the reform agenda of current neoliberal policy with that common amongst 'disadvantaged schools'. I now revisit the 'disadvantaged schools' literature in the light of the evidence I have presented about the everyday and propose a re-reading.

I begin with the understanding that order and curriculum are interrelated. A more engaging curriculum reduces, but not eliminates, social order demands as these are created out of the positioning of the schools as mediators of unequal social relations. As a recent overseas visitor (Fecho, 1998) to South Australia remarked:

My experience in an urban, racially-isolated high school in Philadelphia indicates that the more students become engaged in their schooling, the less problematic they become in the classroom. It doesn't do you any good to get the halls clear of wanderers and then subjecting students to the same tedious teacher-centered work. That's one of the reasons they started wandering in the first place. So you need to help them gain both ownership and responsibility for their learning - you can't have one with out the other. In addition, students need to see how these skills will pay off now as well as down the road. (Fecho, 1998)

Other reform advocates do not go this far. Take for example, the current reform attention devoted to middle schooling.29 Nowhere in the recent middle schooling reform

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29 One text will suffice to illustrate the point. The following principles are the result of wide consultations through ten Australian Middle Schooling forums (Barratt, 1997, p. 9) and constitute 'essential components of middle schooling':

Learner centred

Coherent curriculum is focused on the identified needs, interests and concerns of students, and with an emphasis on self directed and co-constructed learning.

Collaboratively organised

Powerful pedagogy is employed by teams of teachers who know and understand their students very well, and who challenge and extend them in supportive environments.
discussions is there a strong acknowledgement that the maintenance of good social order (school discipline and welfare) may not only require time but could well work against the achievement of such worthy goals. This lack of recognition creates impossible and idealistic expectations in schools and of teachers who strive to implement such sets of prescriptions separate from their considerations of social order - unless they are in a school where there is an understanding and articulation of the mutual construction of curriculum and order, and an understanding of the tensions and dilemmas related to them. This idealism is characteristic of school improvement literatures (Thrupp, in press).

Re-reading the reform literature with the everyday in mind, I propose that reform in 'disadvantaged schools':

- **Starts from understanding the contradictory and paradoxical positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediator of inequitable social relations**
  Contradictory texts, structures and stories circulate within and through schools about what they are to do - the expressed and enacted institutional purposes of schooling are in tension. Any set of policies about Australian education encompass expectations that schools and teachers will ensure that students are
    - socialised - students understand and practise the behaviours necessary to live and work together in our society, that is they are self disciplined and self managing, socialised and sociable
    - selected - schools sort for work and further education pathways through the competitive arrangements of curriculum and assessment and student grouping procedures
    - individually developed - the interests, talents and needs of each child are to be nurtured regardless of race, colour, ability, creed, income level.

Educational policies across Australia currently suggest that it is possible to have a selection process in which all students will achieve high standards, have self confidence and be cooperative when they are also pitted against one another in a selective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome-based</th>
<th>Progress and achievement are recorded continuously in relation to explicit statements of what each student is expected to know and be able to do.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibly constructed</td>
<td>Arrangements are responsive to local needs and circumstances, and reflect creative uses of time, space and other resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethically aware</td>
<td>Justice, care, respect and a concern for the needs of others are reflected in everyday practice of students, teachers and administrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community oriented</td>
<td>Parents, together with representatives from a diverse range of groups, institutions and organisations beyond the school are involved in productive partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequately resourced</td>
<td>Experienced teachers and support staff, supported by high quality facilities, technology, equipment and materials, constitute essential requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategically linked</td>
<td>A discrete phase of schooling is implemented as a stage within a K-12 continuum and connected to the early and later years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
competitive assessment system, curriculum and practices for maintaining order that sort, divide, reward and punish. The trajectories work in various directions but all rely on the processes that normalise, universalise and individualise, that support the social relations of inequality and that use the capillary processes of power-knowledge operating through the technologies of discipline, welfare, pastoral care, pedagogies, curriculum, assessment, and parent-student-school relations.

- **Adopts a transformative imaginary**
  Connell and various others (Connell et al., 1982; Connell et al., 1990b, 1991; Connell, 1993, 1997) have argued that in 'advantaged schools', the curriculum and pedagogies are 'organic' to the class and gender positions held by students (and their families) who are thus already positioned for success. In 'disadvantaged schools' the 'dominant' school curriculum, pedagogies and institutional practices that constitute hegemonic relations are in conflict with the students' needs, aspirations and knowledges, thereby working to produce educational and social disadvantage. The process of sorting and selecting through the 'competitive academic curriculum', a social/institutional task of schooling, is effected through this process A 'socially just' schooling, according to Connell, would seek to invert this hegemony by making the curriculum of 'disadvantaged schools' 'organic' to the class and gender needs of students, and by making the curriculum start from the point of the least advantaged. At the same time it would also provide a range of welfare supports for individual students in need and would seek to balance democratic school processes with industrial democracy (Connell, 1993). The emphasis is on curriculum reform, establishing democratic processes that improve the school-parent relationship and supportive welfare provision.

I suggest that this is an imaginary to be continually worked for, not a description of achievable 'best practice' against which schools can be judged, nor an essential and immutable 'truth'. What schools can do however is to look at the principles implied by the imaginary with which they need to try to work.

- **Puts together the everyday practices of curriculum and the everyday practices of the institution**

Some other literatures on 'disadvantaged schools' suggest that too often many children find no place in the school, no space within which to 'become somebody' and little or no avenue to use their life resources as the basis from which to construct the school knowledge that counts (Comber, 1998a, 1998b; Delpit, 1988; Dyson, 1993; S. Hill et al., 1998). This analysis suggests that teaching is a situated social practice conducted in classrooms. This perspective opens the way for putting together curriculum and the

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30 This imaginary can be just that, not a totalising 'will to truth', but a narrative that acts as a resource for alternative readings, problematisations and everyday tactics and the place from which ethical judgements can be made.

31 A recent critique of this argument from a postcolonial perspective (Singh & Hatton (1995, November). suggests that Connell's analysis fails to account for the variety of dominations, in particular that of race, that occur. The notion of a single standpoint, whether it is that of class, race or gender or combinations thereof, from which an inversion might take place has come increasingly under duress from poststructural perspectives. My notion of people similarly but differently positioned is a response to this critique.
everyday institutional practices (which include school discipline and welfare) in ways that are helpful for schools engaged in reform. As they partially theorise about the ways in which social control and curriculum are mutually constructed and are related to the dilemmatic positioning of the 'disadvantaged school', they open up possibilities for school discussion, debate and action and for a realistic engagement with the 'organic' curriculum proposed by Connell and his colleagues. Staff in reforming schools therefore recognise the broader social context not as something manifested in individuals, cultures and families, but in social relations in which each school is one 'place' and its 'place' is to work to provide children with the 'primary goods' of education, working with/against discipline and welfare.

'Thisness' revisited

I add these to the notions established in the precious chapter, viz. that each school is unique with particular sets of issues related to its social context and that many of those issues are beyond the reach of the school system and education policy but are related to ongoing social changes in the family, the labour market and in public policy in general.

I add to my list of 'context derived' issues related to the 'context generative' capacity of schools the notion of the theorisation of 'doing justice'. My list therefore now is:

1. School mix: Students and their families affected by
   • changes in labour market - levels of unemployment/underemployment/tenuous employment. This is connected to changes in the global economy
   • changes in families - separated, blended and extended families
   • changes in public policy - health issues, public housing, transport
   • concentration of families in crisis
   • patterns of migration and diaspora
   • increasing or declining enrolment

2. Resources available to the school in the neighbourhood
   • community infrastructure - also affected by public policy
   • employment and employment networks - affected by globalisation and microeconomic reform
   • availability of voluntary labour, related to un/employment and local geographies of mothering
   • age of locality - age of school facilities

3. Neighbourhood issues that impact on the school
   • specific local events - racism, culture of lighting fires and vandalism against school properties
   • neighbourhood change - redevelopment, change in demographics, external review, possible closure

4. School based theorisations of 'doing justice' that
• start from understanding the contradictory and paradoxical positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediator of inequitable social relations
• adopt a transformative imaginary
• put together the everyday practices of curriculum and the everyday practices of the institution.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

In this chapter I have focussed on the place of the 'disadvantaged school' as a mediator of unequal social relations. I have focussed on everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', arguing that the everyday social relations of welfare and discipline create common demands and dilemmas amongst 'disadvantaged schools'. I have argued that 'disadvantaged schools' are caught in the processes of selection and socialisation, both of which require the creation of norms that exclude and regulate.

'Disadvantaged schools' spend substantively more time on discipline matters than their more privileged counterparts: 30-40% of all available time when things are running smoothly. This is time not available to spend on the formal curriculum. School administrators reported increased pressure, more families in crisis, the 'difficult' students more 'difficult', and greater numbers of clashes with parents. Marketisation already seems to have resulted in more effort going into ensuring the image of discipline and also, in some cases, has worked to justify the exclusion of those students who require large amounts of support and whose behaviour is not within market tolerances. Everyday life in the DSP schools I looked at consisted of managing increasing disciplinary and welfare demands with less support available from other agencies. These demands inevitably require the use of SBM policy and welfare procedures thus bringing the normalising essentialising, individualising and fragmenting effects of current policy further into active play within the 'disadvantaged school'.

The discipline question has more commonly been the province of psychologists and social workers who have helped to shape the legalistic and standardised procedures which work to exclude the most marginalised students. The behaviour management procedures are exemplars of the ways in which abstract knowledge based procedures rewrite lives and enable them to be known at policy level only as population statistics and individualised and categorised behaviours. At the same time, such procedures work to prevent the school from being able to recognise how its curriculum and institutional practices are implicated in the production of rebellious behaviours. The disciplinary procedures also leave little option for the parent(s) who wish to dispute the school's processes and may well be a factor in the reported increasing number of angry parents coming into schools and going off to other ears and eyes on tabloid television.

Once good order is established in a 'disadvantaged school', these paradoxes become part of ongoing life, and most (but not all) school administrators find they are able to spend some time on curriculum reform, working away at pedagogies, assessment, content at the same time as working with teachers, support staff and parent relationships. However, the binary separations - of discipline from welfare and good order from
curriculum reform - are found in both education policy and also in some of the reform literatures which have a strong focus on curriculum and building parent relationships. The models of reform advocated for 'disadvantaged schools' need to combine the transformative imaginary of organic school-community relationships and 'bottom up' curriculum, with an everyday pedagogy that recognises the institutional realities, specific issues in each site, and the broader issues that are beyond the capacity of the school or schools policy to influence.

'Disadvantaged schools' have little choice but to accept their paradoxical place as the mediator of unequal social relations and the place where 'doing justice' is possible. Both of these may be seen as generating context, but working in different directions. 'Disadvantaged schools' must manage the ineluctable and irresolvable practices of discipline, curriculum, welfare and pedagogy as the ecology of everyday life.

In the next chapter I look at the way that 'disadvantaged schools' are positioned by neoliberal policies of market devolution and the distributive curriculum and what the demise of the Disadvantaged Schools Program has meant for the schools it targeted. I consider how the schools are 'placed' to carry out either the neoliberal reform agenda and/or a reform agenda more in tune with 'doing justice'.
Above left: wetlands to control stormwater. Bottom right: coastal erosion treatment

Above: Inner city tip

Below: Suburban sounds

Above: local landfill - how high will it go?  
Below: appearing not to pollute the Port River

Right: Keeping locals out of the dunes
CASH IN RICH SCHOOLS

CASH IN RICH SCHOOLS

Teacher ratios worse for private students than public.

unpaid family

Principals' demands.

as funds freeze bites

unpaid fees at schools

Cash stash

Schools face cuts

Public schools

Fairer school funding

Teaching ratios worse for private students than public.

Schools face cuts of $34m as funds freeze.
We're in a low socio-economic area,
We've got the most amazing group of kids,
We've got a really strong and really proud community.

We deserve to have everything before everybody else!
Our kids deserve it.

It just seems that this community has been through a lot of loss and grief.
We're fighting our toes off, and the community has been wonderful to us,
But at every turn there's yet another thing they're being hit with.

These issues could happen anywhere, but they are intensified in a community like ours.

I just wonder how many other schools with high levels of poverty, high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, have to fight like crazy for what should be a basic right, that is a basic right in so many other schools...

When does that stop and when do you make your quantum leaps?

It just seems in these communities we're fighting from the bottom about going up whereas other schools are there automatically.

That's the stuff that's seems unjust.

We have a grave fear that life for our kids is going to get tougher and tougher and tougher.

A grave fear that we are going to have less resources to be able to support them.

An awful irony when we think we've nearly got it right... It will be heartbreaking if we're not able to follow it through. (Transcript 19)
It is the end of the school year and the teacher transfer information has just been released. I steel myself for the inevitable.

Ring, ring.
Hello. I've been appointed to your school. But don't expect to see me. I'm not coming out there and I'm going to fight this tooth and nail.

Well..... I'm sorry you feel like that and I certainly hope you can resolve this quickly because we'd like to get our classes sorted out and if you're not going to turn up then we're going to need someone else. I'm sure you can appreciate that.

Ring, ring.
Hello. I've been appointed to your school and I'm really pissed off. I've worked out in the bush for the last four years and you think after that they could do something better for me than this.

Well..... I'm sorry you feel like that but maybe it won't be that dreadful. Look at it this way, at least you're in town and we're really not that bad. Maybe you'll even get to like us.

Ring, ring.
Hello. I've been appointed to your school and I'm really worried. I just don't think I've got the skills to work your kind of kids. I've been teaching senior school for the last ten years and I don't think I can work with kids who aren't academic. I'm feeling terribly upset and I'm going to go to the doctor straight away.

Well..... I'm sorry you feel like that. We quite like the kids actually and we do have senior classes and I'm sure we could make sure you have one in your teaching load. I hope you're feeling better by the beginning of next year because there'd be nothing worse for both of us than having you feeling stressed out all next year.

Ring, ring.
Hello. I've been appointed to your school and I'm really pleased. I'm really looking forward to it because I've heard a lot about what good things you're all doing.

Hello? Hello?
Yes, Hello. I'm sorry. How nice to hear from you.
Chapter 9

Doing More With Less
POSITIONED BY POLICY, POST AND PRESENT.

The last two chapters have been devoted to looking at the stories my colleague school administrators have told about their schools in the context of the neighbourhood, and in the context of the school's role as a place where the social relations of inequality(ies) are mediated. In both of these chapters I looked not only at 'context derived' issues but also at the implications of those 'context derived' issues for the capacity of the school to generate context, which I have called 'doing justice'.

This chapter follows the same pattern of analysis, but in this case I look at the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' in the context of changing policies about justice and social inequality and the efforts by governments to reign in public expenditure. This is the context (detailed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) in which governments speak of the inevitability of globalisation and the primacy of economic recovery, in which governments promote the notion that redistributive justice and welfare assistance programs have damaging effects on the willingness of citizens to look after themselves. The result is the increasing polarisation and production of deepening inequalities in Australian society. I look at the iconic change in schools policy from Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP), which concerned itself with equity, to its subsequent replacement the Commonwealth Literacy Program (CLP) which is framed within the distributive curriculum's desires for efficiency combined with thin notions of effectiveness and equity.

The school administrators of 'disadvantaged schools' in the northern and western suburbs share a high degree of unanimity about the impact of the changes in this specific policy shift, as well as the overall effects of social policy directions. They emphasise their immediate needs for more resources if they are to make a positive difference for their students. Their concerted voices speak strongly to the question of the nature of central support systems and levels of resourcing currently on offer.

I conclude this chapter by adding further to my list of school issues that need to be considered in policy making for context generation that 'does justice'.

I begin with considering the implications of the abolition of the DSP.

FROM DSP TO CLP

In South Australia, as in some other states, the abolition of the DSP did not mean the end of targeted funding for schools with concentrations of students in a poverty category. The Commonwealth guidelines specifically mention low socioeconomic communities as one of the criteria for the distribution of CLP funds. South Australia decided to continue funding 'targeted schools' rather than disperse the funds on a per capita basis across all schools. A formula, based on School Card percentage and total enrolment numbers, produced a ranked list of targeted schools eligible for funding. About 250 state schools now receive a per capita CLP grant which is weighted to the highest index, so that the 'poorest' schools get $140 for each child enrolled in the school, and the 'least poor' get
$120 for each child enrolled\(^1\). In 1997, a total of $5 million was distributed in this way. In addition, all schools with an enrolment of less than 100 receive an additional $1,200 (Chief Executive, DECS, 1997). A small primary school of around 300 children at the 'bottom' of the list would therefore receive somewhere in the order of $36,000. This is actually an increase on the sum allocated a few years ago under the DSP which was a flat rate of $100 per head. When the CLP was introduced, additional schools were targeted, using money that had formerly been spent on DSP program administration and other centrally directed activities, and this placated some of those who had been close to the arbitrary cut off point.

The South Australian CLP guidelines explicitly state that program funds need to be "directed towards improving the literacy outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students" and require that schools establish and monitor the literacy needs of students. They suggest a range of strategies that schools might adopt: they range from early intervention, improving participation in 'literacy events', involving parents in literacy programs, training and development for teachers in information literacy to the purchase of resources for the postcompulsory years to better address the compulsory literacy requirements of the SACE (Chief Executive, DECS, 1997). The guidelines are relatively open ended and can be variously interpreted at the local level.

National studies (Connell et al., 1990b), and a recent state survey (Thomson & Wilkins, 1997) have shown that 'targeted' DSP schools spent the majority of their funds on literacy based activities. In 1996, the South Australian survey concluded:

Nearly all schools that are newly targeted under the CLP have devoted funds solely to 'direct' Literacy programs.

Nearly all schools that were targeted under the former Disadvantaged Schools Program continue to devote a large proportion of the funds to direct Literacy and Numeracy programs, but they also use funds for programs that go by other names.

The vast majority of these are what we might call 'indirect' literacy programs, since they clearly contribute to a school culture, organisation, and teaching practices that support literacy learning.

So, if the schools not only still get funds, but also get marginally more, and if there are more schools involved, and if the guidelines are relatively open ended about what actions the schools have to take, and if they spent most of the money in the past on literacy anyway, what then could be the problem?

THE DSP AS CATEGORY

The DSP functioned as a classification into which schools were placed because of the characteristics of their school population and also usually, their location. Most of the school administrators in this study had an association with the program going back over many years and most did talk about DSP schools as a distinctive group of schools with particular needs and characteristics. They all frequently referred to 'schools like this'

\(^1\) A targeted school's annual budget consists of the usual per capita grant, plus per capita School Card, plus a per capita CLP grant. There may also be other redistributive measures, such as primary counsellors, technology grants and so on.

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even when they did not directly refer to the DSP. It is important to note that these administrators had grown with the program and that various aspects of the program strongly shape their sense of identity, their narratives about their careers and their ways of acting in schools. They were shaped by, and helped to shape, what the category DSP, (or 'schools like this') meant, not only amongst the particular 'community' of DSP staff, but also to some extent in the wider system. These are people who are all strongly committed to notions of justice and equity. Changes in the program affected them in ways that are deeply personal: they speak from partial and particular positions.

The creation of a boundary around the DSP schools worked to rationalise their similarities, forge a sense of commonality and purpose, stigmatise them in the eyes of many 'outsiders', and make them easily seen by the gaze of policy makers. To those outside, there was a strong association of the DSP category with 'undesirable teaching locations' and it was common to hear and read representations of DSP classrooms as blackboard jungles and the students as feral, untamable, stupid and criminal. As Powell (1993) indicates in her study of the representation of the western suburbs of Sydney, the stigmatisation of working class youth and their communities has a substantial history in Australia and utilises various modernist oppositions such as:

Lack- excess, poverty-wealth, us- them, brutality- finesse, ugliness-beauty, neglect-concern, outer-inner, bad-good, crude-refined. The outcome is that ... people become the problem rather than social structures, policies or power relations. (p. 7)

The DSP was a categorisation forged within such a discourse and its first incarnation in South Australia as Priority Projects was an attempt to move away from such 'deficit' formulations. Dealing with both the positive and negative connotations of the categorisation, working with and against the stigma, was one of the hallmarks of the program's life at national, state and school level. But despite this tension the overall message that school administrators give is one of a significant loss associated with the DSP's demise.

It is important to recognise, before going to talk about the losses associated with the change in policy, that school administrators are not simply nostalgic about the DSP. They acknowledge its limitations and excesses. There was wastage of money on less than useful projects:

I was in the DSP schools when we bought the sewing machines and that sort of stuff, and then the cliques of parents moved into the school and we couldn't work out how to kick them out... because they took over and no-one else got a look in. (Transcript 13)

Much time was spent on parents but perhaps, in some cases, with deleterious consequences for the children's learning:

I think we did some good things for the parents... a couple of them I hadn't seen for fifteen years rang me recently to thank me for the good things we'd done, to tell me the impact we'd had, and that made me feel good of course... but I worry that we

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2 This phrase was in use for quite some time and a popularity poll based on applications for transfer was used as the basis for affirmative action on behalf of the schools 'at the bottom'. For some years the school of which I became principal was the least popular in the entire state system, a point I both used and hugely resented at the same time.
shortchanged the kids....if they didn't come, we'd say "Oh that's OK dear, we understand what it's like at home"...if they didn't do their homework, we'd say "Oh yes well we know what home's like"...now they do their homework at lunch time. if they can't do it at home after school, then they do it at school. (Transcript 2)

Staff made huge commitments of time and energy, to compensate for the inadequacy of government support, exhibiting considerable altruistic zeal:

I used to scrimp and save on everything...get second hand stuff...not any more...we paid for a consultant to come and design our new logo, I never would have spent a couple of thousand on something like that, but now I think, well that's what it costs, then we'll pay it...We don't do fundraising any more...we used to deliver phone books and the staff would be working on weekends doing it, and after we'd get about $4,000. and after we'd been doing it for about five years I just said...well I knew that the staff were getting ready to revolt...I decided we'd just stop doing it...it's not worth it...
I used to think buildings weren't important - not any more - the new buildings here have given the parents and the community a real lift...
You don't see substandard accommodation in the middle class schools so why should our kids have to put up with it? (Transcript 2)

And then of course there were the DSP submissions, for which there is both some support and ambivalence:

Under the old DSP we used to get about $75,000 here because we used to get teacher salary and then there were other bits of salary you could get for programmes. The year before I came the school only got $14,000 because nobody had any experience in writing applications. I think the schools that were good at writing were really good at it. And I liked the old system where you put in applications... We got heaps of money!
(Transcript 18)

I wouldn't go back to it, but ironically in some ways, the submission based system had some good parts to it. People actually had to sit down and discuss and they had to negotiate with parents to put in a submission, because it had to be supported by parents.
Now I wouldn't want to go back to that because I was one of the people that would spend hours writing the submissions and then I got to my last school I found a school where people didn't actually have the skills to do that and their finances were in a very poor state. And yet they had been a DSP school since 1974, and the fact that that school was poorer than other schools I was in was because mainly due to people's submission writing skills. So I wouldn't want to go back to it. (Transcript 13)

However, the overwhelming narrative is one of losses.

Stories of loss

The demise of the DSP and the birth of the CLP has not been a seamless transition. Despite the continuity of funding and focus, the school administrators tell stories of regret, concern and sadness. The things they talk of are:

- A loss of moral purpose and connection with wider social issues
  The schools are no longer especially charged with a particular mission to do something about equity and justice. The category CLP is no longer to do with the state of schooling
and society, but reduced to one aspect of learning with which all schools are equally concerned:

Now it's like we're just part of an amorphous lot of schools and all schools have kids with reading and writing difficulties and we've got to do something for this amorphous mass of kids. (Transcript 2a)

There are issues about what kind of literacies are proposed by the CLP:

I couldn't care less what they call it in a sense, but by calling it the CLP it conjures up a very narrow and dated definition of literacy and it sounds like a sort of missionary approach to how we're going to support communities that need extra resources and it sounds like we're talking about South American villages and the English lesson under the trees and that's not what we're talking about. (Transcript 15)

There is debate about the degree to which the current overall approach to literacy, within which the CLP schools are intended to produce better results as measured by benchmark tests, will produce the kinds of literacies necessary for all children to participate in the brave new information world (Comber et al., 1998; Lankshear, 1998; Thomson, 1998c) and this is strongly felt within the CLP schools.

Administrators see the shift to the CLP as a political move rather than one which makes intellectual and professional sense:

This lot thinks it's about reading and writing but all the same for everyone - consistency - equity means everything all the same and everything consistent and doing it exactly the same to everybody. Well, we've grown up beyond that. (Transcript 20)

This government wants not to acknowledge that there are real disadvantaged groups and pockets in the community. They'd like us to think that all the problem is, is literacy and we'll just top them up with literacy and it'll all go away. It's very naive and it's wrong. You have to look at how poverty is constructed and how other inequities are constructed and so the advantage of having a DSP was that schools could choose to address constructed disadvantage how they thought best. Whereas with this one, they're obviously saying oh no, there's only one thing we're on about and it's this thing called literacy. Which is really the Basic Skills Test and spelling and that sort of stuff..... I don't actually believe you achieve social and political change and empowerment by making kids better spellers. (Transcript 15)

Most of the schools still use the term 'disadvantaged school' (rather than CLP school) and use a discourse that works with a concept of disadvantage. One principal remarks:

When I talk to people about applying for School Card I say, "Look Its really important that you do, we get extra funding because of this" and they say, "How come?" and I say "This school is designated a disadvantaged school". I still use the term 'disadvantaged school', it explains more. (Transcript 18, my emphasis)

There are now no system sanctioned ways to explain social context, and no problematisations in policy texts to make those connections between what happens in schools with the broader distribution of privileges and inequalities. It falls back on the school, and in particular those who are influential within the school - such as school administrators - to provide those theorisations.
• An association with failure
The CLP as category is one in which 'disadvantaged schools' can no longer produce practice that leads the remainder of the system. At best they can produce teaching practices that help their students do better by 'value added' measures. At worst, in system wide league tables and in competition with other schools, they will always be at the bottom. The CLP as categorisation means schools that are bad at literacy, rather than schools doing something to make schooling and society fairer. And it is a category that carries all the risks associated with failure in a performative environment:

What they seem to moving towards saying is "Yes, there are all these difficulties out there that you talk about, but when we compare you with like schools, you're not performing as well"... so it's sort of like this level of understanding about the actual difficulty of even getting to base level to start teaching, and all that understanding that I thought used to be there is gone away. Because the implication is not, "Gee you're working so hard to get better", but "Perhaps we'd better come in and have a look." (Transcript 16)

This construction has an impact on staff, and their teaching practices:

The change in the DSP to focus on literacy ...in a sense there's a message in that. It says we think the problems are actually about kids who can't do things. This school was always in the DSP, and while there were varied understandings about what was for, there was certainly a concept that extra resources were being provided for those kids who didn't have very much money to do things, and there was that simple level of understanding and an appreciation of that, but with the movement to literacy it's surprising how people have moved back from that, and it's almost like they're actually picking up on, and being reinforced with things that blame kids. (Transcript 16).

The possibility of a policy that 'rewards success', that is provides funding to those schools that have 'added value', fills many with foreboding:

The draft federal paper that I saw about the Commonwealth Literacy funding for this year suggested that if you weren't having successful outcomes with your students then you would get money taken away from you. I mean we know we're not going to be highly successful with these kids, and they're going to take the money away! It's not about our ability to develop appropriate programs, it's about basic human needs that cloud learning, how to write and read, speak... If that sort of approach is taken then it's going to get worse not better. So they're going to punish us for not achieving the outcomes when we don't have the resources to manage... That sort of headset will depress people even more because you really will feel that you're fighting a losing battle. (Transcript 6)

Several had come up with a potential solution to the threat to remove funds, which was to exempt as many students as possible from the tests and declare as many as possible to be 'Special Education'. Each of these categories brings funding from different sources. This would leave those students who were most likely to 'do better' in the testing regime who would then be coached in doing tests. This kind of adaptive response is well documented in the management literatures that counsel against incentive based schemes on the basis that they skew performance (e.g. Aguayo, 1990)\(^3\). It is clear how this tactic

\(^3\) For example, if insurance salesmen are rewarded on contracts signed then some will sign people up who they know will default and others will sign people up for policies they do not need and
would meet the needs of the schools for continued funds, but undermine the policy intent to 'lift the floor'. It may well also create problems for 'doing justice' by proliferating individualised student 'problems' and by rationalising teachers taking time away from important learnings to devote to teaching how to answer multiple choice questions.

- **Loss of systemic support for school reform that 'does justice'**

Many administrators were explicit about the benefits of the old DSP:

> I know that you can romanticise the past and say "In the old days" but you knew everybody in the DSP schools, there would be research, you'd have a section in the Department that gave you some acknowledgement and recognition, and a lot happened, so while you were working in a hard school, you felt acknowledged. ... supported.

(Transcript 2a)

One principal spoke at length on the ways that the accountability process now in use focuses on narrow issues, as opposed to the way that the network of decentralised DSP schools operated:

> I was thinking the other day about that whole networking that used to take place, not just between principals of DSP schools, but about programs, about initiatives, about research, which did impact upon the system as a whole. ...I know in the early days of DSP there were connections between neighbouring schools and parents, of course you had more time for that sort of stuff. I think the research about what are effective programmes is what I'm missing. ... I'm really interested in disabilities but, what I find when you go to the regional office, or you look at the stuff that's put out - it's all about systems for identifying the kids, collecting the data and monitoring and I think, well what's the program? what are they actually doing? I'm finding it very hard to find out from other schools what the hell they are doing with their BST funding. Oh, they're all employing SSOs. Yea, but what are you doing with them? How are you training them? How do you know that's making a difference? ... You don't hear a lot about the programmes, about what people are actually doing, or the details, what does it look like? It's all just about identifying and collecting data. (Transcript 13)

In these words we hear a strong desire for a collective systemically supported reform that is not 'content and process free', that focuses on the mutual intellectual endeavour of trying to 'do justice'.

Another principal claimed continuity with the past in the focus on data:

> It's like all the data we collected in the past. We act like we've never had any data - now we're collecting data about who's succeeding and who's not. We've got some terrific data about kids learning - well Priority Projects should have, the DSP. (Transcript 2)

They found objectionable, as did many others, the way in which policymakers appear to need to undermine the old policy they are replacing to justify their actions. What they designated a failure, what is dismissed in this move, is years of these administrators' 'life work'. These school administrators recognise that 'disadvantaged schools' need to do better but heartily resent the way that their efforts have been belittled particularly by
cannot afford. This skews the company's goal which is to have long term customers, and also earns them a reputation as unscrupulous.

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federal government ministers. They feel they have been portrayed as inept, self serving, trendy dupes, rather than as hardworking professionals, their commitment to reform denigrated and their achievements and concerns ignored.

- **Diminution of parent involvement and school based decision making about priorities**

  Many administrators commented on the way that the CLP worked, in conjunction with increasingly corporatised decision making processes, to reduce the capacity of the school to involve parents and students in reform:

  > Now you sort of get your grants, and to be really honest, it's a very small group in our school that decides how it's going to be spent. And we're talking about $27,000 and we're a small school, lots of the DSP schools around get a hell of a lot more than that. (Transcript 13)

  That's what's so hard about the literacy program - you have to justify that you need a breakfast program to start with, before you can do anything else ...also the power and control the DSP gave to individual schools to be able to set their own agendas, and work them through and do that with that other group of schools so that there was some sense of here's a way of addressing these needs and how are you doing it and parents and kids as part of that... there's no way that parents and kids can get to decide what you do with your literacy money budget whatever, which goes against all those things about the focus of the community and the one stop shop... It's pretty depressing. (Transcript 7)

  Many of course continue to work with parents as they always have:

  > I'm here because I believe in social and political change and empowerment ...I'm here for the community and for the students...It's about community development and community change..... The students and their education is not separate from social capital ...they don't need to be topped up. We need to talk with people and give them the technologies so that they can be online so that they are actually engaging. This is not an illiterate community, it's a poor community but it's not illiterate, it's actually able to do all those things. Look at that parent group in there and the School Council last night, they love getting involved and they've got lots to say and they understand everything that's going on in the school if you use language that's accessible, and if you do talk openly and honestly and you do consult. And you won't get a stronger support, because the capital is there, we just have to start naming it and being part of it and seeing the school as part of it and with it. (Transcript 15)

  Some continue to use the DSP favoured approaches to school planning:

  > We are still doing the same kind of things, we are still working on programmes, we are still setting up projects, we still do the same amount of training and development, we still do establish base line data (that's the old name for it) and we look at it again at the end, we do heaps of surveys, and things like, we survey parents, students, and teachers all the time...It's just because I know how it worked and I know it worked well and I really think that for whole school change it was the best approach, and it is... I would run a school this way whether it was a DSP school or not. (Transcript 18)

  But the CLP, as many administrators see its intentions, is working to prevent schools from running the kinds of programs that they think are necessary in their particular site:

  > What the changing guidelines have meant is that, where before we were able to support kids in terms of camps now that's not possible, we were able to support kids on
excursions that’s not possible... where we might have been able to siphon some money for uniform even though it’s not in the guidelines, we’d find ways of doing it, it’s now not possible... (Transcript 17)

Principals in particular expressed the view that when they did what the students needed, which they were all clear was their top priority and their responsibility, they might have to manoeuvre budgets and reports, obscuring and rationalising what actions they had taken. Some were prepared to be openly defiant and take the consequences: We don’t actually have literacy on our School Development Plan at the moment, but everything we do relates to literacy... our priority is information and communication technology ... I use CLP money for computers and I see that as a justifiable expense and I notice in their latest letter (memo about CLP) they’ve actually got computing as one of the things we can spend money on whereas last year when I did it, I thought I could get my knuckles rapped for this, but who cares... we need to spend the money. I mean we want to do the absolute best for the kids that we can in terms of giving them experiences and the most up to date technology we can afford. (Transcript 18)

The ‘school versus CLP’ scenario hardly promotes open and transparent communication. It is symptomatic of a climate of distrust in which teachers generally believe that when political policy makers use the rhetoric of effectiveness, equity and devolution it is synonymous with an in comprehension of actual material conditions. The CLP is framed within the distributive curriculum and the reform it supports is geared to achieving designated literacy outcomes. The emphasis is on ‘outcomes’, not needs. Priorities are determined by government not by local schools; they get to decide on implementation not what should be done, not what are the local needs. The accountability regimes of testing are integral to this top down reform in which conception and execution of policy are separated by a considerable distance.

Codd (1998) suggests that when enacted through the new accountability regimes, low-trust cultures, characterised by line management systems of hierarchical control and contractual compliance, are produced. Most significantly, Codd suggests that such cultures have reduced moral agency, operating as they do with an ethic of ‘neutrality’ and the machinery of positivism. This is not confined to the shift to the CLP but is system wide. It is to other evidence of this ‘ethic of neutrality’ that the next section is devoted.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE NEEDS OF 'DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS'

For many years, the South Australian state school system has been characterised by a commitment to a range of redistributive measures, predicated on an ethic of justice. 'disadvantaged schools' not only received funding and support from the federal DSP, but also from a series of important state initiatives.

In the mid 1970s 'disadvantaged school' principal positions began to be advertised, classified and remunerated at a level greater than their student numbers might

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4 The school has a practice of providing uniforms for the very poor and also sets of sports and performance clothing for students who would otherwise miss out.
otherwise generate, in recognition of their specific needs and demands. Primary student
counsellor positions were initiated in the mid 80s and were appointed to the most
'disadvantaged' primary schools in the state. Also in the 80s and early 90s, additional
staffing, called Tier 2 and including Commonwealth funded components such as ESL
and Special Education, were given to eligible schools. 'Disadvantaged schools' received
some additional staffing on the basis of poverty. However, budget cuts also began in the
late 80s and the Tier 2 component was reduced. Grants of various descriptions ranging
from maintenance to information technology support have been weighted towards
'disadvantaged schools' and this practice continues.

The election of the Liberal government in South Australia did not see the removal of
redistributive measures, rather there has been further reduction in this area of
expenditure and reduced policy emphasis. The School Card regulations have been
tightened up so that the eponymous Mercedes driving welfare cheat would find it
harder to claim, and the actual allowance itself has been held at the same level for quite
some time. This has been subject to considerable criticism. However, in general, the
picture is one of attrition and slow movement away from policies of positive
discrimination. As policies come up for review, they are quietly and individually
changed. At present, principals associations are challenging an unconsulted government
decision to remove the Department's exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act which
enabled teaching positions to be advertised specifically as women's jobs, and which was
a major factor in increasing the number of women in school administration 5. This is
change by stealth and by gradual erosion.

Shifts away from 'doing justice'

School administrators report that there is:

• **A decrease in the importance of disadvantage in allocative formulae**

  In the last few years the amount of subsidy or weighting given to disadvantage in a
  range of areas has declined:

  The thing that I think gives people a really clear message about the unimportance of
  poverty is the ridiculous formulae that the Department uses to allocate funds to various
  things. Technology is a case in point, that supposedly takes account of differences
  between schools and when you actually add it up what you get is a level of tokenism.
  The difference between here and (a more middle class school) was such a small amount
  of money it was just trivial in terms of funds...you might have got as much as maybe a
  $4000 difference within a $20-25,000 payment and what you're talking about here is low
  School Card compared to our 60 or 70% School Card. What that says is that it's just a very
  trivial part of the whole thing. The most important part of the whole formula is how
  many kids you've got, and that's it. And so it downplays poverty as an issue. In the past,
  it's like you were allowed to say it was unique and important and you might even have
  contemplated the idea that some schools got nothing. But you wouldn't dare do that
  now, so that component is now smaller and smaller and smaller. (Transcript 16)

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5 When I became a secondary principal in 1985 there were only 5 female principals out of a
possible 96. In 1997, the peak year, there were 34 out of a possible 88. This number is now
reduced slightly.
• Reduced incentive to work in 'disadvantaged schools'
The 1996 industrial re-negotiation of school administrator salary levels (called Band 3), downplayed disadvantage and used instead a series of indicators about school size and school budget, modified only marginally by socio-economic factors. Many 'disadvantaged school' principal and deputy positions have subsequently been 'demoted' from the highest salary level to ones lower down the scale. This has had the effect of causing some to leave:

Had I been able to access that next pay level and stay at the same place for at least seven years, I would have stayed on. (Transcript 7)

Some to question why they stay on:

I'm getting extremely nervous about the direction we're going. On a bad day you do say "Why bother to work here?" when you have friends say to you, "It's heaven here" I had that the other night, "It's absolute heaven to go from a DSP school to a middle class school. Wouldn't know yourself...time you got out"...I do question why I can go to an eastern suburb schools and get the same money as working here. (Transcript 2a)

The tendency for 'high flyers' to go to 'disadvantaged schools' has diminished:

Once you'd know all the Principals of DSP schools, I wouldn't have a clue now.. and they come and go because they're so far down the ladder. (Transcript 2a)

For many, administrative positions in CLP schools have now become a somewhat undesirable stepping stone on the way further up the career ladder.

• Lack of priority in procedures for the needs of 'disadvantaged schools'

Principals report an increased rigidity in their dealings with central office staff, as the expectation that all schools have similar demands and needs becomes more pervasive. Many had stories of obstruction arising from an apparent lack of understanding about disadvantage and equity that exists in the much reduced lower echelons of central office. Several related to the processing of School Card, the mechanism by which any redistributive formula weighting is done:

There's a go slow on processing School Card applications...We actually had all of our forms sent back because they weren't in alphabetical order. We did have an order that matched the cover sheets which matched the order they come in... so they sent all 550 forms back for us to put in alphabetical order, and we said, "We haven't got time to do that...." "Oh well we certainly don't have time to do that"... and the inference was what an inconvenience it is for you to send us 550 forms, how dare you send us so much to do... it's really tough and quite nasty. (Transcript 14)

There's no understanding in there...the School Card numbers were two days late for the mid year update...We were ringing parents to try to get them to bring their Social Security card in so we could sight it...some School Card parents are the ones who just aren't likely to do this so we have to chase them... we would be ringing everyday...and then when we got the information about how much money we'd got, we decided to check up and we were $800 dollars short of what we'd budgeted and it was because we'd been two days late with the numbers...so I rang up and the clerk said "Oh we have to have a deadline"...and I said..."Yes I know there has to be a deadline, but there are shades of grey here and you don't penalise the poor schools".... so an hour or so later, the
next person, the boss, rang up and said that I should write a letter and they'd take it up with the Director...all for $800...and this took me the best part of half a day...it shouldn't happen like this. I mean I don't care if well heeled eastern suburbs schools get their forms in late and they suffer because it doesn't matter to them. But poor schools shouldn't be penalised like this...and I shouldn't have to be wasting my time fighting over $800...it's all a fight these days. (Transcript 2)

But there are two sides to these stories. The other side tells of the changes in the public sector. Performance appraisal for base grade public service clerks relates to the efficient enforcement of rules and processes. They have to follow the rules or be seen to perform badly. In these cases the clerks had no mandate to do anything but follow the procedures. Schools reported that Directors by contrast were often lenient and understanding: they of course have the authority to bend the rules and their performance agreements include more emphasis on 'client satisfaction'. Substantive 'downsizing' of the public sector has also meant that there is hardly anyone to do the work - the School Card section is reduced to one or two people who could not possibly arrange schools' forms in alphabetical order as required by the data processing unit. This is an illustration of the way that the combination of cuts to the public sector, new public management and an 'ethic of neutrality' operating through rules, works to create conflict between schools and the centre.

There were also other examples of failure to respond to need arising from limited services and a public service culture in which the real needs of 'disadvantaged schools' are not a priority. These two are not a-typical:

There was the kid who was threatening the Assistant Principal with a knife, and all four foot one of me had to go out and do something with this knife and that was OK, but the answer I got from one of our Departmental people was perhaps we needed to look at a placement in a withdrawal program. Excuse me? No! I want a police report, some strong action. "Oh but if you do that it might mean he'd get sent to secure care"... Confined care may be this child's answer, considering he is still a child, not yet 15. A four week, eight week placement with minimalist intervention for fairly base levels of naughtiness, not for serious, adult levels of crime? He was out of his depth. We need a bit of an understanding that yes we actually are dealing with children and adolescents, that 12 to 15 age group, but with adult stuff, not that kid stuff any more. (Transcript 20)

We have an enormous number of kids who have learning difficulties. I believe that our kids who have learning difficulties don't get the same go as kids with learning difficulties in other schools. Because if they're here they're just one of many, whereas in some of those other schools, they stand out. I'm not convinced that Guidance officers' work is fair across the whole state. Like I was sitting next to the Principal from (seaside school) – when we found out about disabilities funds and she was getting something like 2.3 salaries and I was getting like 0.2. (Transcript 20)

Thiny veiled hints at 'double dipping' and resentment of that 'extra staff' from colleagues and central office staff were not unusual:

I mean when you look at Tier 2 salary, the Social Justice side of it, that's piddly... 0.6, what can you do with a 0.6 - and the other salary you get you deserve it anyway, you've got the ESL students, the Nunga students - so I don't see that as a big bonus - it's not extra. (Transcript 2a)
System wide programs meant to take the needs of 'disadvantaged schools' into account do not necessarily do so:

It's classic with the ASTs. They come from other schools and they've got this AST and they front up at a DSP school and they're out on stress within a week or five days or maybe two days. (Transcript 7)

Some administrators identified the loss of the DSP with the loss of advocacy in the system for poverty and equity. They felt that not only did few people understand what happened in 'disadvantaged schools' but at the same time there were few people to help those outside 'disadvantaged schools' understand:

The other day I had this custody case, I had a very angry mother, and a father on his way here, I had screaming students, and I just couldn't make a meeting in town and I thought that this is just out of the realm of their experience. They nod and try to understand, but you know that have no experience of what we deal with on a daily basis, its just amazing...I did think the other day, God I'm it from the 80s....I'm the last of the old timers from these schools, talking about poverty and people going 'Oh God, they're off again!' (Transcript 2a)

The sense of isolation in those words are palpable.

The two systemic issues that matter most in 'disadvantaged schools' are staffing and the general dwindling level of resources. This is where system and government commitment to justice and equity really matter.

STAFFING

Teachers and support staff are the largest component of the total education budget. They are also the major means by which educational policy is translated into learning for children and young people. The policies of the progressive 70s and 80s and the managerial 90s share the understandings that teachers are the most important resource in the system, and that the classroom is the basic 'unit' of reform. What varies is how this work is regulated and the degrees of autonomy and professionalism afforded to teachers in this work. It is no surprise that school administrators also saw teachers and support staff as the key to 'doing justice' in their schools.

Common concerns

There were three common concerns expressed about the current situation in 'disadvantaged schools'- achieving staff stability, attracting the right staff and getting enough staff.

- Staffing stability
Several of the schools had experienced considerable staffing turbulence. This is not uncommon in 'disadvantaged schools' which typically have high numbers of contract

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6 Advanced Skills Teachers - one of the criteria for achieving AST status is the capacity to work with all students.
and one year appointments. These short term appointments have a complex genesis. The metropolitan surplus of teachers and the shortage of staff in the country was resolved for some time by the combined policy of guaranteed return to the city for country teachers after four years, and the 'ten year rule' which makes compulsory a move every ten years for all classroom teachers. Merit based selection procedures that go on late in the year and require short term back fill, also create temporary jobs. Industrial negotiations now play their part too in creating the need for short term staff positions in schools, as state funded Tier 2 salary has become a bargaining chip. Short term vacancies are filled by PATs - Permanent teacher Against a Temporary vacancy. PATs can be placed in short term vacancies from one term to one year. 'Hard to staff'-ness adds to the turbulence of 'disadvantaged schools'.

The magnitude of 'turnover' in 'disadvantaged schools' is considerable. One of the secondary schools in this study, through combinations of leave, promotion and transfer had had seven different principals in the last ten years and over thirty people in three Deputy and Assistant Principal positions. Rather than an exhaustive list of examples, I will let one principal speak for the others:

A number of teachers are coming up towards their seventh, eighth years and they said to me, "I'm putting in a transfer, it's not because I'm not happy here at the school, it's the travel," the travel's one big factor, and it is tiring in our classrooms and it is really draining, they said, "I don't want to be on the PAT roundabout, I want to take some control, I'm putting in a transfer form." Well just about everybody who put in a transfer form has got their first preference. So we've got five new staff and some of those are PATs and that's partly bad luck and it's partly because we've got falling enrolment so you keep that flexibility up so that you're not facing a displacement. And the Junior Primary's the same, the last two years they've had 50% turnover of staff. And last year we had, we are a small school, 270 kids, we had a staff of 15 full time equivalent, and we said farewell to 11 teachers. That's hard to do, year after year. (Transcript 13)

But the issue does not stop with teachers:

The thing with all this school based funding is what it's done is to casualise SSO7 employment hugely. They cut, they had big cuts -what was it 3%? - in 1996, and they brought it in, then we all got our BST8 grants and our early intervention and all converted it to SSO hours and there was no-one left in the system to employ, and you can not get the name of an SSO hardly from Central office - you can't believe the number of people I've got ID numbers9 for - and we're employing lots of people. It's just ironical I think. And some schools they've got grants from here there and everywhere, because the trend is cash grants for schools, rather than employment, so it has the effect of casualising employment in the Department. (Transcript 13)

Such movement in and out of the school makes it difficult to establish relationships with children, undermines ongoing reform projects based in common understandings, and makes it extremely difficult to establish trust between the school and its parent communities:

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7 School Support Officer, the name for para professional staff.
8 Basic Skills Test funding is per capita on the basis of the number of students below 'average' achievement.
9 All staff have an identity number which links employment data to payroll.
This is my fourth year and I have to say that this year is a lot better. I think I've developed a lot of credibility. I've basically had the school rebuilt and it looks good and parents are proud about the look of the school and I know all of the parents now and I've had something to do with most of them so there's a kind of relationship there. But I've been screamed and shouted at and I've felt quite intimidated by the parents' anger and hostility and aggressiveness and in my first year and a bit I was really surprised by the level of aggression. So I think that the development of the relationships are absolutely critical for teachers and parents and for Deputy and principal. And it takes time, you have to be there for a while, you have to have developed some credibility, you have to demonstrate you're fair and that you will listen and follow things up, so it's less of a problem now, touch wood. (Transcript 13)

Local people see their teachers come in and out of their neighbourhood every day like the tide. They also see the overall shifting of staff from term to term and year to year. They experience their children taught by teachers who are battered by this movement, reluctant to build connections, to engage with them and the school from which they know they will move. It is little wonder that working class parents question how much the state school system has their children's best interests at heart.

- **Getting the right staff**

All the school administrators in this study were obsessed with ensuring that students have teachers who are both keen and well equipped, intellectually and professionally, for the pedagogical challenges of working in their 'disadvantaged school'. Establishing relationships, dealing with the 'everyday' disciplinary and welfare demands as well as actively generating necessary ideas for improvement and working cooperatively with colleagues in a demanding setting, requires both personal and professional dispositions that it seems are not universal among teachers in South Australia. There have been a variety of system based initiatives to encourage staff to apply for positions in 'disadvantaged schools' but these have recently been collapsed into one system that has been extended to cover all schools. The current School Choice scheme, negotiated as part of the 1996 industrial agreement, replaced a program called Outside the Normal Transfer process which operated on the principles of positive discrimination - teachers made special applications for schools with specific needs. Most 'disadvantaged schools' were included.

The School Choice system allows every school to declare up to a third of its vacancies available for specific merit based appointment. 'Disadvantaged schools' compete with schools in less challenging locations close to teachers' homes, and they get few applications. School administrators have different experiences of the School Choice system and their attitudes range from luke warm to dismissive. This was the most positive response:

> School Choice has assisted us to some degree, but it could be a lot better... we get one person a year... I think for any position in schools like this we should be having a say and people should be coming to us if they want to, there are people in middle class schools who want to transfer into these schools and I quite frankly don't know if I'd want to keep anyone who didn't want to be here... so it's helped, but the Outside the Normal Transfer process was better, every PAT that was in the school applied for it, I just knew that I could have them, it was like "Come into the school, have a taste of it, let us have a taste of you, excellent, thanks very much we'll keep you." (Transcript 2a)
Merit based promotion positions are also available to all schools. 'Disadvantaged schools' routinely get one or two applications for positions for which an identical job in a middle class location receives thirty to forty. There are still two affirmative staffing strategies that remain in the system. The two single sex girls' schools in the system choose all of their staff according to specific criteria and this works better for the middle class school than for the 'disadvantaged school'. One cluster of schools in Elizabeth offers long term contracts, some of which become permanent, to unemployed, often young, teachers.

Ironically the ten year rule has also adversely affected 'disadvantaged schools' as some teachers who understood the locality and considered themselves part of it were moved on. One administrator remembers their time at one new 'disadvantaged school' in a new suburb:

They had a fair number of people for whom this was their first school and they bought houses in the area and they lived in the area and they were part of the community and they saw the changes as they went on...and they weren't necessarily people whose teaching style that I'd appreciate or I'd consider in the main as friends but they had an understanding of the school and what the cultures were, and it was just absurd to tip them out and never ever replace them with other people who were doing that. (Transcript 4)

By and large 'disadvantaged schools' get most of their staff from the central placement system, not from the School Choice scheme nor from transfer preferences, and what they often get are reluctant conscripts. Some teachers are happy with their placement, after some initial complaints:

We have teachers who come from other schools who are put here for their ten years, who believe they shouldn't be in the school because what right does the Department have to put me in this school - that's the attitude we work with. We have people who come to us and say I didn't apply to be here so... the whole issue of how you work on a yearly cycle and continue to develop that morale and continually show to them that you're a good school and you work to enable that to happen and some of them in a term say 'Yeah it's a great place to work', and they just don't want to leave the school.... (Transcript 11b)

Others put up with it, reluctant to engage with the 'place' where they work:

The very simplest example is people not even knowing the geographical location. You talk to teachers who have been teaching at the school for six years and they'll say, "Where's the train station?" which is five minutes away and especially when the station is a focal point for youth mobility, that's where they go when they go out, so there's that geographic sense, lots of people just don't know it. (Transcript 4)

A proportion of the conscripts however are hostile and unprepared to change. Such people take up considerable amounts of their peers' time, administration time and stretch the schools' relationship with parents and students close to breaking point. School Councils in 'disadvantaged schools' are understandably angry at the system's inability to provide for their children well qualified and motivated teachers. It is important to note that in general, schools in the northern suburbs find it even more difficult to get staff than those in the western suburbs. The story in the northern schools is that Grand Junction Road functions like a Maginot line beyond which only a few are
prepared to venture. This reluctance is compounded in non metropolitan locations. Just to put the northern and western suburbs in perspective, one country 'disadvantaged school' principal explains their efforts to get staff:

I spend a lot of time entertaining prospective employees, getting them to come to the town, look around, sending them away, making phone calls all around Australia, the recruiting process has become very big for me and occupies a lot of time. I don't wish to get rid of that because the principal being involved I believe is the successful mode. However, it costs a hell of a lot of time. To me, it's just so critical; if you don't have teachers recruited for specific purposes and specific environments then the kids - and we're not talking about the curriculum and the outcomes and so on because we're not, poor teachers can't deliver a good or bad curriculum - that's why it's so important to us. And it has to work. And it costs a lot. And DETE is supporting us slightly in this in that they have told me that they will refund the airfares and accommodation costs of any of those people that I've been getting to come - except they have to take the contract. So that's positive but it's also a downer because I'm risking the school resources. They should be Department resources. It's been a successful strategy so far. I've only had one person out of about ten come to the school to see say no. (Transcript 11d)

This is time that principal colleagues in the eastern suburbs of the city do not have to spend, time taken away from educational issues.

Experience in 'disadvantaged schools' suggests that simply decentralising employment to the level of the school is not the best solution to the staffing 'problem', since the 'disadvantaged schools' will always attract less people than their middle class counterparts. At the same time the central system is a major problem. All the school administrators wanted some involvement in the appointment process and most of them wanted the system to ensure that they didn't 'miss out' compared to their more affluent colleagues. Most of them suggest that some kind of incentive based scheme, which inevitably categorises and stigmatises the neighbourhood and the school, is so far the best proposed solution on offer. They would live with the label, which they feel they wear anyway, in order to get the right staff.

- Getting enough staff

Overwhelmingly, and not surprisingly, the question of class size, or the teacher-to-student ratio, was named as the single most important policy issue. Class size has increased over the last decade, particularly in 'disadvantaged schools' as the state budget cuts whittled away additional Tier 2 staffing given on the basis of School Card numbers. A primary principal reflects:

There are some teachers who are more effective with 30 kids than other teachers with 20. I know that. But the effectiveness of that teacher when they've got 20 to 25, compared to when they've got 30 is huge...or 32, whatever. I don't think a lot of people realise but we've now got the largest class sizes that we've had throughout my career. When I was in the country it was 25, when I was in the Parks area it was down to 18. (name) and I had 18 each, team teaching! Then when I went to my last school it was 26...because we used our negotiable staffing - you remember negotiable staffing? - and all the Priority Projects schools used it to reduce class sizes. (Transcript 13)

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This receives considerable attention in the media (Bachelard, 1998b; C. Jones, 1999; Lloyd, 1998e)
School administrators were scathing about what they saw as misuse of class size research by politicians and senior bureaucrats to justify mean resource decisions. Again, I will let one principal for speak for their colleagues. This administrator was firmly of the view that class size research, which suggests that significant improvements in student learning only occur if the class is reduced to 15, as it is reported, does not acknowledge the different needs of 'disadvantaged schools':

Despite all of the evidence that exists about class size and real increases in learning don't happen until there are 14, 15 or 16 whatever the magic number is, the degree to which larger classes in our sort of school start to create a whole gamut of problems out of proportion to the actual size....That occurs from Reception to somewhere near Year 9 or 10. I suspect that having a formula of having smaller classes at Year 11 and 12 is putting the cart before the horse in some ways, the die is not entirely cast, but it's relatively cast by the time kids get into Year 11. (Transcript 8)

Large class sizes equate to a classroom where the 'best' and 'worst' students get teacher attention and the 'middle' struggles on by itself:

Reducing the number of kids per teacher would make a whole lot of things work better, one of which may be academic achievement. I understand why the argument is always run on academic achievement lines because that's what the world at large wants to know about school. It would need to be a courageous position to say our schools would just work better with smaller classes, better for the vast majority of kids who go to school most days of the week, who work reasonably hard, who want to get on, their parents want them to get on, their parents support the school, they're the kids whose needs are sometimes not the priority when a class of Year 6s and 7s goes to 29, 30, 31, 32...there are at least 15 kids who don't get as good a trot as they would if there were 22 or 23 in the class. (Transcript 8)

This administrator argues that the class size research is narrowly focussed on particular kinds of results, and using a particular lens:

I suspect the academic research which is always used to debunk the class size argument is a little too finely focussed, and it ignores a whole lot of the social dimensions. Take the issues around overcrowding in classrooms because none of your classrooms are built big enough for the kids that are in them now. I think one of the more simple analyses is how many individual learning programmes is it possible for an individual teacher to take overall and close responsibility for, day in, day out, week in week out, year in, year out...there's a degree of human possibility that's attached to it. Certainly for secondary teachers as the number of kids they come in contact with goes from 150 to closer to 200, there's got be a qualitative drop and I defy anyone to suggest that that wouldn't be the case. (Transcript 8)

They suggest that large class sizes make impossible demands on teachers, something that policy makers refuse to, or cannot, understand:

I reckon if we were offered the opportunity I reckon the staff at the school would very clearly opt for smaller class sizes. Whenever there's any special funding and priorities have to be set around issues, class size is always discussed and it may be discussed for instance in terms of reduced work load, but by and large when teachers are talking about reduced work load they're talking about a work load which would become manageable rather than somewhat unmanageable at the moment. What is the reasonableness of putting so many young people together in a crowded environment with a teacher who
cannot be reasonably expected to be as on top of the curriculum student by student and hence will resort more to social control than to learning, just out of pure necessity... I mean who's needs are being served? Certainly not the kids. (Transcript 8)

School administrators were firmly committed to a notion of differential staffing, a redistributive system, in which 'disadvantaged schools' got a meaningfully larger proportion of the salary budget. Further, they argue that the school should be able to decide how best to utilise that staffing:

There needs to be a differential staffing, if it means more counselling time, those kind of supports. I see the school counsellor's role not there to manage the crises, it's more providing students with the social skills and running class meetings to maximise participation and management of their own learning. I'd like to see us have more support in that way. I'm not a general subscriber to the reduced class sizes idea because why should (eastern) primary have a reduction in class sizes? I mean it has to be differential. Why should every school in the state have a reduction in class size when some of those funds the eastern suburbs doesn't need could be used here? The millions of dollars that would be needed just to reduce one or two students every class.... I ask myself why should every school get reduced when that money could make a lot of difference in a lot of schools that really need it. (Transcript 14)

They also have their suspicions about the ways that staffing is currently being managed:

I have classes of thirty, sometimes they get up to thirty three... I saw a glossy end of year publication from an eastern suburbs primary school and they had classes of twenty four, twenty one...and I thought well how come they've got classes that small when we're all supposed to be on the same formula? (Transcript 2)

School administrators are not naive and they understand that decisions about funding are linked to questions of state and federal budgets and to wider questions about political priorities. This knowledge just adds to their frustration as they, like many other citizens, feel relatively powerless to influence the economic directions not only of this neoliberal government but also of its political opposite:

I'm not aware of anything that is around at the moment that would give me confidence in policy support or policy directions to address what it's like in schools. And I don't want to sound like they don't know anything about us in there, because I don't think that's true. I've worked in those jobs and they take it very seriously, and people in central positions do know a lot about what goes on in schools but they've just got different tugs at them. And it's more like the political climate and one of the tugs at the bureaucracy is the political climate and while that's how it is, I don't see that they've (central office) got much room to move. (Transcript 15)

However, staffing is not the only resource concern for 'disadvantaged schools'.

MONEY

Non salary resources, disposable cash, is also important. A recent rebuttal (Spring, 1997) of the critiques of devolution suggested that the current 'progressive' focus on fundraising and fees was misleading:

The...criticism is that schools rely more heavily on local fundraising then ever before. The fact is that school fundraising accounts for about 4-5% of total school disposable income. I have to say that to ignore teacher salaries as part of school operating funds, as
some critics do, is a pretty shaky way to approach things. Teachers account for about 87% of a school's resources....

What this statement glosses over is that the critique of fundraising and fees is not only about whether it should be a necessity in a supposedly free and secular system, but is also about its inequitable effects. What's more, what might seem a small amount, only 13% of the total school operating budget and 4-5% raised from parents and fundraising, is highly significant in the schools. The non salary component of the school budget may appear comparatively small, gazing from the vantage point of the pinnacle of the school system, but at the base level in the classroom, it looms very large indeed.

What is also significant is that the Federal government funding policy for private schools - the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment dubbed in one media headline as "Class Warfare" (Armitage, 1998) - is having a direct and disproportionate effect on the state education budget. A 1998 headline, 'Public schools face cuts of $34 m' (Lloyd, 1998b) tells the story of what a 'drift' of 3.5% of students away from the public system to private schools will mean - a reduction of $6.8 million in 1998-99 decreasing progressively to $13.6 million in 2000-2001. The state Minister promised to make up for this federal shortfall through efficiency savings and the 1998-99 state budget foreshadowed school closures, further reduction of teacher numbers, and devolution. In financially stretched South Australia, government school non salary grants have remained static for some time and have increasingly failed to keep pace with escalating demands.11

Non salary budget is allocated to schools on a per capita basis. In South Australia there has not yet been a review of school grants (as there has been in Victoria for example) and there are some habitual 'taken for granted' in built biases. Secondary students get more than primary. Senior secondary students get much more than their junior secondary counterparts. This is an historical rather than a costs based calculation. Given that when these divisions were decided there were set text books and little equipment required by the curriculum in primary schools it was perhaps not unreasonable. Today's curriculum is not skewed in the same way and all students require considerable amounts of equipment and library resources.

In addition the generally bigger size of secondary schools means that they have a considerable resource advantage over small primary schools. The secondary skewing to schools with high retention rates (not the 'disadvantaged schools' where retention is low) is another hidden fillip for those who reside in comfortable circumstances. When patterns of disadvantage and demography are mapped onto this age and size bias, some significant difficulties occur for particular schools in particular places.

11 Increases in the state education budget have been largely accounted for by matching Commonwealth grants to new non government schools and wage increases for teachers and the public sector.
Parent contributions

The shortfall in funding at the level of the school has forced all state schools to increase their request for parent's contributions. This is congruent with the neoliberal emphasis on self insurance, that there should be no free provision, that people should look after themselves, that the state cannot afford to have an unbalanced budget and must rein in expenditure by expecting those who can, to contribute for things which they may formerly have paid next to nothing. This is public education as a private good, not a welfare service. In addition the federal policy promotion of private schooling further emphasises the notion of the significance of schooling as an individual "positional good" (Marginson, 1997b).

This plays out in a series of deepening divisions, between public and private schools, and between rich and poor schools in each sector, all of them asking parents to reach deeper and deeper into their variously deep and slender wallets.

Public and private

Recent media reports indicate the difference in costs to parents between the private and public system. A recent media report (School costs soar, 1999) - and it is interesting to note that the main source of public information on school costs comes from the media - said:

This year, parents can expect to pay an average of $7,000 in extras - such as textbooks, uniforms, travel and sport - no matter which school system they choose. But the gap between private and public education appears to be widening with private school education costing 16 times more than the government scheme. Australian Scholarship Group spokesman Terry O'Connell notes: "An average family with two children can expect to pay nearly $340,000 in 12 years for private education or over $56,000 for government schooling."

This particular survey of school costs found that parents of state school children would pay on average $491 for tuition fees, levies and school building funds while private schools charged an average of $8,190 per student and Catholic schools $2,169 on average.

This gap, it is argued, reduces choices for parents and leads to a "class divide" (School price gap, 1999) for which the solution is to compensate those parents who wish to attend high fee schools. The private school advocacy bodies are currently lobbying for increased subsidies for the non government sector, and media reports such as, "Catholic schools reject wealthy elite tag" (Gillard, 1998), "Union fights funding for 'rich' schools" (Monk, 1999), "Private schools desperate for money" (Clarke, 1998b), and "Rich schools...

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12 This is now often connected with the purchase of computers. As Bruce (1997) suggests, systemic policies that make computers synonymous with a good education and do not provide the means for 'disadvantaged schools' to purchase them are highly inequitable.

13 Shacklock (1998) suggests that this is indicative of fast capitalism where the speed of information generation which can be captured by the media makes it more important as a source of information than in previous times.
cash in" (Crouch, 1998b) tell the story. The argument from the private schools' peak body is that to educate all the children now in private schools in the state system would cost the government substantial amounts of money. Therefore, the argument goes, they should be entitled to some of the savings, a bigger share of funding, since their parents are 'hit twice' for the costs of their education. In a full page advertisement (Le Duff, 1998) in the local paper, the South Australian Independent Schools Board stated:

Parents from South Australia's 88 independent schools make a significant financial commitment to the cost of educating their children. Independent school families have the right to a basic entitlement from public funding to help them send their children to the school of their choice.

Spokespersons for independent schools claim that they offer smaller class sizes and this accounts for their fee structure (Ramsey & Coorey, 1998). This is contradicted by ABS data (Lloyd, 1998e) which shows that in South Australia Catholic schools have the worst teacher student ratio with 1:17, Anglican schools 1:15.1, and other non government schools 1:14.8, the same as the state system. It is really only in the elite high fee paying schools in the eastern suburbs of Adelaide that teacher student ratios are lower than in the public system. In the private system, there is still a question of privilege versus the rest and it is the high fee paying schools which are arguing most strenuously for a bigger share of government funding and an end to the tiered funding system installed by the federal Labor government when it was in power.

Public schools

There are also differences in parent contributions within the state system. All state schools are now rapidly increasing the amount they ask of parents because this '13% of total school operating budget' is increasingly unable to cover escalating costs. This is in part due to marketisation as all schools compete to meet parent and policy expectations of levels of computer provision and to manufacture image through glossy brochures and front foyers, and in part just due to rising costs of basic provisions like paper and pens. Low income communities can raise few funds and often cannot afford to pay school fees (Senate Standing Committee, 1997). Schools in low income areas peg their fees to School Card. This plays out in the amount that is asked as 'school fees' by differently located schools. In practice this means that the eastern suburbs schools have been raising their fees at a faster rate than those in the northern and western suburbs:

- Marryatville High School fees (eastern) have risen from $330 in 1997 to $380 in 1998 and $420 in 1999.
  Norwood Morialta High School (eastern) fees have risen from $320 in 1997 to $380 in 1998 to $400 in 1999.
  These two are close to top of the range.
- Salisbury High School (northern) fees have risen from $190 in 1997 to $200 in 1998 to $205 in 1999.
  This is just below average for secondary schools and below that of Walkerville Primary (eastern suburbs) which charged $195 in 1997 and increased its fees to $220 in 1998.

(based on Lloyd, 1998g, Lloyd, 1998h)
One 'disadvantaged school' primary principal epitomises the contrast:
We have $100 as our school fees here and that’s only gone up recently. It’s not very much money but the 10% of the population who would pay it, they pay – They’d pay it even if we went up to $120 or $130 I guess. But then there’s this group in between, who don’t pay anything, regardless of what our school fees are, some pay maybe $10 or $20 and then we don’t see them again... and we have this group who are on School Card and then we have this group who aren’t on School Card but who should be on School Card...
We need the DSP allowance for us to survive basically. School fees we get $100, we get $110 for each School Card, $10 is left for excursions or whatever and that goes in the first term... and there’s not a thing left after the first term and we certainly don’t ask parents for any additional money, we just don’t, we’ve had that as a policy for 4 or 5 years... transient populations make it hard because kids’re always moving out and taking the things we’ve given them... and the next ones come in with nothing...(Transcript 18)

The disparity between the larger charges in the wealthy areas where parents can afford to pay and those in poorer areas where the amount does not rise too much beyond School Card has prompted principals to call for an increase in the subsidy (Lloyd, 1998a) but this has not been forthcoming. Similar circumstances across the country have caused welfare groups to warn that the very poorest can now barely afford to keep their children in school (Brotherhood of St Lawrence, 1998; R. Gibson, 1998; The Smith Family, 1998).

'Disadvantaged schools'

Despite the addition of CLP funding, which is tied to specific outcomes, 'disadvantaged schools' generally have less in their school bank accounts than their privileged counterparts on the hills-face and at the seaside:

I look at colleagues' budgets and I can't believe the amount of leeway they’ve got. Here we get down to the last cent. And if the budget’s out you have to go back and rework it. Its not a matter of saying "Let's spend five thousand to get somebody trained in First Steps". It's an absolutely major decision and you don’t have this lovely amount of money that just sits here growing. (Transcript 2a)

Many 'disadvantaged schools' have given up trying to fundraise altogether, but some do see fundraising as a way of getting moral support for the school. There are few large businesses with corporate headquarters in the west and north, and sponsorship is subject to competition among schools. One school’s gain is often many others' incapacity to get additional funding. This is in stark contrast to schools in the eastern suburbs where voluntary levies and school fetes regularly bring in substantial sums of money. This combination of factors means that 'disadvantaged schools' find it very hard to manage, to provide a level of equipment and experience that they know is available to other students on other places:

Looking at our day to day running costs and the money that we get from fees, School Card and the supply grant, doesn't really add up to enough to run the school day to day, it doesn't allow for purchase of curriculum materials, let alone computers. I heard on the weekend of a private school fete that raised $60,000 in one day and our total fundraising, we'd be lucky to raise a couple of thousand. And we'd have to work very hard for it. We busted our little boilers last year and the committee got themselves organised and it took nine months and we got three thousand dollars and we got curtains. (Transcript 7)
You know we’re down to four practicals in Home Ec. in a semester because of the cost of the ingredients. (Transcript 16)
When I moved to this school (a middle class school in the Adelaide hills) I opened the freezer door in the Home Ec. Centre and it was full of chicken fillets. At my old school we used to use mince, mince and mince - when we cooked. (Transcript 11f)

It's money and resources here (in the eastern suburbs)... like blow your mind...I keep thinking if a teacher dares to come and say we haven't got this or we haven't got that, I want to say, don't open your mouth...One came to talk to me yesterday, from the computing room, we have outstanding facilities...and he said "You got a minute", and I said 'I've got Admin meeting' and he said "You got a minute, it's pretty hot up there in the computing room and we're all up there computing", and I said "Well find a room that's cool and move your class". "Oh no", he said, "We'll need to upgrade the air-conditioning." (Transcript 7)

Compare the one laptop per child scenario of the celebrated private schools with this not a-typical 'disadvantaged' primary school:
We’ve got a room and we’ve maintained that for a while and we’ve placed all the computers in that, about a year ago and replaced, well actually the old ones have gone into classrooms, so we’ve got one computer per classroom, plus the room of fifteen plus a few other odd ones scattered around. Admin computers are another issue – but for the kids, we’ve got, if you’re looking at the DECSTech\(^{14}\) plan of 1:5, well we’re nowhere near that, at this stage, we may be half way there in terms of the number of computers but we’re at the limit of our budget really. We’re putting a huge amount of money into that each year. It’s hard to see how we can extend that unless we just keep hold of very old computers and just hope they don’t break down... but I don’t think we can afford 1:5 for the latest and up to date. I don’t think we could manage that. (Transcript 7)

The non salary income of 'disadvantaged schools' is heavily dependent on School Card payments (which are given direct to the school, not to the family), and on the small percentage of parents who pay the full amount of the fee requested. Many schools, including 'disadvantaged schools', have a 'gap' payment and struggle to collect this and non School card eligible 'fees' during the year.\(^{15}\) Annual school 'debts' of $12,000 to $20,000 are now common, particularly in 'disadvantaged' secondary schools.

**School fees**

In South Australia there has been an effort by the state government to call these 'fees' a 'goods and services' charge, make their payment legal, and the use of debt collectors standard procedure. Some schools already do use debt collectors and this is officially sanctioned even though it is not legally enforceable. This has caused considerable public debate, media attention and contention amongst principals. "School fee boycott" (Clarke, 1998c), "Teachers oppose fee push" (Lloyd, 1998i), "School sues family over unpaid fees" (Owen-Brown, 1998) and "Fight over school debts" (Crouch, 1998c) indicate the level of

\(^{14}\) DECSTech - the name of the five year strategic plan for information technology.

\(^{15}\) This 'gap' was noted in a DSP publication in 1988 (Ryan, 1988) as a major contributor to differential resource capacities of DSP and non DSP schools.
heat generated by the move which would, it is suggested by its opponents, undo forever the notion of a free public education.\textsuperscript{16}

Low locality and school income inevitably rebounds on students - as lack of equipment, material goods and access to programs:

The bad debts increased of course and so that was just going up each year and that impacts on the school each year and that rebounds back into the school with the amount of money you have for resourcing things. That's another issue. We tried as far as we could to increase the number of computers that the students could use, so they had access to that sort of technology that they didn't have at home, and you know there weren't enough and the demand was more than we could provide. (Transcript 6)

The most obvious manifestation of poverty comes through at the beginning of the year with school fees and how that might or might not be paid and the number of people who engage in time payments and the number of people who don't in fact pay - that's increasing in the school. It manifests itself when kids can't complement the initial stationery issue, because it is in fact an \textit{initial} stationery issue and there are complications with that, and the angst that causes to teachers who say, "Well I wanted a text book and this and this" and we say, "Well we can't possibly supply all of them." It's the uniform business, it's about students not having access to as many resources in their homes, the technology is a very obvious one - we try to ameliorate that somehow by having a bank of laptops that the kids can borrow and they're heavily used. But at the moment we only have 8 of those in a school of 850, so that's an issue. You see the sense of poverty also in the question of the cost of camps and excursions. Kids will put off, or find ways of not participating in the activity so they self select unless the teacher is astute in picking up some of the reasons and finding ways of sensitively dealing with that. (Transcript 17)

Some schools have instituted policies of withdrawing school supplies and activities for children whose parent are in 'debt':

The gap between the School Card payment and our school fees is almost impossible to collect. It's only a $15 gap, but its almost impossible to collect that. It causes tension particularly on School Council; those parents who pay their gap or full school fees, they can't understand why these people can't forgo a couple of packets of cigarettes to pay it. My spouse was at a wealthier school last year and he said they didn't have a problem there. People paid up because that's what they felt morally that was what they were meant to do. Here it's a huge joke - "We're not goin' to pay it", especially since there's precious little you can do. I'm quite tight on not letting them run up bills for excursions and things like that. I hate to see kids miss out but we've got to make a stand somewhere. The school can't keep covering all of those things. But there's nothing we can do to get the gap. (Transcript 9)

Others find such a policy unacceptable and just carry the costs, regardless:

Why in the hell should you have to hound people about the $2 for the darned excursion when you could spend your time far better and you know that it's wasted energies that could be used far better elsewhere? (Transcript 19)

I've got SSOs who do the front line who believe that if you are efficient and get the money in from people then you're doing your job well. And so even yesterday I got

\textsuperscript{16}In South Australia as in other states public education was never really free and parents have always been asked to contribute, see P. Miller (1986) and Spaull (1998).
swag of letters to go out to parents for why they haven’t paid their fees and half of them are the Aboriginal parents in the school and I just refused to sign them and what I’ve got to do now is work out how I have this conversation in ways that don’t make me look like I’m favouring the Aboriginal parents. (Transcript 21)

The resources available to the school clearly impact on the capacity of the school to implement programs, policies and reforms. The situation as expressed by these administrators points to a normative judgement about the state of justice in the wider system.

'Disadvantaged schools' and 'doing justice'

The dominant view in 'disadvantaged schools' is that, when it comes to money, justice is not being done by the system:

I reckon one of the most frustrating things is the time, effort and energy we’ve had to put in just to establish the place as a reasonable learning place to learn. We shouldn’t have to do that. We shouldn’t have to be fighting things now, that these kids have had the right to for the last twenty years. It's not appropriate. We shouldn’t have to, staff shouldn’t have to be forced to work under the conditions they're working with, we shouldn’t have to give up half our holidays to go in and fight for it. It's that effort and the energy that you put in for business that these children and the people that work in this environment, actually deserve. (Transcript 7)

However, rather than fighting for a bigger share of a diminishing cake, 'disadvantaged schools' fear they may be on the receiving end of further redistribution away from them. If funding by results, or a per capita distribution rather than a targeted school allocation basis was to occur, they fear for their capacity to continue. In straightened circumstances CLP funding is a necessity, a lifeline:

Losing funding worries me. Losing funding worries me a heap.... Not just the funding for CLP, DSP but also Social Justice salary - when I find I’ve lost 0.1 of a Social Justice salary I go back through all the records to find out how come this happened. For me things can only work while we’ve got the flexibility and while we can afford to pay for the flexibility. Losing funding worries me as completely as staffing... that is a real issue because we walk a tight rope, a tight line... (Transcript 18)

We currently get $75,000 from the CLP. Let’s just imagine you put all that back in the pot. And you look at the schools that are achieving high levels of literacy or results or outcomes or whatever, and you then say to an eastern suburbs school “Gee you’re doing such a great job we’ll give you $50,000” and to this school “You’re doing such as awful job we’ll only give you $5,000 this year. We’ll give you $5,000 and when you start to improve we’ll increase it.” Now to us, that will put us in danger. Just do that for one year and that will put us in danger of running down our curriculum offerings, of running down our entire curriculum, let alone doing other things for the school like getting rid of the graffiti and repairing the hole in the wall. That will almost prevent us from running the curriculum that we’re meant to. Do that for two years in a row, you might as well close the school, because we would have barely enough money ... we would then be at the stage where we would have to say, "I’m sorry we can't afford to buy any new books, any new novels, anything like that for the next ten years because we’ll have to save up for them"... and we’d be just be in a slide down. (Transcript 16)
The Commonwealth Literacy money helps us to survive... like if we're going to do more than survive then we're going to need more money. It's our bread and butter stuff. The bottom line is if that's ripped out and we don't have access to it, we can tell you right now what will happen... our SBM will go through the roof, teachers will be leaving in droves and our Workcover stress cases will go through the roof, probably our facilities, that we've worked so damn hard to get will be in tatters. That's our bread and butter stuff... don't take our bread and butter away, give us some jam! (Transcript 19)

While concerns about staffing and funding have been around for as long as the Commonwealth has been involved in schools policy, they now occur within the new neoliberal context. In the next section I conclude by synthesising the concerns with staffing and resources and adding them to the ongoing collection of contextual issues.

DOING MORE WITH LESS

Just as there have been cutbacks in particular areas of expenditure in areas of social policy such as health and housing, this has also occurred in schooling. It is clear from the views of school administrators in 'disadvantaged schools' that they believe that the relations of inequality that exist in the city of Adelaide are reproduced within the school system and have been exacerbated by budget restraint and the gradual adoption of the 'ethics of neutrality'. Corroborating evidence about the uneven distribution of school income supports their view of a social and economic divide. Those neighbourhoods, where unemployment is high due to de-industrialisation, where lone parents are concentrated by public housing policy, isolated due to cuts in public transport, increasingly stressed by the struggle to survive on welfare payments and stigmatised for their geographical and social position, are served by 'disadvantaged schools' under similar pressures.

These schools strive to do their best, often coping with considerable staffing turbulence. Attracting leaders and staff who will, and can, stay at the school to establish relationships and earn the trust of the communities is a major priority. Moves to devolve staff selection to the schools has not been successful strategy, because the same stigmas that operate to delineate the west and the north also operate as a deterrent to teachers applying for positions. The sheer numbers of adults is also important. Despite the fact that the state system has the lowest staff-student ratios in Australia and is the same as the average for non Catholic and Anglican private schools, 'disadvantaged school' principals can well recall that it was once lower, at least in part because of the amount of salary redistribution that the system undertook. They see that best way to do better for their students is to lower class sizes and/or increase the range and number of professionals and para-professionals in the school.

'Disadvantaged school' principals experience a hardening of attitude from central office staff, who they feel are increasingly made remote from their particular milieu and needs. The proposals to make school fees compulsory goes no way to making up the shortfall between the most well-off schools and the rest and creates difficulties in low income neighbourhoods where parents turn on each other rather than on the root problem, the inadequate level of funding for policy and community expectations. The extension of, and increase in, the user pays principle actively works against equity and is
just another aspect of the decline of the welfare assistance state impacting on the northern and western suburbs.

'Disadvantaged schools' have to do more than privileged schools. If they are to 'do justice' then they need to engage in the business of being 'context generative', of working away at the dominant curriculum and pedagogy, of systematically and realistically changing school practices. This requires teachers who are willing and up for the tasks, the resource of time for staff to engage together, and school processes that connect with parents and students to develop meaningful partnerships. The major source of funding for this activity is the CLP, which as we have heard, is barely sufficient for schools to keep going. If 'disadvantaged schools' are to 'do justice' then they do need more, and that more, according to their administrators, is more staff and more money.

There are many arguments which are made to counter such claims. One is the globalisation determinist argument about lack of public funds, and in South Australia, the State Bank debt can always be proffered. Yet this state is engaged in substantial corporate subsidisation and this clearly has priority in the state budget. The choice of what to fund is ideological.

What is offered to 'disadvantaged schools', instead of money and staffing, by government ministers all of whom send their own children to (mostly) private schools well away from the northern and western suburbs, is literacy, vocational education and more accountable schools. This reform strategy is not what might seem most evident to teachers and parents in 'disadvantaged schools', because the strategy makes them part of 'the problem' and fails to hear their arguments for staffing stability and smaller class sizes. Those educational situations are enjoyed by the children of policy makers and are not to be extended to students in locations hardest hit by economic and social change. The research of Hanushek (1986, 1995) arguing that increased resources make no difference to student learning, a position which has been subject to considerable scholarly critique,17 can always be deployed to justify this refusal to increase spending. This is certainly a position which has been mounted at the federal level. And, as Kozol (1991, p. 134) points out, this is:

an argument, which if it is applicable at all, applies most naturally to wealthy schools, is used instead to further limit options for poor children.

I will continue to use as the basis of my argument the understandings of my colleagues in 'disadvantaged schools', for it is they who do the everyday work and know what they need most to make substantial difference.18 It seems clear to me, based on my own

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17 The broad debate in Australia can be found in the NBEET Conference Report, Efficiency and Equity (NBEET, 1995).
18 This is not just my idiosyncrasy. Recent research on class size looked at the reasoning behind school and parent advocacy of small class size and found justification for their views. University of Nottingham researchers (Centre for Teacher and School Development & National Association of Head Teachers, 1998) suggest that:

Much of the existing class size research has focused on:
experiences and that of others, that the level and kind of resources and the ways in which they are framed, has a major impact on the capacity of the 'disadvantaged schools' to 'do justice'. This is evidence that policy makers choose not to hear.

What is equally important is to marry this picture with that provided in the previous two chapters. I have suggested that 'disadvantaged schools' have to spend more time on welfare and discipline issues, they have less time to spend on curriculum change and altering student and family relations with the school, and they are often constrained by local issues. This chapter suggests that 'disadvantaged schools' have less and declining resources available to them. This paints a picture of doing more with less, rather than doing less with more as is the case for elite schools.

'Thisness' revisited

I will now add to the list of contextually derived issues that shape and delimit the capacity of 'disadvantaged schools' to be 'context generative' the issues raised in this chapter.

It is worth noting at this point that a recent paper by Wylie (1998), who has studied the New Zealand 'experiment' over many years, highlights the importance of effective systems as well as effective schools. Schools, no matter how decentralised, are dependent on the centre for allocations and support and leadership. The centre is entrusted with the

- the effects of reducing class sizes rather than the impact of increasing them; the influence of class size on pupils in the early years of primary schooling as opposed to those at the upper primary and secondary school stages;
- the learning gains of pupils as measured by their scores on standardised tests (particularly in mathematics and reading).

Such research fails to address evidence on such related important issues as:
- the long-term effects of class size on non-cognitive learning outcomes such as pupil attitudes, behaviour, motivation and self-esteem;
- the wider effects of class size on the professional work and quality of life of head teachers and teachers;
- the impact of rising class sizes on the management and effectiveness of schools and their capacity to sustain continuous improvement at a time of rising expectations and rapid educational change.

A recent American research summary (US Department of Education, 1998) argued that,

Overall, the pattern of findings drawn from the existing research lead to the following three conclusions:

1. A consensus of research indicates that class size reduction in the early grades leads to higher student achievement. Researchers are more cautious about the question of the positive effects of class size reduction in 4th through 12th grade. The significant effects of class size reduction on student achievement appear when class size is reduced to a point somewhere between 15 and 20 students, and continue to increase as class size approaches the situation of a 1-to-1 tutorial.

2. The research data from the relevant studies indicate that if class size is reduced from substantially more than 20 students per class to below 20 students, the related increase in student achievement moves the average student from the 50th percentile up to somewhere above the 60th percentile. For disadvantaged and minority students the effects are somewhat larger.

3. Students, teachers, and parents all report positive effects from the impact of class size reductions on the quality of classroom activity. (my emphasis)

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responsibility for ensuring equity across all of the schools. Wylie says, in words that
echo those of the school administrators in this study:
Infrastructure, teacher supply and the promotion of equitable access to good quality
education - all these are beyond the ability of individual schools to decide to maintain.
These are the proper responsibility of central government agencies to fund, and to work
with those in schools on the design of robust policy whose implementation will have few
'unintended consequences' or negative effects. (Wylie, 1998b, p. 889)

I group the majority of the issues arising from this chapter together under the heading of
system support.

1. School mix: Students and their families affected by
   • changes in labour market - levels of unemployment/underemployment/tenuous
     employment. This is connected to changes in the global economy
   • changes in families - separated, blended and extended families
   • changes in public policy - health issues, public housing, transport
   • concentration of families in crisis
   • patterns of migration and diaspora
   • increasing or declining enrolment

2. Resources available to the school in the neighbourhood
   • community infrastructure - also affected by public policy.
   • employment and employment networks - affected by globalisation and
     microeconomic reform
   • availability of voluntary labour, related to un/employment and local geographies of
     mothering
   • age of locality - age of school facilities
   • income based on parent contribution and fundraising

3. Neighbourhood issues that impact on the school
   • specific local events - racism, culture of lighting fires and vandalism against school
     properties
   • neighbourhood change - redevelopment, change in demographics, external review,
     possible closure

4. System support
   • staffing turbulence - turnover of teachers, casualisation of support staff, turnover of
     leadership
   • staffing 'fit' - staff who can 'do justice' as their professional work
   • income - sufficient redistribution to compensate for locality factors
   • accountability culture of blame and performativity
   • professional development in 'doing justice'
   • research in more equitable schooling practices
   • support for networks of schools, teachers and administrators
   • support for school based democratic practices
5. School based theorisations of 'doing justice' that

- start from understanding the contradictory and paradoxical positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediator of inequitable social relations
- adopt a transformative imaginary
- put together the everyday practices of curriculum and the everyday practices of the institution.

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

In this chapter I have looked at the changing nature of justice and equity policy and the impact of the demise of the DSP and its replacement by the CLP. Schools reported that while the federal money continued, they were concerned by the focus on failure, by the lack of professional development, the loss of networks, research and advocacy. Despite the stigma attached to belonging to the category of the 'disadvantaged school', the DSP did provide an identity and a shared sense of moral purpose that connected with wider social issues. The CLP on the other hand offers a narrow and utilitarian project which administrators have to massage to make work for each particular school's needs.

In this chapter, I focussed on the things that all of the school administrators said would make most difference to their school - staffing and cash resources, both of which are affected in a number of ways by changing patterns of public expenditure, the ethic of neutrality and the shift from redistributive justice. Getting staff, attaining a state of relative stability and getting the 'right' staff were vital. Devolutionary strategies have not yet produced a solution to the staffing turbulence and 'lack of fit' problems in 'disadvantaged schools'. In addition, although a comparatively small component of the overall school budget, non salary cash resources were important and declining relative to their more privileged counterparts. This has an adverse effect on the 'disadvantaged school's' capacity to offer the same programs and equipment as those offered to children and young people in other locations. Recent federal government policies in favour of private schooling only seem set to exacerbate the problem further.

I argued that if 'disadvantaged schools' were to be 'context generative' in ways that constitute 'doing justice', then they could not be expected to do so with less. That so many do more with less, is testament to their commitment.

In the next and final empirical chapter of this study I look at how the schools are dealing with the current reform agendas set by market devolution and the distributive curriculum, those things offered instead of resources and more staffing, and consider further how it is that the school administrators are continuing to work in various ways for justice and equity.
Critical literacy involves children in working from their own knowledges and desires.

If you could have 3 wishes what would you wish for? Draw them.

- For people to stop dropping rubbish.
- For a tree in front of my house.
- For people not to yell.

Draw something that worries you
- My dog almost jumps the gate.

Draw something that makes you angry
- People stop cutting down trees.
**Business backs junior pay freeze**

Government is determined to maintain junior pay levels. The freeze is significant of the Government's commitment to maintain a careful balance between the interests of employers and employees. The freeze will be lifted in two years, after which a review will be conducted by the Australian Bureau of Employment. The freeze is due to the existing shortage of junior employees, which is expected to continue for at least two years. The review will consider the impact of the freeze on the job market and the potential for longer-term benefits.

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**Schools bear brunt of market collapse**

The collapse of the full-time employment market for young people has forced many to stay on at school. 'It is in part a direct result of the downturn in full-time employment opportunities that have been experienced in recent years,' said Mr. Oliver. The report of the Australian Bureau of Employment found that the rate of decline in full-time employment opportunities for young people was particularly severe. The report highlighted the need for urgent action to address this issue.

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**Two technical schools tackle lack of trade skills**

A shortage of trade skills in South Australia has prompted the State Government to establish a technical school to help meet the demand. 'We have to act now to ensure that we have a skilled workforce to meet the needs of the future,' said the Minister for Education. The school will offer a range of vocational courses and will work closely with industry to ensure that students are well-prepared for the job market.

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**Literacy barrier to jobs**

Poor literacy skills are preventing many people from accessing jobs and forcing them into marginal work. The ABS has released data showing that long-term unemployment is highest among those with poor literacy skills. 'We need to address these issues head-on to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to succeed,' said the Minister for Employment. The Government has announced a range of initiatives to improve literacy skills, including funding for schools and training programs.

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**School of thought on jobs**

Education guarantees success in the job market. 'We must focus on providing our young people with the skills they need to succeed,' said the Minister for Education. The Government's education policy includes a focus on vocational education and training, as well as a commitment to improving literacy and numeracy skills. The Minister emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools, employers, and the Government to ensure that young people are well-prepared for the workforce.
There's a different feeling in schools at the moment about things like core business, running like a small business,
And the people business is becoming less and less important or talked about.
And the stuff about class doesn't get talked about so much
It's a bit worrying because we're going to lose the plot, we're going to go back to the old behaviour management And the curriculum development's going to fall apart...
Unless we can keep that going....
And people say, "Oh that's old language now they're the old terms
and we have to think of new ways of proceeding" But I'd like to know who's doing it and how you do it... because I worry about it.
People are into Annual Reports and graphing the kids results..... the parent opinion surveys are graphed, and Superintendents come round and ask how you know your kids are learning, where's your evidence,
And principals in principals' meetings talk about how to do that stuff better, rather than talking about how to do the curriculum better,
It's how to do the measurement, or how to do the graphing, to show the parent community how the kids are doing better, it's about that kind of improvement
In principals' meetings we used to talk about curriculum, now we talk about data and the best ways of presenting the Annual Report. (Transcript 22)
Our first School Council meeting of every year always contained a ritual question and answer session where parents asked how many students had 'matriculated' and I tried to avoid giving a simple answer. They wanted to know how well the school was going to do for their children and I wanted to argue that we were doing pretty well for our students, given the probability that only a relatively small proportion would 'make it' in that particular competition and that wasn't all that we thought was important.

Eventually we hit upon the not very novel idea of bringing back ex students who were 'successful' in a range of areas - the international and national sports stars, the business owners, artists, community activists, and tradespeople as well as university graduates. We hired our ex students to run workshops with current students - "See, if they can do it, so can you," we said.

One year¹ when the questions had been particularly insistent, one of the staff stalwarts got a number of university students to come back to the school to talk with primary parents ready to enrol their children in our secondary program.

On cue, the first ex student came to the front of the library where we were meeting and began, "Hello. I'm doing a Ph.D in a branch of medical science called...."

There were audible gasps and murmurs. Some people in the audience were obviously amazed. They did not think that any student from our 'disadvantaged school' could possibly do this.

And who had gasped and murmured? Not the parents. It seemed they could easily imagine local kids making it. No. The gasps and murmurs came from some of our teachers who had not even considered that the 'disadvantaged school' where they worked could help to produce anyone 'like this'.

¹ This incident occurred just after I left the school. I am retelling the story as it was told to me.
CHAPTER 10

TESTING TIMES
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In this chapter of my research text, I look at the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' I have studied in the light of school reform and 'doing justice'.

In the last three chapters have focussed on the school as a 'place' - a meeting point for the production and reproduction of subjectivities, social relations, teleologies, knowledges and narratives. I presented stories and theorisations of school administrators from sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' using Appadurai's (1996) notion of the paradoxical nature of localities and places - paradoxical in that they are both 'context driven' and 'context generative'. I focussed specifically on three school contexts, themselves produced and reproduced through broad social and policy changes (outlined in Chapters 4 and 6) that impact on the specific regions in which the schools are located (sketched in Chapter 5). The last three chapters have concentrated on 'context derived' matters:

- the first (Chapter 7) highlighted aspects of the material, social and cultural characteristics of the local neighbourhood that profoundly shape the particularities of schools and make them unique places
- the second (Chapter 8) looked at the 'disadvantaged school', and the people and processes within it as mediators of the social relations of inequalities. I suggested that this made demands on 'disadvantaged schools' that schools in more privileged locations did not face. I examined the ways in which the discipline and welfare functions of the school worked to produce and reproduce dominant social and cultural norms and how this might work against context generation that was oriented towards 'doing justice'
- the third (Chapter 9) highlighted the social policy context in which 'disadvantaged schools' currently work and how the changing meanings of justice and equity play out through the abolition of the DSP and its replacement the CLP and how they are made manifest through staffing and resourcing, two major concerns common to all of the 'disadvantaged schools' in this study.

This chapter picks up and focuses directly on the question of context generation, on the capacity of the school as a place that produces subjectivities and localities by 'doing justice'.

In this chapter I begin by looking at how it is that the school administrators see their schools taking up the 'context generative' reform agendas put forward by the current state and federal governments, that which I described as market devolution and the distributive curriculum. I present evidence that school administrators take on aspects of this reform agenda in different ways, specific to their locality context, to the school history and to their own conceptions of 'doing justice'. This is of course only a partial view of what is happening in each school, as students and staff and to a lesser degree parents, also construct the school responses. However school administrators have a designated position as interpreters and implementers of policy and their perspectives are therefore important in shaping what actually happens in the school.
The empirical evidence suggests that the project of 'doing justice' is ongoing and has not been obliterated along with the DSP. I note that there is considerable difference in view among the administrators about what this means and what any future justice and equity policy might look like. I conclude the chapter by offering my completed 'thisness' list of 'context derived' issues as something that might assist in developing a policy approach that recognises both commonalities and differences among 'disadvantaged schools'. I take this further in the next and concluding chapter.

I begin by revisiting Appadurai, the policy reform agenda of the state, and the school and its locality.

CONTEXT REVISITED

Appadurai (1996, p. 187) argues that the capability of the neighbourhood, and the 'places' within it, to produce contexts, meanings and local subjects is "profoundly affected by the locality producing capabilities of larger scale formations" such as the nation state and trading cartels, to "determine the general shape of all of the neighbourhoods within their powers". In conditions of late modernity, the relationship between the 'context derived' and 'context generative' activities of the neighbourhood, and its places, mediated "through the actions of local historical subjects" has acquired, he argues, new complexities. He suggests that the task of generating contexts at the local level is "increasingly a struggle" (p. 189).

The reasons for this are complex. Most germane to this particular 'post policy' study is the changing actions of the globalising nation state, which Appadurai describes as increasingly aggressive, invasive and disciplinary. He proposes that we consider the nation state as a:

bizarrely contradictory project of creating a flat, contiguous, and homogeneous space of nationness and simultaneously a set of places and spaces... calculated to create the internal distinctions and divisions necessary for state ceremony, surveillance, discipline and mobilisation. These latter are also the spaces and places that create and perpetuate the distinctions between rulers and ruled, criminals and officials, crowds and leaders, actors and observers. (Appadurai, 1996 , p. 189)

The school is one such place of mobilisation, a place where divisions and distinctions are produced and produced, where vast networks of formal and informal technologies

1 This is based in Bourdieu's theorisations of habitus, agency and 'interests' (or 'illusio'). I return to this later in the chapter.

2 I note in passing that Lingard and Rivzi (1998) suggest that Appadurai has over emphasised globalisation and underestimated the role of the nation state. This is not quite my reading of his text. Appadurai's focus is to explain globalisation and the global/local. Because he has not spent equal amounts of space explaining the nation state this does not necessarily equate to him seeing that its role is minimalised. Rather, it is not the focus of his study. As the quotation I have used indicates, I think he is suggesting - in common with writers as disparate as Bauman (1998c) (who does I think overstate the withdrawal of the state), Elliott and Atkinson (1998) from The Guardian, and, when he is discussing 'control societies', Deleuze (1985) - that the globalising nation state is increasingly more concerned (for complex reasons) with regulating private lives and local events than global capital.
penetrate "the nooks and crannies of everyday life" (p. 189) and the nation state exercises its sovereignty. Appadurai says, echoing Foucault, that "the models of localisation most congenial to the nation state have a disciplinary quality about them" and these create "severe constraints, even direct obstacles to the survival of locality as context generative rather than a context driven process" (p. 190).

The nation state is increasingly under duress. The movement of people, money, information and images destabilises its grip on the cultural, social and economic processes through which it gains legitimation while they also infiltrate localities and communities. The response of the neoliberalism nation state has been to loosen, if not let go altogether, its grasp of the economic, but at the same time to tighten its clasp on the social and the local. This erodes the 'context generative' capacity of the local.

In the literature, some commentators focus on the way that this results in a decline in social capital and they attempt to create social action around the idea of 'lost neighbourhood', others draw attention to the increasingly tight borders erected round ethnicity, religion or history, while others take refuge in proselytizing about the benefits of the virtual and extended communities offered through advanced digital telecommunications. These, along with other contestations, form the intensified struggle around the capacity of the local to generate context. Appadurai (pp. 195-199) points out that the process of disjuncture between state and locality is historical and ongoing, but has become increasingly puzzling as the technologies of the state, diasporic flows and electronic and virtual communities come together and are articulated in variable ways. What he emphasises is that the 'production of the local' is increasingly fragile.

The remainder of this chapter takes Appadurai's notion of the increasingly invasive and disciplinary state and the increasing fragility and puzzling quality of the local, in this case the 'disadvantaged school', as a general analytical construct around which play the particularities of school administrators' narratives about the reform agendas of the state and of their schools.

**THE SYSTEM REFORM AGENDA**

The current conservative reform agenda for schools is framed by the concerns of the effective schools and quality movements and by policies that marketise, and privatise in the name of greater choice. Schools are regulated through the strategy of devolving responsibilities for management to schools. Policy is produced by removed and highly political processes and schools are increasingly seen as implementers of policies made elsewhere. Accountability is a major strategy through which market devolution and the distributive curriculum come together in the schools. There is an increasing instrumentalism in curriculum, an emphasis on the 'basics' of literacy and citizenship

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3 In places where the state has crumbled away and does not exercise control over the local there can be civil war based on such new localised territories.
4 This paragraph has no citations. This does not suggest that this set of ideas is mine, but rather, rests on the argument and the literatures cited in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
and a growing regime of testing (see Chapter 6). The intent of policy seems increasingly divisive and the prospect of Australia seeing the same kinds of educational inequalities produced from the same policy approaches used overseas, appears ever more likely.

However, what the policy says and what happens in schools are not necessarily the same thing (Ball, 1993) and different aspects of policy take hold in different ways in different locations. In this chapter I look at the impact of marketisation on the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' in my study. I then look at the processes of accountability and testing and complete this snapshot by considering the question of further devolution as is soon expected in South Australia.

The educational marketplace

Australian education has always had a market element to it. From the advent of public schooling, there were choices to be made between public and private. For a good part of this century there was also a choice between public technical and high schools. There was an educational pecking order in South Australia which placed high fee private schools at the top, followed closely by four big state selective high schools, one in the city, two in the eastern suburbs and one in the west. At the bottom were technical high schools, and Catholic parish and primary schools serving public housing estates. Despite zoning, everybody in the post war period knew the status of various schools, and many parents knew well the process of manoeuvring to ensure your children got into a school which represented your social and cultural aspirations. The abolition of zoning and the advent of comprehensive schools did not remove this hierarchy and the networks of information and choice continued.

The gradual drift to the quasi-market, described by Whitty (1997, p. 4) as "involving a combination of parental choice and school autonomy, together with a greater or lesser degree of public accountability and government regulation", was helped along in South Australia by the development of specialist schools, and given a hefty prod by recent federal and state conservative government school funding, devolution and quality assurance strategies.

Schooling is irrevocably now an item of consumption and the notion of choice is ubiquitous. The last bastion of government prerogative over parent wishes, that related to the placement of children with disabilities, is under fire - as a recent news report (Give us a choice, 1999) says:

Parents of disabled students - and lobby groups - are fighting for the right to choose which school their children attend.

Choice is now represented as an inalienable right regardless of circumstances and a fundamental value of conservative self managing individualism. As the Prime Minister (Howard, 1999) remarked in a recent address:

We've tackled the most fundamental challenges facing Australia today by drawing on their own strengths and values - individualism, a willingness to take on responsibility, the desire for choice and opportunity.
In a consumer society, there are two major ways choice can be constructed - through democratic means, that is the "increased participation in decision making by students, parents, teachers and other members of communities" (Walker & Crump, 1996, p. 4), or through markets, which pit varying self interests against one another, mediated through institutions which may or may not remain viable. In Australia, as in many other countries we have taken the market route.

Whether there is an equal choice for everyone is very debatable and there is mounting research evidence (e.g., Ball, 1997; Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1996; Ball & Gerwitz, 1997; Cutler & Waine, 1997; Gaffney & Smith, 1998; Gerwitz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Gillbourn, 1997; Tomlinson, 1997; Wylie, 1998) to suggest that the exercise of choice, like the exercise of any other matter of 'taste' that occurs through 'agency and habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984), not only tends to reproduce the broader dimensions of inequality but also finely differentiates between people on the basis of their economic, symbolic and cultural capital. This can be seen at work in this state, echoing through the words of one primary principal who says:

We've had huge problems with the new housing estate community because initially they thought there was going to be an Education Department school built there and then that changed because, well you know we can take another couple of hundred here and so that caused quite a lot of flak. They were promised a school when they bought their house there by the land agents and so of course when our Department said "Well the land agent doesn't actually make the decisions about where schools go". I think that's created a bit of a problem. Then the private school was built there and I think it's a combined Catholic and Anglican – half the money each. Mind you when it first opened we only lost five or six kids so we didn't lose a huge number but it was just that group of kids where the parents wanted them to be out of here and couldn't afford, and couldn't take them anywhere else. They try not to come here because they see this as not the kind of school they would like their children to go to. (Transcript 18)

Parent choice however is not the focus of this chapter, nor of this research. It is the effect on the institutions themselves that is my concern, because the quasi market represents an instance of what Appadurai describes as the 'heightened locality building activity of the nation state', that seeks to subject the neighbourhood to nationally oriented narratives, knowledges, and teleologies in order to produce national subjectivities.

Some effects

The quasi market in education has produced a number of emerging issues in the northern and western suburbs, some of which emerge easily and seamlessly from the older patterns of the hierarchy among schools.

- **There is an increased stratification among schools**
  In the western suburbs, pockets of low income housing rub up against pockets of comparative comfort and relative affluence, there is a declining population base, a decade of government school closures and the expansion of existing private schools and establishment of new ones. Here the question of competition and viability is at the forefront of many principals' minds. Many of them have their eyes fixed on their most immediate competitor, which serves as a reference point for decisions they make.
A principal from a working class high school (not one of the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' I have been looking at in detail, but the destination point for primary students from two 'disadvantaged schools' that are in the centre of my study) tells me:

I think we're starting to see a bit of white flight from here. A long established family in the neighbourhood have moved house so they could get into another district so they could guarantee they'd get into Foreshore High....
I think the general thing that's said about this school in the community is that they do quite a good job down there but there's some rough kids...but they don't know how good a job we do, and we're tainted by association with a few kids.
It's scary. It doesn't matter how good a job we do, we're going to be residualised, not because of what we do...We're fucked really... What do we do - respectabilise even more? The danger is we get too small. I guess we do what we do and try to do it really well.
We have about 600 kids. Three or four kids left today. This year we think we'll have about 127 year 8s for next year, this year we had 155.....(Transcript 1)

The principal of an old and respected high school, now a disadvantaged school, in the west, also has their eyes on the competition, not another state school, but in this case a prospective private school, and describes their role as one of:

being a strategist and looking at what's happening with public-private schooling, and what would happen if a private school opened just down the road. We've got the church that's just been built just across from the school and in a few years time, I have no doubt in my mind, that there will be a school on that property because it's a huge property...it will be a community gathering place and I know how that community thinks, and there won't be just their kids going there - initially yes, but if you take a longer term view, it'll be everybody. (Transcript 17)

For both of these secondary principals the question of reputation and the long term effects of enrolment drift are significant everyday matters.

The former is attempting to develop one strong curriculum focus in the school; work cooperatively with local primary schools in shared programs that involve the cluster sharing teachers and students moving onto each others' sites; develop a home grown literacy 'standard' so as to ensure that not only do students learn what is necessary for them to move through the school, but also parents can be reassured that the school is covering the basics; and is working with local service clubs on a community service program that will eventually involve all students in the school. Each of these things is educationally creative, resourced and enthusiastically directed to the interests of the students, the bulk of whom are working class young people from fairly low income home owning families. At the same time however, there is a viability edge to each of these strategies, a way in which the principal seeks to denote the singularity of the school and to connect with neighbourhood information flows and networks which bring potential school choosers into closer contact with the school programs.

For the latter principal it means trying to maintain the image and practice of the school as one which does enable significant numbers of young people to acquire the valued symbolic capital of university entrance, at the same time as increasing the school's responsiveness to more marginalised individuals and groups without 'appearing' to be a haven for students seen as needing welfare and remediation. For them, uniform is a
highly visible symbol of this process, as is being able to display students' performances (across the curriculum) in the foyer, and in public arenas, to indicate that 'excellence' and the school are synonymous.

For both of these principals, the struggle is how to maintain the viability of their schools, to cater for all the students in them, (especially at a time when particular classed and raced students are read by some parents as meaning the 'bottom' of the social field), and how to do this ethically. Both of them do not wish to engage in overt competition and aggressive glossy image production, but each is positioned in ways that are irresolvable - they must compete or face the prospect of their school being residualised - closed in the first instance, lessened in stature in the other. They feel this acutely:

Stratification has always been there but you can see it progressing, taking the next step. I feel quite powerless, what can you do? I guess you have to go into more PR than we have been. (Transcript 1)

The situation and response of primary schools in the west is more mixed. One principal tells me:

In the 70s and 80s this was known as a 'nice' school that had religious things and an orchestra. That was in the days of that Australian working class generational thing of how you got to be middle class. In a straight white Australian sense you had an orchestra and you did that sort of stuff, so the school set itself up as that and that was the culture back then. But really it's changed, so much has changed. There's always been a thing between this school and (nearest DSP school), some people send their kids here and not there. And since Seavilla primary school has closed there's a little bit more movement across the main road. But that road is definitely a barrier, there's a nice side and a not nice side and the nice ones go elsewhere. We'll get some that cross over from here that go to that school. Some families I've suggested that might be a good idea because, you know how people position themselves culturally and class wise, and if they can't do it here, they can't do it...and I say, "Well it's more stable there," that's the word I use because I think that one of the indicators of disadvantaged children or kids who are poor, whatever you want to call it, is just their freneticism - they're just emotionally and psychologically frenetic and the indicators of that are all this behaviour stuff and if you go to a middle class school the first thing you'll notice is that the kids are calmer.
(Transcript 15)

Here we have a principal accepting that their 'disadvantaged school' is not going to be everybody's choice and that the best way to deal with having concentrations of 'undesirable kids' is to make that a virtue. They are passionately committed to community development and to working in innovative ways with new technologies, growing curricula that is 'culturally responsive' (Ladson-Billings, 1994), teaching with, in and through 'multi-literacies' (Cazden et al., 1966). This principal wants parents to choose the school because of the care it exercises for students and therefore offers considerable space for them to participate in the life of the school. They seek to create an image but also the practices of a school that refuses to be residualised, despite the fact that it is not first choice for many. The fact that this school services a discrete geographical area, has a 'reputation' and is not in immediate danger of closing since another nearby school closed quite recently, positions the administrator such that this is a viable option. What they do is predicated on a notion of the school's territory, metaphorically and literally.
However, another principal in a very vulnerable location has also taken much the same view:

And we need to connect to the community somehow so we’re not hammered by everybody either, like government schools are... are not where it’s at – to be a good parent you have to send your kid to a private school, I think that’s just rubbish. But it’s certainly out there. Government schools do get hammered a bit. So the profile of government schools needs to be raised. We get the private school stuff from some. We sometimes get it in funny ways, if a kid is getting in too much trouble, then we’ll just take him off to a ‘proper school’ – and then he’d be back, things were so hard in the private school.... Poor Catholic schools mainly. But there were sprinklings of - "If I had enough money I’d be sending him off to a decent school" - there was that mixed with the..."This is the best school, this is our school, this is the best"... there’s a lot of contradictions in all of that, but it's there. (Transcript 22)

Another primary principal from the north tells me:

At the school level my energies are into promoting the school, not at the expense of other schools, but just developing some pride in the school... and some trust in the school.

(Transcript 13)

These primary principals have committed their schools to the priority of parent-school relationship building. They have a view that this is integral to a broader set of neighbourhood processes and that the schools can play a positive part in the development of local social networks, can support social action and become a site in which decentralised democratic practice can be nurtured. Each of them worries that the focus on basic skills, literacy, narrow outcomes plotted on graphs in a game which their students cannot win, will undermine this focus on the capacity of the local school to support locality 'generative' activity. They fear that a politically induced process will undermine the trust that they have worked hard to win, and that grim days of unremitting hostility and despair will be the result.

In the north west there is competition with eastern suburbs and city schools which is particularly acute at secondary level. One administrator tells me that history continues to be a problem for the school and that competitive 'dirty tricks' can easily ignite significant panic about the school:

One of the contexts is that this place has actually undergone two reviews in under five years, shall we close or shall we not. The first one was the really ugly one with a Labor Minister, then there was another one two years later with the Liberals within two weeks of my appointment as principal, which ended up with the amalgamation of another two schools, not this one. That affected not just Year 8 enrolments but also the top of the school. And so really it’s been unsettled for five long years and our retention’s not that flash. And then I gather last week a ‘colleague’ circulated another story that this place was going to be closed at the end of this year – I haven’t got to the bottom of it yet. I phoned up the principal of the said school and asked that the staff member responsible be questioned so I could find out what his motive might be for creating this kind of havoc. I haven’t got to the bottom of it - yet. (Transcript 20)

However, it is the present mix of students around which overt competition takes place,
Last week I had to follow another school at a primary school meeting looking at enrolling at high school. That was difficult. They do flaunt their statistics all the time and those of us who only have a few statistics to flaunt were a bit more quiet about them. It's not really what the culture of our school is about. It's especially hard to take when it's the kids. The teacher did the statistics stuff, it was the kids who went on rather too much about what a quality place it is, how quality people attend and achieve and what Year 12 results look like and all those things, and we just sat there tapping our feet to try and subdue the anger a bit. It's hard to take because our kids do achieve and achieve well. However, within the context of their lives. (Transcript 20, my emphasis)

However this school also gets students enrolling from the northern suburbs, travelling by bus every day to cross the Maginot main road line and the principal knows that. Even though this school does not engage in these kind of ostentatious displays of embodied symbolic and cultural capital, the same dynamics of competition exist. What this principal feels towards the hills face, others further out of town feel towards their position, located closer to the city.

Such dilemmas are widespread in 'disadvantaged schools'. A 'disadvantaged' secondary school principal from the southern suburbs perhaps best exemplifies the mix of frustration, pride in the school and the students, and isolation from colleagues:

It's really interesting down the south because it's quite different from the north where you've got poverty spread widely. In the south, you've got poverty very much isolated into a particular pocket. So our school is poor and has enormous levels of outstanding debt as far as the community is concerned and 65-70% of the kids are on School Card, but we are surrounded by schools that aren't like that, that are very middle class in the way they operate. And one of the issues therefore we are facing all the time is the dilemmas about those sorts of icons that define middle class schools - issues like school uniform - it takes on a whole new significance when you're located in a school like ours and you know that you have got kids that cannot afford a thing that's called school uniform during the week and another set of clothes they wear on the weekend. I get great joy out of our kids because they're the ones who I see being successful and it's a great occasion when they're successful but nobody else appreciates it. My colleague principals round me don't appreciate it, and they'll dump on us and they'll dump in ways that are really hurtful. For example, if I want to get a kid transferred out of our school to go to one of theirs, we have to fight bloody tooth and nail to enable that to happen, because they don't want them because they come from our school. (Transcript 11c)

This administrator explains that the work in the school does not stop with the parent-school relationship, because no matter how good that is, it is always subject to influence and scrutiny from other places:

We work harder with our clients continuously to make them feel wanted and to find strategies by getting them involved in their learning which means all sorts of alternative programs, all sorts of training for staff, all sorts of different ways of looking at working with kids.

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5I highlight these words because they are ambiguous. Are they indicative of a 'deficit discourse' at work, or a recognition that the 'disadvantaged school' must be realistic about what it can achieve, or shorthand for saying the game is rigged against working class students - or all of these combined? I hesitate to jump to a simple reading.

6This transcript from the wider sample.
Our successes are moderate compared to the energy that I put into it, so that's a real focus on how I work each day, and it's like being a black woman in society, you have to perform at that level because that's what you need to be successful, and I reckon that's what we have to be like as a school - we have to always prove we're better. Just so we can maintain our client base. I mean we have heaps of parents that come in and tell us that we're the best school in the district and all that sort of thing, but that doesn't help in the big picture. (Transcript 11c)

One principal saw the generally negative attitude towards 'disadvantaged schools' as a good reason for focussing on image and public relations, and described the engagement by students in the process as a positive learning experience for them, as well as an 'indicator' that their school was being successful:
We've got a group of kids who now love the school, who genuinely like being here, who think is a good school who approach it with real joy and pleasure - they go out and talk all over the place about the school and talk with real pride about it, which I think is a major, major shift from where it was when I first got here. (Transcript 21)

However, they also have other reasons for taking marketing the school seriously. This 'disadvantaged school' is not a neighbourhood school, per se. It attracts students from a wide geographical area, over thirty primary schools in fact. In order to maintain the school as an institution the principal has little choice but to engage in some kind of marketing activity. They say:
The other school we market with probably doesn't need to do it as much as we do. We're currently sitting on 540, when I got here we were 370 and I reckon I would like to be around 600 minimum. We actually don't have room for the kids here now, we've got kids everywhere, we've got trannies here and there, but the school has a location description that says over 900, and I figure I'll just keep getting them in and telling the Department when they arrive that we need the facilities. (Transcript 21)

At the same time the principal admits:
We are being forced into higher levels of competition and if we as principals associations don't deal with it, then it will be real sink or swim...But I'm very happy myself to break the (collegial) rules if it's in the interests of these kids and this school...And everyone will do the same thing... it's a fragile association we have. (Transcript 21)

Principals, who largely lead the push for public relations in their schools, are inevitably placed in such ambivalent circumstances. In a competitive environment they have little choice but to respond, to act in ways that serve the interests of the particular school in which they are situated, to act in ways that are congruent with the schools' histories and neighbourhoods, and to act in ways with which they can live. However there are consequences that arise from such activities that work to undermine collegial and cooperative agendas.

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7 For reasons of confidentiality, the exact nature of the school is not explained.
8 'Trannie' means transportable building, usually an old timber construction on a low stilt frame, under which there is usually litter, decaying food, rats and stray cats. Occasionally in summer, to everyone's excitement, snakes can be found lurking there too.
Clustered and cooperative activity breaks down

The 'disadvantaged schools' in the northern suburbs have a comparatively long history of cooperative and cluster activity. Assisted by the sheer size of the public and low income housing tracts in which they are located, supported by a history of local government activities that encouraged service providers to work together, and in one instance by a federally funded Better Cities project, the schools have largely worked from the position that their job was to provide the best possible schooling for a larger neighbourhood, rather than act as a stand alone school. Despite this shared belief, clustering was always a difficult process, although the combined resources, energies and ideas did result in some spectacular products and real benefits for students.

The purpose of the school clusters was to extend curriculum options for students; extend student services provision; provide curriculum leadership not readily found within one school staff; facilitate the transition of students from primary to secondary; provide professional development and to share good practices; to work together to advocate for the neighbourhood; and to promote educational issues in the local community. Some clusters developed strong community development agendas and saw themselves actively engaged in a socio-political process of contesting, in partnership with local networks, the social production of inequalities. These clusters took on strong advocacy roles, supported local arts, self help and job creation projects, and had a strong commitment to providing educational opportunities for adults in the neighbourhood as well as children and young people. Such adult education was seen as a poverty-cycle breaker. One principal says:

We saw so many examples of people who'd come back to education. The common thread was "I didn't think I could do anything"...and they discovered they could and enjoyed it and did go on to university... now whether they're going to get a job at the end of that or not, at least it puts them on a more equal footing and we had a range of ex students who having gone through university have come back to teaching at our school, people were actually making pathways that they wouldn't have had without that education. So there were so many success stories that it's really clear that adult education is a social justice strategy, it does actually change the course of lives. (Transcript 6)

It is important to note that what is being offered to people who are mostly long term unemployed, is not 'back to basics', is not a narrow literacy and numeracy. It is a chance to continue the valued learning that matters, to acquire symbolic capital that might be able to be cashed in if the opportunity arises. It is about the acquisition of 'primary goods'.

The cluster I was in, you'd hear the stories from the primary schools, the teacher would say "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and the kids'd say "A thief" or something like that. They weren't being silly, they were being quite authentic, that's the way you made a living basically ...in a sense it's a self fulfilling prophecy because in some families the modelling is that and there's no breaking of that cycle... there's probably a good chance the kids are going to go that way too. I started working last year with the cluster, it was the first time I'd actually joined it last year and we were developing a bit of a hypothesis, we thought if we actually took some of the worst, the most difficult problem classes and did a big promotion, bringing them over to our high school, doing

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various fun things, getting the parents interested in the program and enrolling some - then watching what happened to the kids over a period of time, we reckoned that it would make a difference, because we were getting incidental reports from parents who were already enrolled that when they'd sit down with their kids to do their homework their kids thought it was terrific, all this sort of thing, we reckoned it might make a change in the longer term to those kids' future...I actually think it would make a really interesting thesis for someone to look at re-entry parents and the effect on their children, the effect of their changed attitude for children and I don't think anyone's done it yet but I reckon it's likely to be a big factor... So we were trying to do a bit of social engineering, in a small way, through that kind of approach... it's probably not going to change the world but it will make some small differences. (Transcript 6)

A neighbouring primary principal reports:
One of our parents who apparently went through the high school, the parent did and was suspended and excluded and left at 15, and now her oldest child has also been excluded last year and she said to me in the office one day, "The same thing's happening to her as happened to me." And after a lot of persuasion we persuaded her to go on this computer course and last week she said, "Oh this is fantastic, I'm learning all these things," and it's just brought a whole new attitude to us, to the school, to her kids already and this is two weeks into the program, she's had a whole new lease of life. (Transcript 14)

The secondary principal explains that the school's role also involved generating community action:
The other focus we had was to increase peoples' awareness of social action and the fact that they could make a difference and even if you don't end up actually getting a job at least maybe you can act on your community or do something about making things a bit more comfortable for yourself, there's a whole range of different things other than work... and doing that people would have learnt personal skills, conflict resolution skills, communication skills that would have added quality to the relationships that they had and some decided that they didn't want the relationships that they had so those kind of changes too... but that generational unemployment's there and unless something breaks that cycle, then it's going to continue. (Transcript 6)

But not all the cluster activity was positive. Clusters tended to develop bureaucratic processes around their activities; they failed to adequately discuss issues related to autonomy and commonality and often got into conflict; they did not share resources equally amongst the members of a cluster; clusters competed with one another; they paid out huge sums of money to consultants; and they undercut system wide industrial agreements (Thomson, 1994). The level of competition amongst the school clusters that was identified some years ago as a problem, has however now escalated to such a degree that clusters are changing focus in significant ways and some are imploding.

One factor is marketisation. An administrator talks about their cluster which contains a mix of aggressively marketing schools and others more reluctant:
You take one individual school in a cluster that says "No we're going to do it this way" and how do you stop that competition?...the community is still going to react to different schools, the community's still going to say ..."This school's like this...and that school's like that"...Anecdotally I would say there's probably more mobility between the schools than there has been, the community now has that shopping around culture...it's not just
here but anywhere ... and a lot of the problem kids we have come from other schools because you have parents saying, "All my problems will be solved if only we change schools"... so how do you get the balance between we work as a comprehensive neighbourhood school and working as a coalition? ... and our cluster was going somewhere towards that but it was about educational leadership as well, and if you take that out... Then it's just an administrative network. (Transcript 4)

Another in the same group reflects:
While we're living in a political environment where individual competitiveness and aggregated individual school outcomes/results are considered to be the be all and end all, there's little capacity other than essentially goodwill between principals, principal to principal initially and then grow that across staffs, I suspect they're the only ways that that sort of clustering stuff can happen, and within a geographic district it only needs one principal to choose not to approach those issues with some fundamental professional good will from the very beginning, to make it unworkable for every other school and I think that's been demonstrated time and time again. The other issue which affects that, is the degree to which schools have become free, and it's a good job too, this is not an argument against that, to essentially make a whole range of decisions for themselves and wear the consequences too, that cooperative, collaborative efforts across schools create the most labyrinthine decision making apparatuses. (Transcript 8)

But other systemic processes are also at work in northern clusters:
A few people have been appointed principals recently who are not union members and actively against unions, they don't have the same perspectives, coming from a different point of view... the focus is all on quality assurance and literacy outcomes, and that's where they want to put all their energy. And they're getting lots of kudos from the Department and government for what they're doing. And they've got really good annual reports, that sort of stuff. That all has its place and I mean I've done all the right things myself. But they have a very restricted vision and so the cluster is not the force it used to be, there's different values creeping in and were not a cohesive group that's fighting for social justice any more. You can't say the words, and that's hard. As you're colleagues you've got to accept where they're coming from, you can argue with them but you can't change their perspective, and there are at least three principals who are non union members and are anti union activities and just have a perspective about what's the core business... (Transcript 14)

Support for neighbourhood activity from some other government departments, on which some clusters drew, has dwindle. Community health services have been regionalised, welfare services reduced at the same time as demand has escalated, and local government neighbourhood houses which got most of their funding from adult and community education grants and labour market programs are now struggling:
In this community you need a coordinated looking at the whole problem. It needs education, health and all those people need to have a look at it, housing, all those people need to look. When I came in that's what made the difference and the beliefs was yeah this was happening on the macro level and I'm the principal of a school within this context and yes, we can do something if we do it together, but over the five years that's all disappeared. (Transcript 14)

The one agency that is taking more and more interest in neighbourhood action is the police. For example, one principal tells me:
We’re trying something with the police...which is like a combination of Neighbourhood Watch, School Watch, Taxi Watch, Safety Houses, it’s all of them – in fact representatives of all of them come to school, it seems like every fortnight – I don’t think it is every fortnight - with the police liaison person who’s actually the chairperson. And they’re looking at setting up some kind of community project. (Transcript 18)

The picture perhaps also hints at how it is that the local neighbourhood is not only a site for the production of the national context but also the site of increased nation state discipline, surveillance and monitoring.

This also has its educational turn.

RESPONDING TO THE NEW DISCIPLINARY REGIMES OF POLICY

Clusters began in South Australia at the initiative of school principals. In the mid 90s there was some support from the DSP for clusters and where this coincided with those that had already formed this was helpful, but where clusters were imposed, little action occurred. The National Schools Network also provided a focus for cluster activity and they became a ‘unit’ for sharing information and engaging in professional development.

In the last two organisational ‘realignments’, the district and the cluster have become the base of a line manager, the District Superintendent, and a unit for centrally driven administration. Some funding, such as vocational education money, has also been directed to districts. One principal describes the effects:

There was an awful lot of politicking just amongst the principals about who were winners, who were losers, and those things are pretty hard to call with your colleagues when you know that next week you’re going to be back in the same room with your colleagues, the same group of people, working on another project.

Given most of these projects involve resources going to frequently the neediest kids, I think most of the principals’ group are quite committed to that, not all, but most, it almost appears that there are too many stratas, and to a certain extent I reckon principals do have to make an executive decision on those sort of issues and say ‘Yes we’re in’, then just deal with the forest fires that are there, that doesn’t seem to be the case in every participating school. You get the hiccups, all schools were in and then suddenly three of them have pulled out which has funding effects and so on.

So I reckon it’s really hard work clustering but I’m not sure we have any other options. Sometimes it would be expeditious to have a set of initial operational parameters presented to you so you opt in or you opt out rather than having to develop the operational parameters on a cluster by cluster basis, which certainly with VET I reckon wasted nine months plus.

The huge amounts of money absorbed in endless meetings and release worries me because, it’s not so much the time, obviously people have to be released, but you wish they were being released to be involved in program delivery or program development rather than parameter development. (Transcript 8)

District meetings become the place where central information is circulated and discussed, reconstructed and interpreted before it is taken back by each administrator into their schools. Recently principals were instructed by a centrally issued memo to present information to staff about the employer position in the ongoing industrial
dispute but Superintendents were not asked to report back on who had complied, nor were they expected to take action against any who had failed to do as instructed. This is not the case with the Basic Skills Test where Superintendents annually take stock of which schools require intervention: it is currently the case the Superintendents provide staff to supervise the industrially banned testing process if teachers refuse to do so.

The agendas of testing and accountability are also variously driven by professional development through the districts, as school principals are encouraged by Superintendents or by their peers to engage in discussions about data and quality assurance. Principals are increasingly constructed as each others' monitors, with the district meeting the site where the gaze of peers brings the recalcitrant principals into line with accepted norms and departemental policy. However it also must be said that there is considerable debate and difference of opinion about the state testing and accountability agenda. Some principals are more accepting of the general agenda and others take up particular aspects of it.

I will look first at the issue of school quality assurance and the Annual Report.

A note on administrators and policy agendas.

It would be simplest to conceptualise the actions of principals as either resistant or compliant, that is actively working to undermine the government agenda or passively accepting it. I want to suggest that this is not a helpful way to read the stories of these school administrators. In the first instance, what they do is active.

Szudlarek (1993)\textsuperscript{10} argues that power discourses are actively read, interpreted and translated into actions from the body - that there is no position of subjection but \textit{at least} three broad kinds of positive agency:

- \textit{emulation} - action towards the adoption of an externally defined signifier such as a policy
- \textit{mimicry or simulation} - action to adopt externally defined signifiers in order to become invisible
- \textit{resistance} - action oriented towards the inversion of externally defined codes in order to construct one's identity as different.

Szudlarek claims that subaltern (local) cultures can never be fully appropriated because they can not be fully narrativised or explained; they can only be identified as existing. Furthermore, acts of resistance may result in greater repression whereas hybridity of identity gained through mimicry and emulation opens up the possibility of space for change\textsuperscript{11}(p. 59).

\textsuperscript{10} Szudlarek writes about freedom from the perspective of a Polish intellectual who has experienced both the colonialism of the West and the former Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{11} Emulation and mimicry replace the binary of subjugation/compliance and are active positions rather than that of passive subordination. Szudlarek also warns that attempts to liberate the subaltern lead to a weakening of their subject positions because they are made visible (p. 62). What I present in this text is therefore partially edited to avoid exposing my colleagues to particular kinds of counter moves. What there is, is a general, rather than highly detailed story.
In the second instance it is helpful to think about the positive actions of administrators as dynamic and subject to change, because their actions are highly responsive to changes in the overall context. de Certeau (1988) calls these 'everyday' resistances. He proposes that we think of society as a space in which power and its embodiments - institutions, political, scientific and economic rationality, dominant discourses, temporal regimes, enterprises - come to occupy specific places. These are 'strategies' and they serve as the basis for generating social relations. The practices of resistances occupy no permanent place, they are 'tactics', everyday moves that opportunistically wait for times and events that can be turned to advantage. de Certeau suggests that everyday resistances are transgressive and variable, responding to the strategies of power in unpredictable ways, calling on sedimented layers of discursive understandings and meanings. Daily local resistances operate as tactical moves within and against the normalising and individualising structures of power:

clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nest of 'discipline'. Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an 'anti-discipline'. (p. xiv)

These two ideas make it possible to think about the actions of school administrators as a program of continually changing active choices, made on a case by case basis from a range of possibilities that are highly contextual and localised. These tactical choices are not simply fragmented but are able to have an overall effect in the school: they are not a simple series of isolated actions but have some synchronicity, are networked across a range of sites within and without the school, and are held together in a narrative of school planning, management and reform. This resonates with Ball's notion of the 'multilingual principal' (Ball & Gerwitz, 1998b), the principal as one who has to speak many languages to many constituencies and translate across and between them. It also goes somewhere to explaining apparent contradictions and gaps in principal behaviours. There is a particular kind of 'rationality' at work.

The final idea that I find helpful to bring to the reading of school administrators' actions is the theorisation of 'habitus'. Bourdieu (1984, 1990, 1991, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) suggests that habitus operates as a 'feel for the game', a practical sense of what is possible, given the particular situation at issue. This practical sense is not fixed and the same habitus can lead to very different stances and practices depending on the state of the field. Habitus is endlessly transformed and can be practically changed within defined boundaries through reflexive actions. Bourdieu suggests that actions are always influenced by the interests and dispositions of the 'player' but not in a determinist, mechanical fashion. He says:

There will be as many senses of the game, as many practical understandings of interest as there are games. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 110)

This notion of the 'practical logic' of active agents - a practical logic that is changing, responsive to particular circumstances, locations, constellations of people, histories, narratives, and knowledges; a feel for the game that is limited by the social context; that

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12 For this argument see Swarz (1997, Chapters 5-8).
is influenced not only by dominant discursive formations, but also by reflection and new ideas - positions the stories of these school administrators.

These stories that I have recorded and reproduced then, are of the moment, and will undoubtedly change over time not only as circumstances change, but as the administrators themselves continue to work with them. I now return to my narrative and begin again with quality assurance and Annual Reports.

THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

Each school in South Australia is now required to produce a School Context Statement, and provide an Annual Report to parents which lists the school’s achievements against the goals of the annual plan. The annual plan must be derived in part from the overall Department Annual Priorities. Each school has been issued with software which enables the administration and analysis of a parent satisfaction survey which is to be included as part of the Annual Report. The Annual Report requires the production of a Statement of Purpose focussing on curriculum and pedagogy, and on school organisational matters. Nowhere in the Annual Report is the school required to provide any specific information about equity or justice policies. This decision is left to the discretion of the school.\textsuperscript{13}

By and large most schools have produced their Annual Reports and School Context Statements as required. However some it seems may have not:

I was talking to a high school principal and he hasn’t done his annual report. And the primary people go “What you haven’t done your annual report?” then I’m finding out there’s so many secondary people who haven’t done the annual report and I said to someone the other day “I don’t think you would find in this state, I don’t think you’d find a primary person who hasn’t done it”, and that’s an image that we primary people have of ourselves...we compare ourselves to secondary principals and say we’ve got to be stronger... there’s a perception that secondary people are very strong... I think we’d like to think we’re getting that way out of wisdom, to say no to some things in our schools, but there’s a whole lot of things that we just take on - we try to do everything. (Transcript 2a)

However no school in this study had refused to produce a report. Their views on the Report differed somewhat. One principal for example decided that they were not going to do anything different in the Annual Report they had always done:

I give my Annual Report to the AGM, it’s the same one I send in - I don’t do two. (Transcript 18)

Some principals decided that it was something that needed to be done, but not taken too seriously - for example, one secondary principal says:

You can take written things away if you want - a lot of the things we write are for a different audience and I don’t know that they mean that much, they’ve got flowers all around them and they smell nice. (Transcript 20)

\textsuperscript{13} A colleague who is a superintendent remarked that he always looks for this, but acknowledged that not all of his colleagues do the same.
Their tactic with such documents was to be seen to engage with them, but to go slow on those that were less immediately useful to the school. This principal used all policy documents with some scepticism, encouraging staff to adapt and modify them:

We've been curriculum mapping for some time against the statements, and we're curriculum mapping against the Foundations of the Future, and the Deputy came in and said, "Have you read Foundations for the Future? Have you read Foundations for the Future? How do we curriculum map against it?" "Oh, easily"... "Well it's against the principles isn't it?" and then I waffled on... "Oh I get it, you mean we just write it in but we don't really..." "Exactly."

We do it critically, we do it politically, and we teach what we need to and if we have to we can justify what we do. (Transcript 20)

Another found the Annual Report, and the model of school development it presumed, an imposition with which they had to deal, it was part of the bureaucratic regime that intensified their work and engaged them in work for the system as a whole, rather than the school:

Annual planning gets in the way, planning doesn't, but annual planning does... I think annual reporting without any notion of it being for the benefit of the school gets in the way all the time. We've only done it once but I found it the most stressful piece of writing to do because there was no notion of what I was supposed to be writing about and I've heard people say that their reports are anywhere from between 3 and 70 pages long and what I tried to do is to report on progress or achievement and realised I haven't got anything in place to let that happen, so it'll be a bit better this year. (Transcript 21)

This principal looked for ways in which they could turn the exercise into one that was of benefit to the school:

I think the impetus to be clearer about what we are doing and what impact we are having is good and that's that stuff about being a reflective school or teacher...See my personal view is that there aren't many policies that get in the way for me because I say, this is where we are, if there are policies that will help me get a teacher to have another talk about what they're teaching and how they're doing it, then we'll work out how to do it - if it doesn't then I just don't do it really, and I think most principals don't. I feel quite comfortable in terms of the key competencies, vocational education, all that sort of stuff. What I try and do is work out who can I get to think about working and talking differently, how will this change what they are doing in the classroom, how will it make it more relevant, more contemporary, more whatever for the kids, how will the kids be more excited by this, how can I use this to get kids to finish school - because that's a stated aim all the time, is that every kid should finish the full 12 years of education - and that's hotly contested as well. People just don't believe that either, which is pretty interesting. So all of this stuff, is how can I use all this to get those things going, to get that outcome because that's my job in my view. (Transcript 21)

Another worked from the view that policy was 'heteroglossic' (Bakhtin, 1981) and would virtually justify anything:

We live in a world of policy contradictions - it's huge - we have the Foundations for the Future document that talks about those five priority areas, they're basically skills for our students to be powerful contributors to society that are quite broadly based, they're sort of the weft sort of stuff - and then we've got the Quality Assurance Unit wanting to know what we do with Basic Skills Testing and which ultimately is coming out of Canberra - and they're just contradictions, they're just blatant contradictions. And so
what I would like us to do, and I reckon we could really serve disadvantage if we could really put our energies into looking at those five areas and coming up with some objectives and some programmes and some strategies that we believe would really help our kids become global citizens...
And what really would enable them to do that, maybe using technology differently and using the eight areas, and it would be really exciting and make for a very exciting dynamic program and curriculum in a school. (Transcript 15)

This principal finds it hard to find the time to both fulfil the Department requirements, deal with the everyday, as well as to do the kind of developmental work they think is necessary:

But at the moment our time is literally consumed. I haven’t had time to do the software for the Annual Report to get the Client Survey Results in yet. And people in the district are moaning about it and I don’t join in those moans and the reality is that we do well here but people work very hard to do it. But I’d love more time away from that stuff to do the exciting bits. We’ve been a project school for the Civics and Citizenship materials. I call them the Kemp materials. They’re just disgusting, they’re just absolutely disgusting materials and we’re really pleased to be in there and to give feedback and I’ve co taught them and we redesigned units of it and that’s what we’re sending in and that’s what we’re telling them. This is what we had to do, it really is crap. (Transcript 15)

This is a principal who actively takes on the agendas, and uses them within an alternative frame:

One of the things from the Basic Skills results that came up when I was doing the Annual Report is that literacy…everyone says what about numeracy, well our results show that literacy was still scoring lower than numeracy even though we don’t have any particular numeracy support programmes and we’ve ‘done literacy’ for years…and then we looked within literacy.
We looked at whether the strengths were in language or reading and basically the kids can read - in other words, they can receive information from texts, but they’re scoring really low on language, that is in putting it out there… in terms of oral or written language and I reckon that’s about believing - that’s about believing that putting it out there, that it’s worth it, that your texts are valued, that this community is a valued community and what it’s capital is, is real – but I think that psychologically because the community feels that it’s not valued in the scheme of things that children are actually internalising that and are not developing language skills that puts it out there.
There’s a sort of a treadmill thing going on there. It’s like circuit breaking that needs to go on – like crack this one – and use all the strategies, come in at all the different places that you know to crack this one so all the different members of this community and these kids have the skills to put it out here and something to put out there – they understand the complexities of the world and how it works.
So consequently the programs that we set up are about all those things. (Transcript 15)

This is not a principal who is a passive victim but one who, like most administrators in the sixteen schools, looked for ways to make the current regime work in the interests of their students in their location. This principal sums up:

You have to have a really internalised sense of equity, and you have to tell yourself it's OK to use different words and it's OK to go back and say it again, to fix it up. (Transcript 15)
Similar patterns of active agency can be seen in relation to testing and performance based agendas at the heart of the new distributive curriculum.

THE DISTRIBUTIVE CURRICULUM AT WORK

The policy complex that I have called the distributive curriculum (Chapter 6) is characterised by an emphasis on the measurement of student performance and the normalisation and fragmentation of students across a performance range. It has heralded a new regime of teaching procedures that form one part of the school quality regime and also serves to regulate the professional work of teachers. In this section I look at how it is that 'disadvantaged schools' have received and dealt with this agenda.

The distributive curriculum has different emphases in primary and secondary schools. In primary it takes the form of dealing with the national statements and profiles and the testing, profiling and assessment agendas. In secondary school it carries a renewed emphasis on vocationalism. At the same time, retention rates in 'disadvantaged' secondary schools are plummeting and the government has removed income support from unemployed young people to force them back to the schools from which they were excluded and alienated. I will first deal briefly with the secondary sector and then go on to discuss the primary situation.

The Staying On and Work agenda

The dramatic decline in retention rates in working class schools indicates that all is not going smoothly. There is little other than anecdotal evidence at this time about the reasons for so many working class students leaving school early. Speculation about causes includes the following:

- the statistics are highly suspect because they do not take part time and repeat Year 12 students into account (South Australia has the highest number of part time students in Australia)
- postcompulsory curriculum and schools are alienating and students are voting with their feet
- there has been an upturn in the number of part time casual jobs available and young people have left school to take them because they understand that the casual job is here to stay and believe that they will not be advantaged in the casual job market by completing twelve years of schooling
- schools have failed to adjust their structures to enable young people to continue on with both part time work and part time school
- market pressures are operating to narrow the curriculum options for working class students and they will not stay if they cannot do the exact combination of subjects they want
- schools are policing the behaviour of working class students with increased rigour and are excluding many
- young people are extremely pessimistic about the future and can’t see the point of staying at school
• young people have seen through the exhortations to stay at school - and out of the job market and unemployment statistics - and have walked out as an act of resistance towards duplicitous government policy.

There is unlikely to be a single or simple explanation for the phenomenon of falling school retention nor any magic bullet to fix it. The 'disadvantaged' secondary schools in the western and northern suburbs have little choice but to engage with the VET project pushed by both the state and national government. It is a major source of funding. Even if they do not believe that vocational education is the answer to falling retention they still have to take up the agenda and make of it what they can. One principal remarks:
I don't know whether I'm just stupid or something but it seems so obvious to me what the huge causes of all of this are... Why would you assume that kids are so stupid and when you tell them that they're doing all this work place stuff and training and they say, "Yes but will you get a job?" And it just seems so obvious to me. (Transcript 16)

They explain how it is that the work programs fail to reach the most marginalised young people:
We have work placements and we have a retail program too.
When we were choosing kids, because we have a selection process involved in placements, we're not actually dealing with the students that perhaps the federal government imagines we're dealing with, they're not the ones who are risk of not being employed, they are highly employable young people, and we have to do that - there are limited placements, anywhere you've got a work placement scheme there are limited placements, and... you're selecting the ones who would be the most, the best able to represent us, because the number of placements are limited...
And why would you send off one of your males who might tell the employer to "F off" in the first half hour they are there and "You can stick this job, what's this for?" We certainly wouldn't be sending them so you're creaming off and you're not doing anything more for the students at risk because there's a level before the work placement stuff that actually looks at how could you develop these skills, but then you're working against some of what they're thinking already which is why would we be doing this anyway.... And you start to run into areas of finding who it actually it is that can work with that group in terms of work placements, or even work experience with that group and the kinds of things they might do, and that takes time to set that up. (Transcript 16)

Another principal points out that many students already work, and do not need work training\(^{14}\) per se:
I think its about 42% of our school who are in part time employment and some of them up to 32 hours a week...so it's nearly full time, and that's a big topic...but a lot of them just get a few hours here and there...Friday night, Saturday morning, lots of fast food and supermarkets...lots of them are employed underage...they are working when they are 14. (Transcript 21)

\(^{14}\) The Youth Research Centre in Melbourne (e.g. Dwyer, Harwood & Tyler, 1998) has developed the notion of a 'choice' biography to describe the ways in which young people now manage combinations of work and study. There are very significant implications of the shift from a clear school to work 'pathway' that schools in South Australia are just beginning to consider. Some of my recent work with schools has been to try to get this message across.
One school, which has worked hard with the federal vocational agenda, will serve to illustrate a spread of vocational that is typical of most 'disadvantaged' secondary schools:

We’ve got Hospitality, Tourism, Office Skills or Procedures, that seemed to fit in with what we were already offering in the school, Tourism and Hospitality we’ve been offering for a long time, so the work placement fits in well with that, the passenger auto program.

The most exciting one is the Music one. It’s a creative new one … I’ve been talking about needing to take up what really is a disgusting waste of talent, where there were kids who’d done music and loved to perform but not at top notch symphony level, but who were interested in the whole music field but didn’t necessarily want to go to university to study a music degree, what options were there? So you could go to the local TAFE15 and do something that we thought was OK, but they spent the first two years of the TAFE certificate or TAFE diploma doing what they’d already done in Year 12 so how did you recognise their level of learning…

So we’ve actually got a program where we’re picking up national music modules, where students learn to manage a small business in music and learn the skill to organise small events, to be able to manage groups, learn how to manage a repair business or a something associated with music and how to manage themselves so if they continue to do the pub circuit or do performances then there is legal stuff, and contacts, and so that by the time these kids finish their SACE16, they’ll be credited with these music units as well, but will have cross accreditation with TAFE.

The TAFE that we’re working with is across town because they have a much more viable music set up. (Transcript 16)

Schools in the eastern suburbs are more likely to have courses in the information industry, to focus on the work related aspects of SACE courses in Science and the Arts for example. Some eastern suburbs schools focus almost exclusively on the key competencies as generic work related skills, and others see vocational education as needed only by those students who are likely to be unsuccessful at a high prestige SACE17. There is a hierarchy of vocational education, with training modules associated with service and manufacturing industries concentrated in working class and 'disadvantaged schools'. Furthermore what 'disadvantaged schools' can offer is limited by the industries and job networks that are within their locality.18

Many 'disadvantaged schools' have a focus on youth cultures as a way to keep young people at school and also as some way of making a living after school. One principal explains:

One of the reasons our rock music program is so successful is because the kids actually come in, they’ve heard something on the radio and the teachers say "OK how do we work that out, how do we write it down?"... then they transcribe and they play that and they love it because it’s instant feedback about I am central to the world. (Transcript 21)

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15 TAFE - Technical and Further Education, a tertiary training institution.
16 SACE - South Australian Certificate of Education - the two year postcompulsory credential.
17 Informal South Australian Secondary Principals Association survey conducted for their professional development program, consultants Reid and Thomson (UniSA).
18 See also S. Willis and Mc Lelland (1997).
This principal’s school has established a Tutorial Centre for senior students to provide specific assistance in the completion of assignments and, like many of the school administrators in this study, they monitor postcompulsory performance very carefully, not to provide information to parents, but to see what additional support and intervention is required:

There are lots of indications that what we’re doing is proving to be successful for the kids – so retention is up, the SACE completion is up – all but three kids who intended to finish SACE last year did…75% of the Year 12s got courses of their choice – so academic success is up, we’re tracking the kids results and our percentage of As is about the same, but the number of Bs and Cs are up and the number of Ds and Es down, so we’re heading in the right kind of directions at Year 12 level. (Transcript 21)

This principal spends a lot of time helping to create a culture in which students recognise that they will not simply follow a career ‘pathway’ when they leave school but need to be consistently working from the present towards a goal.19 Probably half of the kids understand that Year 12 will take them 2 years and they plan around that. That’s really useful because what I talk to them about is that it’s quite likely that you will be able to do what you want but the pathway you choose to get there may well not be the same as those kids who come from these other kind of schools so what you have to work out is how you can be successful when you’re working 33 hours a week or when you’re looking after a two year old, so it’s about structuring into the school things that will…so we’ve got lots of kids who don’t feel they’re a failure. (Transcript 21)

Some schools have focussed specifically on the ‘at risk groups’ and have struggled to find enough funds to establish programs. One of the school administrators explains that this however cannot be at the cost of losing sight of those who can achieve. Rather, they propose a progressive/incremental set of school goals, taking each student or groups of students from where they are. Each ‘layer’ is also commonly focussed on the broad notion of social citizenship:

We’re going to define the outcome of all of our programs as being about students that can contribute to a holistic community…that is the environment, and our working class kids do that really well…there are kids going off and getting the high stakes stuff…saying that we offer Maths 1 and 2 is as much a matter of social justice as offering the courses to at risk kids because it gives them that option because if there is no option for those talented kids to win in what is the current system then we’re doing people out of it completely…and if you measure the outcome as progressively more kids got to university and the ones that got there did more interesting courses…. And by keeping kids that were homeless at school we stopped their further degeneration to the street. (Transcript 4)

The administrator comments on the current policy agenda:

It’s not just the move to the right, but the attempt to try to coagulate everything into an answer… the one bureaucratic solution... because it’s really messy to have fifty different things happening at once… but that’s the way things work and you learn different lessons from all of them, some fail spectacularly but some of them get kids through a system that they never got through before... when you try to measure in terms of one kind of outcome... it's no good. (Transcript 4)

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19 This is congruent with research by Dwyer & Wyn (1998).
They emphasise that this approach needs flexible resources, not tied grant programs:
   If you’ve got a (disadvantaged) school with a high retention rate what you’ve got is a
   school with a lot more problems... if you’ve got fifteen or sixteen year olds who don’t
   want to be there you just need more. (Transcript 4)

By and large, all of these secondary administrators still actively look for ways to make
things better for their students, even as they worry about the federal agendas:
   Potentially as long as we’ve got resources coming in and you can employ some people
   you can do some things and be really adventurous but you’ve got to think what happens
   if that stops at some stage, how are we going to make sure these kids aren’t going to miss
   out. (Transcript 6)

This attitude also lives strongly in the primary schools, but there the agendas are
different.

Testing time(s)

Most, but not all, primary school administrators go along with the Basic Skills Test (BST)
administered to Year 3 and 5s, because they believe that it’s not worth disputing:
   I have that approach... this is a battle I’m not going to fight, not this one, thank you very
   much, I felt that about the BST, I thought that at the time, we’re talking to staff here and I
   said, "We’re not fighting this one, it’s not worth it, we’ll wait for a war to hit us."
   (Transcript 2a)

This is an approach adopted by their principals’ association, but it is one that is in
conflict with the union position, which is one of outright rejection.

Some principals have found school based testing useful not only as a means of accessing
resources, but of significant benefit to establishing relationships with parents:
   We test kids at the beginning of Year 3 on three fairly basic tests and that allows us fairly
   quick access to Guidance assessments too, and from there we do some Neale analysis
   with some kids, we can’t afford to do it with all kids, but it gives us a basis for requesting
   Guidance assessment. One of the things I’ve found is that the parents love it, one of the
   interesting things with a whole range of issues around assessment and reporting, is that
   they really love seeing what’s happened, they want to know differences there are, what
   are the changes, it doesn’t matter to them where the child starts, what the base line data
   is, as long as they’ve seen that progress.... And they come to see the teacher who
   manages the tests in the school and they come to see her all the time and say, "Have you
done that end of year test yet, how did they go? Have they learned anything?"
   And that’s quite apart from the reports that the teachers write, the nice reports with lots
   of descriptions and we have assessment portfolios where we explain the criteria of what’s
   being assessed and you know... they’re more interested in was there progress made
   between these two tests because it’s some thing they can actually catch hold of. It’s
   something they can really understand. (Transcript 18)

After initial hostility many principals have found that the BST does have some uses.
   Some have found it has given them a new angle on the learning that occurs in
   'disadvantaged schools':
   The BST – I don’t think we’re supposed to talk about this, but the jump in kids' learning
   from Year 3 to Year 5 was amazing. It was incredible. It was a huge progression – for the
kids who were here – there were only 16 who’d done it in Year 3 and Year 5… so the
development in those two years has been amazing…. There’s a tendency for primary teachers to say, “Oh it’s the junior primary teachers, they
don’t teach them anything”, and that’s starting to filter back to the junior primary
teachers and – I went and did a staff meeting with the junior primary staff because we
really are two quite separate schools here, so I went and talked about it over there and
they said, “Oh but we did this” and “We did this”…
What I really believe is when you see how the kids come in to junior primary and some
of them don’t know their colours and some of them don’t know their name, and there’s a
whole range of learning that they still need to do… I believe that that junior primary time
is their ‘catching up, settling in, learning school language, understanding how school
works’ time.
Year 3 is still part of that, and then between the next two years there’s this enormous
jump, enormous development, they’ve learnt school, suddenly they’re into school because
they understand it....
The same is true for all our cluster schools, we’ve all talked about it, the change between
Year 3 and Year 5 is quite dramatic and certainly above state average. (Transcript 18, my
emphasis)

Perhaps the BST will provide new impetus for a research and/or systemic focus on how,
and why, it is children have to learn how to live in the institution of schooling before
they can take up the educational resources on offer, and what a school that was more
respectful of students' home and peer cultural and social resources might do.

Other principals have found that the testing agenda is perhaps a necessary aspect of the
current institutional context of ‘disadvantaged schools’ with their large classes, harried
teachers and transient populations often creating specific times when some students get
overlooked:

I’ve got some problems with just teacher judgement now.
I’ve just had too many experiences of kids in Year 6 and 7 – I referred a new kid in Year
7… I’ve not taught any of these kids on a daily basis.. but I mean we did some overall
school testing and her results were really shithouse. She comes from a very poor family,
they don’t have a telephone or television – that’s 1% of the population these days – no car
or any of that stuff. She’s in Year 7 this year and I referred her. Not one teacher has ever
spoken to me about their concerns with her learning. She’s a compliant student. Tries
hard. She has an intellectual disability. How do you say that to a parent? That kid has
missed out on all those years.
I had a kid through the BST who got Level 1, 1 - the lowest. That kid had been in the
school for twelve months and again, not one teacher had spoken to me about his
learning. He wasn’t a huge behaviour problem, but he was in this group of kids with
low level stuff, off task, distracting behaviour, negative.

With classes of thirty, we’re complex schools, with a complex range of ability, the
behaviour management stuff and the teacher skills. I just don’t think we can rely on
teacher referral, teacher judgement.
Now in the past I’ve always argued against standardised testing, but we’ve done testing
across the school and it’s using a couple of reading tests and spelling tests and the BST
results, and 95% of the time the results are consistent. Now I know the tests don’t test
stuff that the kids know… but I studied our BST results, and it did point up some stuff

Some important work in this area has recently been completed: see S. Hill, Comber, Louden,
that wasn’t being explicitly taught. And I’ve argued against it in the past as a diagnostic tool...Now I think it’s an indicator for some individual kids and it can give you some interesting stuff about your school results...(Transcript 13)

This goes to suggest that the testing agenda may not be unilaterally 'bad' and may well work as a 'safety net' provision.

I want to now look at one primary school’s response to the distributive curriculum and the testing project, because it picks up themes already mentioned and is illustrative of more general points I will go on to make in the next section.

Parkview Primary School

Parkview is a small primary school in the western suburbs serving a large public housing estate. Parkview’s staff worked hard with parents to get them to understand why it was that teachers and their union were opposed to the use of standardised tests:

When we were doing the Basic Skills Test stuff, we had parent meetings about it, basically the school was taking the union line on it and saying we didn’t think it was all that very useful, and some of the parents said, "We want to hear from the Department"...

"What do you mean, I am the Department," I said.

"Nah get them down here"...they insisted.

So the District Coordinator came down and give them the big spiel, and one of the parents stood up and said "I know what you’re trying to do. You’re just trying to prove to us our kids are dumb."

Powerful stuff!

"Oh no, no they said..."Yes it is, it's bullshit."

So some of the parents thought it was a good idea but a massive number of them thought it was an attack on their kids. So that was amazing. (Transcript 22)

The meetings on testing inevitably raised conversations about why it was that the 'results' from 'disadvantaged schools' are worse than the 'norm':

That was hard because they started to do the stuff about "Well if you talk better", and "We send our kids to you to teach them" and "Why aren’t they all brilliant?"...so I talked to them about different kinds of learning and what this test is measuring is a particular type of learning, and they actually understood that I think...

But you’re still left with how come the eastern suburbs primary kids are doing so much better...

When parents don’t come to those meetings and they just get numbers or they just see the paper, they don’t actually know how our kids generally did on those tests except from their own children and their friends and then it was a petty hard task for them to work out what it all meant.

One of them came up and said "Well all I got was this green piece of paper and an envelope and it didn’t say anything..." And I’d say, "Well that was it..."

It didn’t mean much to them. (Transcript 22)

The Basic Skills Test information is not (yet) a simple school measurement constructed into a league table and therefore does not function like a matriculation or TER measure in secondary schools. It cannot be easily used by parents or School Councils to promote or rate their school, unless they are adept at reading statistical charts. The information thus operates like a code which can only be read by those with the required ciphers,
much more likely to be in the repertoire of highly educated parents and professionals. It therefore is currently used internally within the profession, the bureaucracy and the education policy community as well as by some savvy school parents. It is the fear of such figures being put into a league table that acts to discipline the schools, not the reality.

But the schools now do engage in much more focussed activity about students' learning and in much higher degrees of monitoring student progress in hybrid, individual school based versions of profiling and testing. The Parkview principal explains:

The stuff we developed in the school was much more useful than the stuff we got from DETE. What the staff found the most useful was the talking to each other about the curriculum....and we focussed on it. We did literacy and numeracy audits and in year levels teachers got together and looked at whether a kid was at risk or not, and why and how and how you’d know that, and they got right into looking at what that all meant, and they found that really useful... and then they could see patterns across the school. We looked at year levels, we looked at boys and girls, kids of non English speaking background, we looked at all the social factors that impinge on them, sort of a chart mapping process... and that was good. We slotted in all the stuff that we actually used as useful information, there were student work samples, the audits we developed, the Basic Skills Tests, the profiles ascribing levels - the outcomes, the ESL scales, the Negotiated Curriculum Plan information - the whole thing....
And we looked at what were the most important bits - and that was teacher talk, and it was the audits we developed, and down the bottom were the profiles and the Basic Skills Tests - all of them were of some use...
But getting people just to focus and have meaningful chats about teaching and learning and we actually saw kids progress, you could actually see it...not just talk about it from memory, but be able to talk about it from all different points of view, using the work samples, you could do graphs about it...you could see the kids had got better at things because we'd actually taught it... well that was our assumption... it didn’t matter, the fact was you could see that there was a better outcome and we could have debates about it and that was what I was hoping to do...(Transcript 22)

Here there are aspects of the distributive curriculum at work, students sliced and diced and plotted and graphed, but at the same time there is teacher engagement in important debate about what learning is most important and what the school needs to do to support students who were currently marginalised within the current pedagogical regimes.

The school also worked very hard on improving information given to parents.

What our parents did know was that their kids liked school and they did go and they came back talking about their school. When we sent home our students' learning folders, they had kids' work in it and teachers' comments on it, they didn't just want samples of the kids' work, they wanted teachers' comments about how good the work was, and they wanted their own kid's comments about whether they thought it was good and whether they could improve on it... They actually made really good comments on those folders. They thought they were fabulous because they could see what the task was, how well the kids did the task and they could see what their own child thought about it. And so they knew their kids went to school, they enjoyed their stuff, we had lots of performances they could come and be part of, getting them to meetings was not easy, but when their children were involved in something they would come. And then their kids

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would be talking about school. And for them that was quite a change...they'd not be talking about, "Oh he pushed me," and all that, it was "Oh we did this in Maths, we did that in Technology...." They were talking about the curriculum, so they knew something good was happening. They might not have been able to be clear about what it was but they knew something good was happening for their kids. (Transcript 22)

'Doing justice' at Parkview

One of the things about Parkview is that it has at its heart a strong set of commitments to 'doing justice'. These frame the way that external policy agendas are taken up in the school and contain the distributive curriculum within a stronger local discursive construct, one which establishes foundational principles for action. This developed because the school became involved in a university project which brought them into contact with a range of ideas about justice and schooling:

We got involved in a project with a university researcher, doing this project on the Socially Just School, he came out and said, "What is a Socially Just school and would you like to be involved?" I said, "Yea, well I don't know whether we are, but it would be good to find out." So he came out and he did observation and he talked to people, and looked at kids' work and our procedures – the whole bit – and we came up with twelve things about the school, which I wrote based on that stuff, which made us a socially just school, and that became our 'Ethos and Culture statement' for the Annual Report and that's what we worked to.

The principal explains that this statement was not a specification of outcomes, rather it was a set of principles that were to underpin actions - it was about 'doing justice':

It was about change...change as a focus, that people are empowered through change, and they need to work to empower people through change, that we need to work to develop a rigorous curriculum, that social justice came into that, we need to have shared leadership and shared responsibilities...we need to listen to the voices and silences and that was crucial with the parents and the students from NESB backgrounds— so we set up reference groups for the students from Khmer, Vietnamese and other language and cultural backgrounds, so we could find out how they learnt best... One of the things that came up, in the Maori group, one of them said, "Well we learn best when the teachers show us, not just giving us sheets, we actually need to see to happen...they need to show us things"...

We took that back to the staff meeting, and thrashed around with how we were going to put that into our program... so it was that kind of thing, getting stuff from the kids. It is about we are professionals and we need to constantly learn... that was one of the things in the twelve points, so we had to be critically reflective, and we had to work out what that meant... and experimentation, we try stuff, we don't have to be successful necessarily but we do need to work out how to do it better every time... so that should be at the centre of everything...we should evaluate everything we did... we had to come to the realisation that the world was complex and that it was OK that it was a complex place, that simple solutions didn't normally work, that we had to work out how to accept that and we had to work out how to build on our positive energies and do the stuff that we do well, and work on the other stuff and critically reflect on the stuff we do. So they were our twelve things that we wrote...That was in all our documents and everything we did was based on that. (Transcript 22)

Parkview was forced into the position of being a stand alone devolved school, limited by the absence of some necessary redistributive systemic supports such as staffing and resourcing. It worked with/against the direction of overall social policy which was negatively impacting on the neighbourhood and on the lives of students and their families.

In the absence of system equity and justice policy, this school, as indeed is the case with several of the other sixteen, had developed its own.

**PARKVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**SCHOOL CULTURE AND ETHOS**

The school culture is one of working together to bring about change that will improve the learning outcomes for students. There is a staff belief that we need to work on changing what, and how we teach, before the students' learning outcomes improve.

Through an intense process of mapping the change and critically analysing what we do, we have named what we think are the main elements of our school ethos and culture. It has taken a lot of hard work and digging deep into our theory and practices to arrive at this point. The culture and ethos of the school are articulated in our vision, policies, planning processes, decision making and methodologies. The following is a summary of how we continue to develop as a learning community.

**CHANGE**

There is a focus on the process of proactive classroom change. Staff are constantly working on how to improve the what and the how of their teaching to improve the learning outcomes for students. We try to 'mainstream' best practice. That is, do it at the classroom level.

**WORKING TOGETHER IN TEAMS**

We've investigated ways to utilise the skills of classroom teachers, support teachers and School Support Officers in teaming situations. Teams form for different purposes and enjoy support from each other. It's also a way of sharing the jobs and of celebrating success.

**PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED THROUGH CHANGE**

Staff, parents and students are encouraged to take charge of the change process. They feel more comfortable in teams and are able to develop trust. Training and Development is provided in teaming and taking part. Through these processes people are empowered by their participation in the change process.

**LISTENING TO THE VOICES**

We spend time and effort listening to the voices and silences of all of the stakeholders. We give time to respond and to debate the big issues. It is important for staff, parent and students to have a real say in decision making.
EXPERIMENTATION - TAKING RISKS
There is a climate of experimentation in what we do. We trial new ideas continually in the knowledge that it is OK to find out that something didn't work too successfully. Staff are getting better at supporting each other and planning for success.

SHARED LEADERSHIP
There is strong leadership and it is shared. There is a clearly articulated vision and a belief system about social justice. Staff with expertise are given the chance to do further training and development and to lead others in curriculum development. Committees and support groups work on day to day issues and also on future initiatives. Teaming, problem solving, intellectual pursuit and hard work are all modelled and promoted.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
Through individuals, the leadership team, and committees we constantly search to understand social justice issues and to develop strategies to address them. We are constantly asking ourselves..."How does this benefit educationally disadvantaged students?" We then work on strategies that will benefit our students.

EVALUATION
We evaluate what we do in terms of whether students are learning. We collect evidence through anecdotal notes, work samples, products and observations. We analyse the 'evidence' we have and plan for the future. We link the evaluation process closely to the School Development Plan.

TEACHERS ACT AS PROFESSIONALS AND AS LEARNERS
There is a belief that teachers are professionals - theorists as well as practitioners. They are involved in intellectual pursuit and are continually learning. Staff are sharing units of work and ideas more often and are learning from others. Individuals are adding to the thinking as a natural part of the way things happen.

A RIGOROUS CURRICULUM IS ESSENTIAL (It stretches the boundaries)
There is a belief that we can make a difference! This is a powerful feeling which buoy staff up when things are tough. Furthermore, we believe we can make the biggest impact on students' learning at the classroom level. We think this is best done by developing a rigorous curriculum which challenges students to think critically.

We look at issues to do with critical literacy, power and inequality in the classroom. Staff are prepared to share their work across the whole school, cluster and state with various groups and agencies.

CONFLICT AND COMPLEXITY
We recognise that conflict occurs and indeed it ought to. The world is a complex place and our school community is certainly complex and energetic. We try to deal with the good things that come out of different situations and work with positive energy. We continually make the links as to where we're up to and where we're going and why. We also do lots of supporting of each other.

CRITICAL REFLECTION
Ideas are shared and debated regularly. We treat reflection as an ongoing process carried out by individuals, groups, the whole staff, School Council and
so on. Together we work out strategies to improve our practices in committees, year level teams, staff meetings etc. We don’t say "That’ll do" but rather, "How can we do better?"

The school would not hold this up as a perfect document. But it stands as a record of long hours of discussion about, as they say, the 'what' and the 'how' of 'doing justice' in 'this place'.

What the school could achieve by itself could have been significantly enhanced by different kinds of systemic and social policies. The principal talked wistfully about what more could be done with support for community development and adult education, including systematic training for the unemployed, adequate public transport, security of tenure in public housing and adequate levels of income support for the sole parents who made up much of the school population.

I now consider how Parkview informs the project of 'doing justice' in 'disadvantaged schools'.

'DOING JUSTICE'

'Disadvantaged schools' are generally doing it tough in the current environment, much tougher than their more privileged counterparts on the other side of town. But many of them are still working on 'doing justice', they have not given up. In this sample of sixteen there are several 'disadvantaged' primary schools that are engaged in very innovative programs of reform. Some of the secondary schools are also working hard to shift - although their sheer size, the effects of the external post compulsory certificate and the push for vocational education, the quasi-market and the rigidity of the time-space construction of the time table and subject specialisation, constrain their movement.

In each of the 'disadvantaged schools' where 'doing justice' is an explicit agenda for reform, it is the principal who gives 'permission' in the school. Where there is a passionate and committed principal, then equity and 'doing justice' still matter across the institution. If that principal has a similarly committed administration team and has taken advantage of the local selection of staff as much as possible to create leadership depth, has used combinations of professional development and imposed policy changes to stimulate local activity, and operates collaboratively and with a strong pedagogical focus then, provided that there are no overwhelming locality issues, the school is generally humming.

Each of the 'disadvantaged schools' where such reform was occurring had such principals. In conversation they used a variety of theorisations of justice and equity. One talked extensively about social capital, a notion they were pursuing independent of

22 The literature on school reform generally support these directions (e.g. Louis & Miles, 1990; McPherson, Elliott, Aspland, & Brooker, in press; Moller & Katzenmayer, 1996; Neumann & Associates, 1996; Westheimer, 1998; Wohlstetter, Van Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997).
schools policy through connections with health reform projects. Two spoke extensively about literacies and their involvement with university based teacher research projects, mentioning specific scholars whose approaches they admired and used. One spoke a rights discourse drawn from involvement with indigenous education and Aboriginal activists. Two spoke of multiculturalism, and their connections with ethnic communities and one spoke at length about events in the European Union. One talked about life long learning and another in the whole school change policy language of the old Disadvantaged Schools Program. One principal drew on feminism and poststructuralism and ideas they were continuing to gather through reading and attendance at feminist conferences.

What is clear is that these principals had intellectual resources about justice and equity on which they drew to design their everyday 'tactics'. The retraction of school's justice and equity policy did not leave them high and dry, with a diminishing sense of what it was they could do, forced to find local directions only from within the discursive resources of conservative policies. While each school engaged variously with the system agendas, they produced their own variation, incorporating the new songs along with the ongoing older DSP justice and equity refrains. By and large, these schools were involved as much in policy diffraction as in refraction.23

There was little consensus amongst the group about some current popular equity policy proposals. Some were in favour of 'community based' approaches (Boyd, 1997), such as the school as a 'community learning centre', or the school as the site for the coordination and delivery of a range of government services. Others were vehemently opposed to these notions wanting instead to focus exclusively on student learning. Some wanted to tackle the challenges of information technology as a first priority, others saw that focussing on the most marginalised would provide leverage for school change. Yet all had some direction, albeit different, which was not a simple 'effective schools' and 'distributive curriculum' version of the future.

They were more united on the prospect of further devolution. Only one principal out of these sixteen schools was in favour of devolved global budgeting. The remainder could not see how it would solve their problems, such as attracting the right staff in competition with more desirable locations. At the same time they did want more involvement in choosing staff. Most were afraid that devolution would create more paper work while not increasing resources in any ways that were significant.

The capacity of these sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' to act is context dependent, but not so much that they cannot act. Some contextual issues are derived from locality, some from social positioning, some from systemic policy and some from the constellation of individuals and histories that coalesce in the institution of the school. Context generation, 'doing justice', is still happening.

23 I am grateful to Noel Gough for pointing out the potential of the concept of diffraction rather than refraction for discussing what can happen to policy in schools.
I want to conclude this chapter by revisiting 'thisness', the grid of 'context derived' issues.

'Thisness' finalised

Throughout the empirical chapters of this research text, I have been compiling a list of 'context derived' issues that impinge on the capacity of the school to be 'context generative'. I now complete the list, which I discuss further in the next chapter.

1. School mix: Students and their families affected by
   - changes in labour market - levels of unemployment/underemployment/tenuous employment. This is connected to changes in the global economy
   - changes in families - separated, blended and extended families
   - changes in public policy - health issues, public housing, transport
   - concentration of families in crisis
   - patterns of migration and diaspora
   - increasing or declining enrolment

2. Resources available to the school in the neighbourhood
   - community infrastructure - also affected by public policy.
   - employment and employment networks - affected by globalisation and microeconomic reform
   - availability of voluntary labour, related to un/employment and local geographies of mothering
   - age of locality - age of school facilities
   - income based on parent contribution and fundraising

3. Neighbourhood issues that impact on the school
   - specific local events - racism, culture of lighting fires and vandalism against school properties
   - neighbourhood change - redevelopment, change in demographics, external review, possible closure
   - history of the school and place in the regional hierarchy of schools

4. System support
   - school administration with a commitment to and understanding of justice and equity
   - staffing turbulence - turnover of teachers, casualisation of support staff, turnover of leadership
   - staffing 'fit' - staff who can 'do justice' as their professional work
   - income - sufficient redistribution to compensate for locality factors
   - 'fit' between system quality assurance and school needs and level of documentation required
   - accountability culture of blame and performativity
   - professional development in 'doing justice'
   - research in more equitable schooling practices
   - support for networks of schools, teachers and administrators
• support for school based democratic practices

5. *School based theorisations of 'doing justice' that*
• start from understanding the contradictory and paradoxical positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediator of inequitable social relations
• access to ideas about justice and equity from literature, social networks, universities, professional associations
• adopt a transformative imaginary
• put together the everyday practices of curriculum and the everyday practices of the institution.

This is not a complete list of 'context derived' issues. It is the set that has come to my notice as I have looked at the evidence I have collected from the sixteen schools. What is important is that the capacity of each school to deal with the everyday demands of managing the relations of inequalities, their capacity to take on systemic reform policy and their adoption of the principles of 'doing justice' are shaped and delimited by each and all of the above set.

At the very least, this list should serve to suggest that any policy approach which seeks to either mathematically screen out the factors which create differences in schools, or create a set of 'like schools' that is based solely on student characteristics drawn from positivist population sociology is wishful thinking. At the very least the list should serve to suggest that any policy which works on the basis that all schools can achieve common 'outcomes', is idealist and light years away from the everyday life of schools. Such policy notions found at the heart of the distributive curriculum and market devolution also obscure the impact that system policies related to staffing, resourcing, and professional development have on the schools' capacity to act. The list also suggests why it is that policies of devolution which simply give control of funds to schools miss the mark in so many ways, because they fail to take account of the fact that the school's capacity to act is dependent on a complex mix of factors, only some of which are in the control of the school system.

Social polarisation and social inequalities are beyond the capacity of the school to absolutely change, but they cannot be ignored, since they work through bodies, narratives, knowledges, practices and everyday relations that congregate and meet in the school as a 'place'.

**LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD**

This chapter has completed the empirical study of sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' in the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide. I looked specifically in this chapter at the school reform agendas of the state, the 'context generative' activity that is expected of schools, and compared that with stories of what the schools are actually doing.

There is little doubt that market devolution and the distributive curriculum are having significant impacts on these schools. Policy makers should be gratified by this since that
is their intention, and it is testimony to Seddon's (1997) argument that significant change can be effected through policy that focuses on changing institutional arrangements.

Increased competition between schools appears to be creating intensified hierarchies amongst schools in the northern and western suburbs, with school administrators making decisions on a diverse range of matters, from school uniform to marketing to curriculum specialisation to the level of advertising about welfare and special needs provisions, influenced by how such actions will be perceived by potential enrollees. Where schools are threatened by decreasing enrolment there are particularly intensified pressures to focus on how to survive in the marketplace. 'Disadvantaged' secondary schools in particular are plagued by the revelations of more privileged schools of their 'superior post compulsory results'. This pressure has failed to eventuate to date in relation to literacy basic skills data, partly because of the difficulties of simply deciphering the results. Clustering and cooperative activity is breaking down and being subsumed by line management structures and peer monitoring opportunities. Other government agencies have their own troubles and agendas and by and large, cooperating with local 'disadvantaged schools' is no longer one of them. The exception to this rule is the police.

School administrators variously interpreted and responded to the effective schools push, finding ways to subvert, minimise, and hijack those parts of the agendas that did not fit for their school, or their conception of 'doing justice'. Testing, data collection and the monitoring of student learning was a mixed proposition with many primary principals finding, sometimes to their semi horror, that basic skills testing did have some use in the current overcrowded and stressed classroom environment.

Most of the schools continued to work in different ways to 'do justice'. Despite declining resources, and more pressure, more managerial impost and more paperwork generally, the majority of the school administrators talked about a range of projects going on in their schools that were to do with equity. A key factor in this was the principal's leadership and their own intellectual resources; many had found ways to continue to read and discuss matters of justice and equity even though policy did not have this emphasis.

I concluded by completing the list of 'context derived' factors that have emerged from this research, commenting that they were sufficient to make dubious the claims of context free school improvement and of course an essential 'disadvantaged school'.

What I have produced from empirical research is a picture that sits comfortably with other descriptions of globalisation, as a process not of homogenisation but as one which creates scattered and fragmented concentrations of differences (Bauman, 1998; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Walmsley & Wernard, 1997). While the project of 'doing justice' has not disappeared, it is clearly vulnerable to and affected by the locality producing activities of the nation state (Appadurai 1996). The social mosaic of difference that is the de-industrialising western and northern suburbs of Adelaide has a geography of 'disadvantaged schools' as one of its components.
In the next chapter, and the final one in this research text, I look at what it is I might conclude from these findings.
Image Management: The politics of first appearances

Schooling in the western suburbs
PLANNED EDUCATIONALLY

This baby is booked to enter Scotch College in 2003. But her tuition fees are already being paid on a prior purchase plan. In this way her parents are buying today the best possible education at Scotch College over a longer term.

Meet the Principal Tours

Open Day
Thursday 7 May
2.30-4.30pm

Open Night
8th May 1999
6.30pm - 8.30pm

Be our Guest
Open Night offers a rare

disc.

Northern Lutheran Schools Offer Excellence in Education...TO YEAR 12
• Caring Community
• Meaningful Application
• Strong Emphasis on

...from Reception to Year 12
• Environment

• Curriculum

• Transition

Meet the Principal

Conducted Tours: Commencing at 9.30am and at 11am

Discussion with Year 8 Parents of the

Special Interest Schools

Specialised Program

Gifted Students

Secondary Program

Year 8 1999

Aberfoyle Park High School
The Hub
Aberfoyle Park
SA 5159
Ph: (08) 8270 4455

Claremont International High School
Latham Avenue
GLENELG
SA 5064
Ph: 08 8298 8888

Students currently

• The Principal
• Ms Mary Marshall
• Glenunga Institute
• The Heights School
• Aberfoyle Park

Based and balanced curriculum that caters academic, cultural and sporting needs of our students and also provides pathways leading to further employment. Students have greater flexibility within the picture, allowing for a more adult and approach to the successful completion of Year 8.

Groups that provide a need

Prep/Year 1

Get to know more? Contact

ALC
We spent money on a bus, which we hired, because people even some who lived close had to catch three buses, or they had a disability, and the financial issue was there as well, people could, according to need, basically get a free bus to school.

So we leased the bus, our students used it free to get to school, we used it on excursions to take students to places that they wouldn't have been able to afford to go to. and then... we tried to map their literacy improvements.

We set up a tutorial centre last year there was some resistance to doing it by people who understood social justice and the need to do this, but basically didn't want the extra work of having to spend an extra lesson a week in the tutorial centre with students, that was an interesting debate.

We did a whole lot of flexible delivery materials geared to our students... so that where students were off they had a hysterectomy, or they had a baby, or they had a sick kid, or family, and they had to stay home and look after them, they could actually take the material home and keep learning so that they didn't drop out which is usually what happened. (Transcript 6)
I remember Mrs. Davis.

How could I not? Every Student Services meeting inevitably spent time discussing her three children. They were difficult kids, and their teachers were generally convinced that a considerable amount of physical and emotional abuse was going on at home.

Mrs. Davis was often in the school, angry, complaining that her kids were picked on. The Junior Primary Deputy spend hours each week, it seemed, talking with her, calming her down, sorting out the latest mischief one or all of the kids had perpetrated. The Parent Liaison worker also put in time with Mrs. Davis and it was through her that we came to know a little of Mrs. Davis’s past.

Mrs. Davis was completely illiterate, having been a child who rarely attended school and who had been moved around a lot by her own mother. Her marriage - well we were never quite clear that there had been any legal arrangement - had been violent and unhappy. Since the break up some years ago there had been boyfriends, all short term, most of them violent too. She had difficulty controlling the kids at home and they, like her, were often unwashed and dressed in ill assorted hand me downs. Discipline it seemed was mostly a slap, or frequently, a beating.

In all, she was the very epitome of a single parent who 'couldn't cope', who had 'poor parenting skills', whose kids were severely 'at risk'. The local welfare agency had had her on their books for a long time and proceeded slowly but inexorably to deal with the frequent reports from the school and from neighbours. No programs for Mrs. Davis were ever forthcoming and the visits to ‘the welfare' usually brought Mrs. Davis into the Parent Drop In Centre in tears.

She was required to come to school frequently, and the Parent Liaison worker got to know her well, reading for her, doing what form filling tasks were required and listening to her talking about 'the welfare', her kids and her future. The Drop In Centre became a non judgemental space, where she could just be. It was a place where she could explore her own feelings of uncertainty, disquiet and lack of self confidence about parenting, without fear of the consequences.

Mrs. Davis joined an adult literacy class that was run in the Drop In Centre and began to talk about reading and doing homework with her kids. They were helping her with her homework and were positive and encouraging about her efforts to learn to read. However she still had frequent run ins with staff and still took up just as much time in the Deputy’s office. Outside the Drop in Centre the school was a war zone – her against us, protecting her kids against our unjust actions, as she saw them.

One particular day, the Parent Liaison Officer came to the Student Services meeting with news that the Welfare were finally going to do something. They were going to take the kids away and put them in foster homes.
We were furious. This was going to do no good at all. Mrs. Davis was making some progress as far as we could see. Yes, the kids and she were still unwashed, and the beatings went on. And the kids were still little horrors in classrooms, but something at least was changing. Why now, we asked, when they had waited so long to do anything?

After some hard talking we decided that I would write a letter to the head of the local welfare office from which the action was initiated. I would argue that Mrs. Davis was taking some steps to take charge of her life and that it might be some time before we saw any effects. I would say that for the kids to be taken away now would do more harm than good, both for Mrs. Davis and the kids themselves, who, despite their behaviour, were very committed to their Mum. I would make vague threats about taking it further if ‘the welfare’ went ahead with their plan. The Parent Liaison Officer would explain all this to Mrs. Davis and say that we were on her side. We didn’t condone her behaviour with the kids, but we didn’t think she should lose them, even temporarily, and we would do what we could.

It worked. Up to a point. The kids stayed. Mrs. Davis decided that we weren’t her enemy, even though she didn’t like some of our behaviour and couldn’t condone what some of the teachers did.

Mrs. Davis learned to read enough to manage basic tasks, but then dropped out of the program, and wouldn’t hear any suggestions of going back to school as a re-entry student. But she became involved in other parent activities around the Drop In Centre and eventually joined a parent volunteer program where she learned how to help little kids in the classroom. She was a fierce advocate of the school in the local area.

The kids got marginally better as time went on. There was never enough time for the teachers to give the kids the attention they needed and even less time to work out what the school was doing wrong. And it appeared that while things had improved at home, sometimes they still got a bit wild. The kids’ future is uncertain. They are unlikely to get all the way through school, which these days almost condemns them to uncertain employment. One of the girls could well end up a very young mother, like her Mum was. However they can all read and certainly have significantly more schooling than Mrs. Davis had as a young person.

The Davis children stayed a fixture on the agendas of the Student Services meetings. But Mrs. Davis was always part of the solution, not the problem.
Chapter 11

Doing 'Less Worse'
RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

This study aimed to provide, through conversations with school administrators, welfare workers and local government officers, some answers to the following research question:

In the northern and western suburbs of Adelaide, two of the most severely depressed city regions in Australia (ABS, 1997; Spoehr, 1997):

- what is happening to disadvantage and to 'disadvantaged schools' in the current social, economic and policy contexts?
- what is everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools', how has it changed and how is it the same as it always was?
- what moves can and do 'disadvantaged school' administrators make in the current context to advance an educational justice agenda? What policies would they propose for the future?

I also have a 'reflexive'1 subquestion:
- what can a 'mid point post policy analysis' do? What does this particular 'sample' allow me to 'see'? What is obscured? What other questions are raised? How is such a study positioned in the literatures and conventions of academic practice?

In this, the concluding chapter of the research text, I consider what I have 'found' and what I might make of it. I begin by considering my own learning, then move on to consider the evidence I have collected. I discuss the notions of 'doing justice' and 'less worse'. I hazard a few generalisations based on the idea of 'thisness' before considering the question of a 'mid point post policy study' as a genre. I conclude by venturing some suggestions for policy approaches that might do 'less worse' and discuss possibilities for further research.

A note on learning

When I began this research I had a sceptical idea of the 'disadvantaged school'. What I understood at that time was that the notion of disadvantage was troubled and that poverty and class were similarly vexatious terms (e.g. Thomson, 1995). However I was still very much positioned within the 'disadvantaged school' and 'progressive left' discourses which focussed on the common characteristics of such schools. Despite knowing from my own insistence on the uniqueness of each school in which I had worked, and despite reading poststructural and feminist literatures about non essentialist knowledges, I did not question whether there would be commonalities between the schools I chose to research. When my first impressions were of substantive differences, as well as commonalities, I was bemused.

Given that at the same time I was busily deconstructing policy, playing with cameras, reading about narratives and picking up everything I could about the western and

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1 This is what Bourdieu (1990; 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) calls a "sociology of sociology".

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northern suburbs, what I experienced was not so much that I was on some kind of learning 'journey' or 'trajectory' or 'curve', but rather that I was muddling around with innumerable pieces of information that I could not make into a coherent narrative. I had snippets, chunks and ragged lines of argument which I had somehow to bring into some kind of connection with one another. Early on, I began to write about the process of research as a construction, as a piecing together of disparate and odd fragments. I recognised from reading that this research struggle was an act of bricolage, of pastiche and other such 'post' activities, but this did not make the personal wrestling with profound and irreconcilable differences any easier.

As much as anything, this research has been a search for the theory that would work like glue to make a text, an elegant argument, a 'new' perspective. Although the notion of the "toolbox" (Foucault, 1989, p.149) would get me some way towards explaining why I have ultimately used so many kinds of theorisations in this research, the concept of tools is not quite apt. Tools imply that there was a coherent project on which they could be used, whereas what I had was a question, and lots of incoherent pieces of information. At some point I discovered, assisted by Falzon (1998), that the notion of fragmentation is itself tied up within the notion of unity, and that my concern with the bits and pieces nature of my research was a lurking version of a will to find some totality and 'one best' theory. So, in terms both of metaphorical 'fit' and of epistemological positioning, the notion of theories as glue, to assist the construction of understandings and of the text, became my modus operandi.

At the point of deciding to stop gathering theoretical possibilities and just construct what I could, I began to write this text, using ideas from a range of disciplines that would help me paste together enough pieces to make a story. I have brought anthropology and geography into conversation with education, I have made Bourdieu, Foucault, Smith and Massey speak to a small corner of the antipodes, wantonly borrowed from Appadurai, and given more space to the voices of my colleagues than respected researchers, who have ended up sequestered in brackets and footnotes. The cutting and pasting that I have done has been a re/construction, a re/presentation, a re/search.

This conclusion is no exception to the metaphor of construction. It is a piecing together of things that I 'know' at this point in time, in this place, poised now to enter the academy, moving on from the betwixt and between where I began.

And so to the research question.

ANSWERS AND ISSUES

The picture I have painted in this research text is one that is complex. It is not a simple matter of the schools in the west and north being poor and irrevocably divided from more privileged locations and schools. There are differences between the schools in the west, the north west and the north, and then further differences within those areas. There are difference between the schools based on sector - primary or secondary - and on school enrolment. What is common to the schools is that the majority of their
students come from families who are currently 'doing it tough', who have been made vulnerable by de-industrialisation and who are not well placed to get the benefits of the re-industrialisation that is occurring in the city.

Families are made vulnerable in that parents either cannot get ongoing and secure work or if they are engaged in so called unpaid work, such as raising children, their welfare benefits are now increasingly tied to work obligation. The notion of the minimum wage, the underpinning of the Australian welfare assistance state, is now on notice from the neoliberals in Canberra who argue that globalisation is to blame. The social wage that previously enabled nearly all Australians to have a relatively good standard of living is being rapidly diminished as market principles, self insurance, privatisation and cuts in public expenditure bring into being a classic Poor Law state. In one way and another these affect not only families but also their schools. Even though there is no absolute border between rich and poor as is suggested by the aerial views of planners and demographers, there is nevertheless a non-synchronous common terrain on which multiples of differences play out. I have called this class. This research looks at the schools that sit on this class terrain and it could be thought of as a study of the geographies of classed schooling.

In order to frame a discussion of the empirical 'findings' of this research, I will begin by quoting myself at some length. Early in this research study I produced a number of pieces of writing, some published, about the possible results of government policies - the abolition of the DSP and its replacement by the CLP, the imposition of market devolution and the distributive curriculum. At the time I stated that that I wrote was a worst case scenario and that what was happening in schools was likely to be different. I of course hoped, as do all who practice the 'will to critique', that the telling of a possible tale of disaster would influence colleagues to try to do otherwise.

What might be expected

My scenario reads as follows:

The potent crunching together of the long running educational privatisation and more recent hard-line marketisation agendas in schooling shape an emerging scenario. The unequal providers, private and public, rich and poor, are already overtly in competition with one another for students, image, networks, funds, and powerful sponsors. The basis of the competition and of their marketing efforts is the commodity they provide – school culture and knowledge. Commentators (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992; Bowe, Gerwitz, & Ball, 1994; J. Smyth, 1993; Whitty, 1997) suggest that choice policy leads to a conservative influence in the curriculum, as schools fight to offer what the market perceives to be the 'best'. In the first instance this is likely to be a choice between two options: the most prestigious - that required for university entrance - and the most instrumental - higher education oriented and work related. More wealthy communities and parents will ensure that the schools that they prefer offer either the common

\footnote{The arguments made here are found in Chapters 4-5 with additional evidence in Chapters 7-9.}

\footnote{I owe this term to Jane Kenway.}
curriculum, or specialise in 'gifted programs' or curriculum congruent with higher education entry, in itself increasingly instrumentalised (Carr & Hartnett 1996).

Some English research (Walford, 1994) suggests that middle class parents will thoroughly investigate the schooling choices available while working class parents who value their children's happiness will be more likely to let children decide. Others suggest an alternative explanation: middle class parents work to 'crack the codes' of school information (Ball, Bowe, & Gerwitz, 1996), whereas working class parents already understand that the schooling game is rigged against them and choose schools that are local, friendly and whose philosophies support students who are experiencing difficulties (Reay & Ball, 1997). What is clear is that the already advantaged will make sure they choose those schools where the curriculum is likely to lead to privileged further education options and eventually result in comparative income security: the disparity between rich and poor increases (Cutler & Waine 1997).

A combination of factors is likely to push working class schools into increasing vocational curriculum offerings. Schools in working class communities are under public, political pressure to redress their plummeting apparent retention rates - one immediate response is to provide more vocational courses in an effort to retain those who are leaving (Sweet, 1996). Government funding acts as a carrot because in a time of restricted resources what gets funded gets done. Both parents of working class students and teachers in the 'disadvantaged schools' are acutely concerned to find ways to assist students to have a future, and that means to get employment. Students argue for schooling that will help them get a job as an alternative to a narrow competitive academic curriculum that appears removed from their everyday lives in the media saturated youth cultures. This is not to suggest that schools should not teach vocational education. It is to argue however, that the prospect of the re-emergence of the old general-vocational binary may reappear, not only in curriculum, but also in a grotesque remaking of the technical and high school divide, as only 'some' students are seen to need vocational schooling.

There is enormous pressure on working class schools to move to avoid the prospect of becoming a marginalised fragment of the former public system, clinging to the goals of comprehensive education while catering only for those who are unable to exercise any other choice. This is already an emerging picture in Australia and is well documented in England and New Zealand (Gordon 1995; Lingard & Porter 1996; Marginson 1993; J. Smyth 1993; Whitty 1997). Taking a positive stance on curriculum by choosing a specialisation that can be marketed, such as vocational education, is an answer that comes readily to hand.

Given these pressures and trends, we might expect to see a future where more working class students are engaged in narrow vocational education in their own neighbourhoods with the 'cream' transported to the more academically prestigious state schools in wealthier communities or to university oriented
schools run by newly funded private providers in working class
neighbourhoods. This would strengthen existing patterns of privilege and
inequity. A combination of testing, data collection and public revelation of single
figure/focus measures of student achievement increasingly tied to funding could
prevent schools and teachers from straying far from increasingly narrowly
defined learning outcomes. This will work against the generation of creative local
educational programs: instead there will be a focus on local management of the
prescribed national vocational and 'core' curricula, image and income generation.
Public and political emphasis on the instrumental value of education, whether
students are able to 'use' their schooling for immediate entry to employment,
training and higher education, a measurable short term goal, may well come to
increasingly dominate secondary schooling.

The diminution of a broad, general and inclusive education that enables young
people to develop the intellectual knowledge and skills that support critical
inquiry speaks to us about the degree to which all young people will be
equipped to deal adequately with the demands of the next century as citizens
and workers, but this is most at issue for those young people who are likely to
become marginalised socially, culturally, politically and economically.
Paradoxically, the New Right policy rhetoric of improved quality in the public
sector and public education may well significantly fail to produce human capital
in the efficient and effective ways its proponents preach. It will produce the
reverse of its stated intention. This will create pressure for further policy
adjustment.

The role of public schooling and the public sector as an active producer of public
values (Marginson 1997) and social capital is almost impossible in circumstances
where a lean State produces a mean society, one that is deeply divided across
income lines. Fortunately the policy envelope that might produce such a future is
not hermetically sealed. (Thomson, 1998, p. 45-46)

I stand by this analysis as a worst case scenario, and I am left somewhat ambivalent
about how my findings shape up against it.

THE FINDINGS

I will now briefly summarise the overall picture derived from this research project
before going on to think about what this might mean.

On the ground

There is some evidence to support the view that there is an increased hierarchisation of
schools in the northern and western suburbs. The development of quasi school
specialisations by a few schools, particularly in relation to vocationalist education, is
accentuating the academic-vocational 'choice by institution,'\(^4\) and on several occasions I was expressly told about ranking of schools that placed such vocationalist sites above those 'disadvantaged' comprehensives that did not have historical associations with university entrance. How much this has actually resulted in a student 'creaming' process working ever upward is not clear and would require further research. A recent newspaper report (Armitage, 1999b) on the impact of selective high schools in the New South Wales state education system suggested that an analysis of the postcompulsory 'results' showed that selective schools did not necessarily 'outperform' nearby comprehensives and warned that the expectations of elitism and differential 'results' derived from selective school enrolments may not be borne out. This report, while not the product of thorough research, does suggest that the words of local school administrators, and my scenario, need to be investigated further before conclusions can be drawn about what such school hierarchisation might mean for students' learning.

What is more certain is that the intensified school market is having an effect on school policy directions. Administrators, in all but the most highly stressed schools, expressed some concerns about their nearest competitor and talked of catering to the 'shopping around' practices in which they were now involved. Some had resolved to, and could by virtue of their location and numbers, accept their position as 'the disadvantaged school'. Others could not be so complacent, and took precautions against any slow decline by upgrading their image and instituting school uniform. Some who needed to be even more vigilant about numbers, such as the unzoned school in this study, actively engaged in marketing and attempted to make it into a learning experience for the students at the same time, mindful of the ethical dilemmas. All but one of the school administrators in the total group (the sixteen plus the wider sample) had thought long and hard about the issue of marketing and had a position that they could discuss. Market devolution might be considered a state of both of matter and mind, in which the market is inserted as a significant factor in school level decision making. Like the media, the market is always a 'clear and present danger' and thus acts to position schools and their administrators in particular ways.

I found less confirmation of the inexorable imposition of a narrow and instrumental curriculum, particularly at primary level where the schools have various ways of accommodating testing regimes, the demands to increase the focus on basic skills and the heightened emphasis on individual placement against a range of norms. At secondary level, the vocational agenda in the majority of the 'disadvantaged schools' (and all in this study) takes its place alongside struggling with low retention, the demands of the postcompulsory curriculum, and efforts to support those students who are engaged with the 'academic' program. In some cases, the schools also and at the same time, tried to find ways to connect with those young people who are alienated from schooling and who have given up on the possibility of future employment. The sheer breadth of this agenda, at a time of diminishing resources, was a source of considerable anxiety for administrators. Nevertheless, there was considerable pressure

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\(^4\) This is the dominant form of market choice - between schools, not so much within schools. What happens within schools is a complex of student grouping, setting and curriculum/pedagogical practices that function to sort and sift, of which 'subject choice' is one component.
to engage in curriculum reform, both from the system and from local agendas of 'doing justice'.

What is also notable is that so few of the administrators engaged with the question of 'new times', with the agenda of new work, or the information society. For one of the principals, this was a major enthusiasm, but this was the exception. All the administrators were all conscious of the need to try to 'keep up' in computer provision, and all of them wanted literacies to mean much more than a narrow set of basic skills. Some explicitly addressed the question of the inclusion of youth cultures in the curriculum. Now this 'gap', the lack of attention to the 'information society'/postmodernity/postwork/New Times may be because I did not specifically focus on 'the future' as a topic of conversation and this was indeed an oversight, caused I think, partly by my own obsession with the everyday. Whenever the 'future' did come up in conversation, it was in less than optimistic terms. 'The future' for 'disadvantaged schools' and for the children within them is, in the current policy and social/economic/cultural context, more often something potentially nasty beyond reach, rather than an urgent issue for curriculum and school reform. How much this speaks to another aspect of the bifurcated agenda between privileged schools and the remainder is a cause for speculation, and further research. What was most apparent was how much these 'disadvantaged schools', like the children, young people and families with whom they deal, are forced to work very hard just to manage in the short, rather than the longer, term. The everyday is what matters most.

None of the sixteen schools in this study have given up on equity and justice, and schooling for 'public values'. All of them value and aim to provide a broad general education, although a few in the most highly stressed neighbourhoods find much less time for doing anything beyond dealing with day to day emergencies and crises. The ongoing positioning of 'disadvantaged schools' as mediation points in the social relations of inequalities produces a common everyday of welfare and discipline across the schools, even as they deal with a range of different and unique set of locality based issues, such as racism, impending urban redevelopment, alarming rates of transience and local geographies of despair. The time taken up by the demands of keeping order and exercising care is time not spent on pedagogy. It is also time that is not required of schools in more privileged social and spatial locations who literally have more time to do less.

The capacities of 'disadvantaged schools' to actually make substantial headway against the odds (to be positively 'context generative', to 'do justice') are being made increasingly difficult by a combination of factors: lack of policy recognition of the specific social tasks of schools in working class neighbourhoods; the institution of a politics of ill/literacy, fear, blame and intensifying media opprobrium; the abolition of the networking, research and positive regard that accompanied the abolition of the DSP; and diminishing resources which equate to the inability to keep up with the provisions of more elite schools. 'Disadvantaged schools' face intensifying demands from children and young people from homes increasingly under pressure, severely affected by the restructuring labour market, by changes in the social institution of the family and by diminishing public services. There is a growing lack of support from other government
agencies, themselves increasingly under pressure. Rapidly escalating demands for systemic accountability and risk management in the form of data collection and paperwork delivered in standardised forms, combine with more supervision and line management scrutiny. Increasing devolution of responsibility to the local level in these contexts takes even more time away from school reform.

The schools have less time and resources to do more with a more difficult agenda, without a supportive policy and systemic framework. The local 'context generative' capacity of the schools, the capacity to 'do justice', to make a positive difference, is beset by the 'context generating' activities of the nation state, itself derived and generated in the context of uneven globalisation.

I will now specifically focus on the question of 'doing justice', the job of local context generation that works to undermine dominant class, gender and race relations produced in 'disadvantaged schools'.

'Doing justice' in the schools

In this examination of everyday life of 'disadvantaged schools' in two de-industrialising parts of the city of Adelaide I have produced both a concerning and reassuring picture.

'Disadvantaged schools' are not just affected by neoliberal schooling and public sector policies but, through the families and neighbourhoods in which they are located, they experience the play of global/state/local extended social, economic, cultural relations. 'Disadvantaged schools' are enmeshed in the totality of the globalised nation state policy relations. Economic policy, cultural policy, social policy and even foreign policy can be seen in the day to day life of the schools. They help to constitute the daily 'micro-circuits' of life. Schools deal with the results of the relations of social inequalities, and they assist in the production of social inequalities (what I have called, after Appadurai (1996) 'context derived' and 'context generative').

As has often been said, schools can not create an equal society. Anyon (1997, p. 170), in discussing inner urban schools in the United States, puts it this way:

Any educational initiatives that are chosen for inner city schools and districts will need to be combined with attempts to improve the economic and political milieus in which the schools are located.

Seen in the broader social context, 'doing justice' is a daunting task. Because of this, the very idea can seem to require extraordinary tenacity and capacities, or demand efforts beyond the possible. It is easy to understand how it is that the 'effective schools' discourse of 'core business' and making a difference by focussing on only a few topics (like literacy) is so seductive, despite the ongoing policy 'churn' that seems to be the practice. It is easy to understand how, when resources become more and more stretched

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5 This is a summary derived from Chapters 7-10.
6 This is my concern with policy studies that just discuss the broad policy context and then go on to talk only about schools policy, when the everyday of 'disadvantaged schools' is testimony to the impact of overall government policy directions.
and other cooperating agencies harder and harder to find, schools focus on the things that they think they have the capacities to achieve, rather than disperse their scanty flexible time across an ever increasing set of possibilities and needs. It is also easy to empathise with those who can no longer do the task, who have just run out of emotional will to keep plugging away, against the odds.

Beyond the individual classroom, where many classroom teachers work quietly away finding spaces and places to engage in pedagogical reform, 'doing justice' as a whole school philosophy and policy is highly dependent on the driving intellect and energy of the school administration. In each of the sixteen schools in this study, 'doing justice' was an explicit part of the school culture and the principals' conversations. But, given that the current South Australian schools policy does not reward principals for choosing 'disadvantaged schools', and given the fact that some principals have been in that 'place' for quite some time, 'doing justice' in these schools is not a stable situation. At the same time, the encroaching coercive mechanisms of the disciplinary state can be readily seen emerging in the practices of these 'disadvantaged schools', as students are increasingly labelled, individualised, monitored, tabled and graphed, and the most marginal increasingly pushed away. And these sixteen schools are among those most engaged in 'doing justice' in the system, which is why I chose them for this study.

It is clear that these schools are 'doing justice' increasingly isolated from each other. They are positioned as stand alone schools. A systemic approach to 'doing justice', as opposed to one that is about documenting results and narrowly focussed on a diminished notion of literacy, vocationalism, civics and numeracy, has almost disappeared. This is not to suggest however that it could not easily be reinitiated and reshaped.

In many ways 'doing justice' and equity in these schools is fragile, just as Appadurai (1996) suggests. But what is most significant is that it is still going on. There is certainly a reservoir of energies and commitments for 'doing justice' within the system. There is a vigor and creativity still well and truly alive in many of these sixteen disadvantaged schools'. Even if the situation in some individual schools changes, there is a sense in which justice and equity are not off the agenda. There is a kind of toughness about the adherence to the topic, a refusal to let go of the words. There is considerable commitment to the project of making a difference that suggests that 'doing justice' would not take much to re-energise and revitalise even in the schools that seem to be losing ground.7

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

I now want to revisit terms that I have used in building this text - the ideas of 'doing justice', of 'thiness', of 'context generative' and 'context derived', and of doing 'less worse'. Taken together they form the beginnings of a position on school reform in 'disadvantaged schools' that perhaps equates to what Thrupp (in press) calls 'being realistic'.

7 Chapter 10 in particular tells this story.
'Doing justice' - the term.

Throughout this text I have used this particularly clumsy term - 'doing justice'. My intent is similar to those curriculum theorists who write of 'curriculum', after Pinar (e.g. 1974, 1994), curriculum as a verb, not a noun, a 'thing'. I want to emphasise that justice and equity are about action. Justice and equity are not an entity, an end point, a utopia, or an object that can be pointed at, measured, and graphed, subject to technical management and development. The current policy of the distributive curriculum is derived from a view of (curricular) justice as product, rather than something that is always in train and that must be constantly (ethically and politically, not technically), made and remade.

Connell (1993, Chapter 4) argues that curricular justice might be based on three principles that guide actions - working from the interests of the least advantaged, focussing on participation in common schooling, and resolving the tensions between the two, by thinking historically about process. He suggests that it is important to remember that justice is about producing and reproducing social relations, working against the dominant frame. I want to emphasise that latter point, given that the current narrative technologies of policy are predominantly about the technical, the instrumental and curriculum as an object. 'Doing justice' thus stands discursively in a different position from that of current policy.

I want to suggest that 'doing justice' encompasses not only curriculum, but all of the institutional and pedagogical practices of the school, and each either does (or does not) contribute to the overall 'doing justice' efforts of the school. 'Doing justice' is based on principles that guide decisions and actions. Parkview Primary School is an example of such a 'doing justice' in action, where the school has developed twelve principles that are the basis from which different people in the school (subjects with different histories, in different discursively positioned places), can make large and small everyday tactical decisions.

'Doing justice' - the actions

'Doing justice' does not happen in a vacuum.

The capacity of the 'disadvantaged school' to 'do justice' (the generation of positive context) is significantly delimited by a host of 'context derived' issues. So, for example, the amount of counter hegemonic curriculum work that can be undertaken in a school is constrained - by the need to keep order, a need which arises from the positioning of the school as a mediator of social inequalities - and is shaped - by the impact on children of local geographies (of housing and employment for example), by idiosyncratic neighbourhood crises, and by institutional capacities (the time, staff and other resources, including theoretical resources available). The imaginary of changing the triangle of student-parent-teacher relations so that they are more 'organic', is always in tension with the assessment system, and with the disciplinary and welfare regimens of the school which arise from the school's positioning as the mediator of social relations. It will also
be shaped by the school's local geographies and by the material and discursive workings of education policy.

'Context generative' always works with 'context derived' in an ecological and iterative paradox. This is often denied by the school reform and improvement literatures that speak of models, but it is an understanding that reverberates through the ethnographies of reforming schools.

The 'effective schools' literatures suggest that 'context derived' factors can (in theory) be mathematically screened out so that just the 'context generative' capacity of the school can be 'seen'. I am not hostile to quantitative research, and indeed will later suggest that some 'number' work might take the research that I have done further, but I have yet to see the model that can take all of the 'context derived' factors I have identified as 'thisness' into account, let alone those that I have not identified (because I do not claim it as a complete list). Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter 6, such 'effectiveness' calculations fail to take into account the ways that knowledge, pedagogies and institutional practices themselves are skewed so that what is measured is progress in an unfair system. I dubbed this utopian ir/rationality.

However, much of the progressive work that goes on around school reform, developing counter hegemonic, inclusive and critical practices, also fails to adequately take the paradox of 'context generative' and 'context derived' into account. Critical literacy is one such project. Comber's (1996) doctoral study of a classroom teacher in a 'disadvantaged school' depicts in graphic detail the struggles of the teacher to implement the ideals of 'critical literacy, to work 'context generative' with 'context derived'. Comber concludes:

   The grand plans for empowerment through literacy become buried beneath the lunch orders, the threats of time out for misbehaviour, the roll book, the institutional practices of schooling which limit not only who students can be, but who their teachers can be. It may be that in studying the instances where teachers and students fight back...that hints for local action for literacy teachers committed to social justice may be germinated. (p. 438)

Critical literacy is based on looking at 'context derived' issues, starting from the needs of the least advantaged. It is from an analysis of class, race and gender that the 'context generative' directions of critical literacy are developed. But it stops short. 'Context derived' matters do not just suggest what needs to be done, they also limit what can be done, even in the most sympathetic and well resourced policy circumstances. This is not to suggest that working on what needs to be done is not important. It is, because what actually happens is the result of the ongoing tensions, actions, and interplay of 'context derived' and 'context generative'. Nor is it to say that having utopian dreams and imaginaries are not important, because it is from such sources that we derive ethics and the principles of 'doing justice'.

The utopian turn is not just that of critical literacy nor of the effective schools literature. There were (are?) a host of unrealistic expectations of 'disadvantaged schools' emanating from both progressive and conservative positions. The capacity of the 'disadvantaged school' to make all children 'successful' is clearly utopian. Any such policy, as Simola
(1998) points out, is more likely than not to be a product of 'wishful rationalism'. Much of the existing literature on 'disadvantaged schools' suffers to some degree from this. The important thing is to understand that such policy provides the direction and the resources for 'context generative' activity, but will not be what actually happens, because of the impact of, and continued interaction with, 'context derived' factors.

To use utopian policy about 'context generation' as the basis for judging schools, without taking into account the ongoing interactions with 'context derived' factors, is to run the risk of setting unattainable goals and expectations, as well as failing to see how it is that 'context derived' factors may be preventing, skewing and distorting what can and does happen. Such is the current policy situation in Australia, where the setting of targets for students learning seems to be the national panacea to all difficulties in schooling.

I now consider the alternative to such irrationality.

**Being more reasonable**

There are two implications of abandoning utopian 'context generative' policy in favour of a 'context derived'/'context generative' approach.

They are:

- **Working for achievable outcomes**
  A more reasonable and achievable set of expectations of 'disadvantaged schools' may be adopted, not as a 'second best', but as a recognition of the particular social place and conflicting tasks of 'disadvantaged schools'.

  It is not the case in 'disadvantaged schools' that nothing can be done, but nor is it the case that everything can be done. It is a matter of 'disadvantaged schools' making a positive difference but they cannot pretend that there is an impermeable barrier between the school and the 'outside', and as if institutional practices and policies are not at issue. These things must be on the agenda.

I tend to talk about 'disadvantaged schools' doing things 'less worse'. This is a phrase which makes no sense if it is examined, and it is a phrase which I used as a kind of meme (a linguistic virus) when I was a principal. It arose from saying that as a school we could either decide to leave things as they were and to do nothing, which would make things worse for our students, or we could take some risks with reform, and make things 'less worse'. This is one way to approach the position of working in a 'disadvantaged school' that recognises the limitations of what can be achieved, but the necessity of trying to do something.

In the current situation, where policy is positively hostile to 'doing justice', it is a matter of some achievement that most of the sixteen schools are not doing less and doing it worse, but that they continue to do more with less, and to do 'less worse' than might be expected. At the risk of adding cliché to cliché, I will restate another of the aphorisms I constantly used as a principal of a 'disadvantaged school' - It's a matter of doing what you can, where and when you can, as well and as justly as you can, given the
circumstances. And the evidence from my colleagues is that this is precisely what they are doing.

- **Fairer accountability**

The second implication is that 'context derived' issues need to be taken into account when systemic judgements about both school effectiveness and also school *needs* are made.

To this end, the list that I have dubbed 'thisness' is a place to start. If every school was able to look at what 'context derived' issues were delimiting 'context generation' and how, and if the system were able to 'see' what factors would be amenable to systemic policy response, then some ongoing and intractable issues might be put on the agenda in different ways. For example, one of the most common issues in the sixteen schools has to do with staff turbulence. This may not be resolved by placing responsibility for staffing at the local level and may well require other forms of systemic policy response. If the school administrators in these schools are right, then a policy priority of getting enough, and the right, staffing may well do more for students' literacy attainment than many other interventions. Similarly, student transience, which adversely affects only a few schools, may be moderated by differential funding and counselling support, but might be additionally improved through some cooperative activity between the education and public housing agencies. This would become apparent by systematically 'looking' at 'context derived' factors, rather than acting as if they can be screened out.

A systemic approach to 'thisness' would mean abandoning simple categorisations of disadvantage. It would also mean developing a more nuanced approach to local circumstances, with the system acknowledging that it still has a place and that not all local situations can be resolved by placing resources at the local level. Sometimes local issues require central intervention and different, rather than standardised policy responses.

**A further note on context**

At the same time as I have been struggling to finish off this document I have had two interesting and related experiences that speak to the question of the current (new and ongoing) context.

The first was with a group of colleagues who had just returned from an inservice activity about 'high reliability organisations'. One asked me how I responded to the term and I struggled to find an explanation about why it was that I found any such notion problematic, given that it ignored both 'thisness' and broader social issues. Another person in the room suggested that the particular theorisation was nevertheless useful for administrators because it suggested things they could do in their schools to make things better. I started to talk about the differences between terms like 'high reliability organisation' and 'things that might help' and foundered. I then tried to discuss the difference between an analytical device and a theorisation that was useful for action and foundered again. Eventually, I came back to a simpler position. Schools are already
highly reliable, I suggested, they sort out who is going to succeed and who is not, and they do it very well. Who is it that wants to change this, I asked.

The second experience was selecting from the pile of books that, like the Magic Pudding, never seems to get any less, a recent book by Lipman (1998) on school restructuring, race and class. Her study eloquently shows how collegially professional communities of teachers can reproduce raced and classed relations. Her concluding sentences have considerable resonance with my findings even though they are from continents away. She argues that the interests of disempowered people must be at the forefront of any school restructuring and that the 'kernels' of such practices already exist in schools. She says:

The profound failure of schools to educate African American students is not a fault in the system. It is the system. (p. 297)

Nevertheless she argues for a range of things that schools might do to work against this highly reliable and effective system.

It is precisely this ambivalence, this qualified pessimism, this optimistic materialism that I think is the tenor of my 'findings' and it is with that knowledge that I go on to offer some ideas for policy that might things 'less worse'.

EVIDENCE BASED POLICY

It is important for new policy approaches to be based not only in and on imaginaries, and on evidence about students' learning, but also in the material circumstances of schools. My research provides some 'grounding' for a reconsideration of policy approaches to 'disadvantaged schools' and I will now take them up.

I have taken to heart an encouragement to use the conclusion of this research text to be speculative. I will therefore presume to offer some suggestions for policy that follow on form these 'findings'. Perhaps because of my long time involvement in policy development I cannot help (habitus again!) but speculate about what I would do if I was able to reconfigure the current school policy directions.

What is required is a systematic way to marry together some recalcitrant issues:

- a localism that supports the neighbourhood, rather than leaves it open and vulnerable to the 'context generative' ravages of the nation state
- redistribution based on the positioning of the 'disadvantaged schools' as mediators of inequalities and that therefore makes up the time and resources to a level comparable with more privileged locations
- a contingent approach to curriculum and accountability, and
- a way to respond to the unique needs of differently placed schools.

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8 An Australian children's classic by Norman Lindsay which features a pudding that is never less than completely round, no matter how many slices are removed. Unlike some academic books I have stored away, it always speaks in a fruity voice.

9 Encouragement from Lindsay Fitzclarence.
These are my suggestions.

**Daring to dabble in policy formulation**

Based on both an examination of specific needs of the sixteen 'disadvantaged schools' and some dreaming, I tentatively propose the following elements of a more equitable localism:

- **An integrated and regional policy approach.**
  An overall policy framework is needed, one that seeks to manage markets and equity together, that holds in balance the private and social benefits of education, and that has as its focus the growth and development of financial, physical, human and social capitals. Such a policy would need to take on board current debates around recognition and redistribution and commonality and difference (e.g. Ball, 1998b; Fraser, 1997a, 1997b; Giddens, 1994; Mac An Ghaill, 1996; Mac An Ghaill & Haywood, 1997; McCarthy, 1998; Ofle, 1996; Yeatman, 1994; Young, 1997a, 1997b), recognising that there is no 'solution'.

Policies for 'disadvantaged schools' ought not to be treated separately from other related government policies that impact on their neighbourhoods. A combined (state and federal) policy approach that integrates and coordinates job creation, public housing, transport, as well as health, and welfare may profoundly improve the context of local neighbourhoods and their schools. Such a regional policy must take onboard the creation, support and strengthening of social networks. Community development processes that link together the local and the region are necessary. Furthermore, the schools component of such a policy must move beyond the imaginary of localism and the practice of tightly controlled isolated stand alone schools. A more genuine decentralisation, as Wylie noted in her analysis of New Zealand schools (1998b), is one in which the role of the overall system is valued, and the systemic capacity to 'generate context' rests on strong policy commitments to 'doing justice' and the practices to match.

However such policies need to get below the level of the region. Because of the increased hierarchisation of schools and neighbourhoods, there need to be mechanisms to ensure that when there are local crises, such as in the one small school and location which has been suddenly beset with a significant number of new families with substance abuse problems, then sufficient coordinated resources can be mobilised without huge bureaucratic fanfare and time consuming performance requirements. Where there are concentrations of families in crisis, there must be provision for continuing intensive and flexible local support that is coordinated at the local level. Other local events, such as dealing with racism, might attract a similar flexible response. Additional professional development should be available to all staff, including those in schools, who work in

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10 Thrupp (1995, 1998b, 1998d) and Lauder (e.g. Lauder & Hughes, 1990) both argue that policy must control this by regulating 'school mix'. This may be possible in New Zealand where there is only a small private school sector, but I am not sure that the clock of public/private choice could be wound back in Australia, given that such choice has been inbuilt from the inception of the public education system.
such locations, and should be geared to building 'leadership depth' and be based on specific, not just general locational issues and needs. In addition the emotional toll of working in such situations needs to be taken into account and a variety of support mechanisms put into place.

- **Adequate resources**

  There must be adequate financial resourcing by governments for 'disadvantaged schools'. The centre must take responsibility for redistribution which is more finely tuned to individual schools, their capacity to raise additional funds and their specific enrolments, rather than use blunt formulae. A priority is achieving the stability of well trained and volunteer staff in 'disadvantaged schools'. This does not necessarily mean local hire or fire, nor even local selection. It is often automatically assumed that the answer to poor central performance is to move the task to the local level rather than improve the central processes. Cumbersome bureaucratic local selection takes precious time away from other pressing tasks in 'disadvantaged schools' but school principals would rather take this on as a task than any other associated with further devolution, such is the importance of having the right staff.

  'Disadvantaged schools' simply must have more staff. The tasks of catering for the very diverse range of students and the specific sets of issues that they bring with them to school requires firstly significant expertise, such as that of counsellors, and secondly lower adult-student teaching ratios. Just dealing with the volume and level of stress, grief, anger, and alienation of some children is a task that more advantaged schools do not have. Any formula that treats all students and all schools as the same will actually discriminate in favour of the already advantaged. Nor will it be the case that there will be two groups of schools - 'disadvantaged' and the others. A differential mechanism that also recognises differences is necessary.

- **Accountability**

  Even holding to common goals for schooling and national reporting, a way must be found to shift from 'one best' and standardised policy and accountability requirements to recognise the specific issues of specific schools. It is not reasonable to expect schools where, for example, there are highly mobile populations and the major issue for teachers is to establish relationships and attempt to establish learning continuity, to have the same emphasis on improving literacy test results as other schools with more stable populations.

  The notion of a contingent curriculum might replace the distributive curriculum with its fixed and unquestionable outcomes. 'Disadvantaged schools' could be encouraged to explore and innovate at the local level to develop the kinds of pedagogy and curriculum that will meet the needs, interests and knowledges of their particular students. Such

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11 Two recent pieces of empirical work that support individual locality approaches to professional development are that of McPherson and colleagues (McPherson, Elliott, Aspland, & Brooker, in press) and F. Townsend (1998).

12 This is a similar notion to the 'permeable curriculum' proposed by Haas Dyson (1993) but at a policy level, not that of the classroom.
activity would be based on principles of 'doing justice' established in system wide policy. There needs to be a systematic and public research program that assists such curriculum and pedagogical development.

Schools could be encouraged to take their 'context generative' capacities to heart, to work to build local social networks with other local agencies and people, to build parent participation into all aspects of the life of the school, and to ensure that governance structures are representative and democratic in their processes. Community accountability then becomes something significantly different from satisfaction surveys although satisfaction would clearly still be an important issue. Ideas such as schools as 'community learning resources' might be explored in places where this seems to 'fit'.

The central education bureaucracy should build a web of consultative and participatory processes that will link the local to state wide decision making fora, thus tangibly contributing to the growth of social capital in and through accountability.

No new ideas

As I write this I am struck by how similar this list is to the original vision of the Henderson Poverty Enquiry (R. Henderson, 1975). There too was an integrated, locality based policy and planning approach to redressing social divisions, a hopeful picture of what schools might do to benefit students and the wider communities, a recognition that the dominant curriculum needed to change. Since that time both poverty and wealth have arguably changed – more people are economically vulnerable, more of the economically vulnerable are concentrated in particular parts of the city, young people have less optimistic life options, and both state and federal governments have less money and even less will to address the issues.

I notice also the resonances with the work of Connell and his various colleagues (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Connell, Johnston, & White, 1990; Connell, White, & Johnston, 1991) arguing for a local curriculum focus, democratic processes at the local school and central levels, programmes tailored to specific local situations, and greater integration of education, health and welfare. These recommendations were written in the light of already obvious long term and high youth unemployment and the weakening of the faith of working class parents and students in the capacity of schools to lead to a good life and/or social mobility. Connell and his colleagues (1991, p. 33) suggested that there were two goals for a social justice program in education:

- to work to eliminate the contribution that the education system makes to the production over time of social inequity in general, and
- to maximise the positive contributions that the education system makes to social equality.

The strength of these interconnected goals is that they eliminate the separation of welfare work from education work and the separation of 'disadvantaged' schools from the wider education system. Like Henderson, Fitzgerald and Connell, I would argue that education policy cannot be separated out from other public policies, that working for
social justice is inevitably linked to working for economic justice, and to working to reduce the complex mosaics of spatial and generational 'divisions', and to recognise and build on the 'differences'.

Connell (Connell et al., 1991) cites Fitzgerald (1976, p. 231) who, in the schools' volume of the Henderson Poverty survey wrote,

People who are poor and disadvantaged are victims of a societal confidence trick. They have been encouraged to believe that a major goal of schooling is to increase equality, while in reality, schools reflect society's intention to maintain the present distribution of status and power.

That distribution is spatial, social, cultural and economic. Market devolution and the distributive curriculum only exacerbate these trends. They work against the capacities of neighbourhood schools to support 'this' community, 'these' students and their families, and to generate not only knowledge but a rich range of social outcomes. The imaginary of decentralisation on the other hand equally blends with imaginings of a more just society.

The challenge is how to move from where we are to a more equitable and civil society.13

I now conclude by looking at what my study might suggest about research, both this particular version, and also a further agenda.

PRODUCING THE EVIDENCE: A RESEARCH AGENDA

I will begin by commenting on this research as a 'mid point, post policy study', highlighting what was the most positive aspect of this research focus.

The gaze from and at mid point

My decision to look at a particular group of schools has been an interesting one. The unanticipated benefit from looking across a number of sites, but not so many that nearly all detail was obscured, was the emergence of 'thisness'. If the research had been ethnographic, across one or even as many as four schools, I do not think that I would have seen as clearly the range of between school differences. I would not have spent time searching for ways to understand the differences and ways to put this difference together with the commonalities. I would dearly love to be able to do more detailed work on a study of this size, because I suspect much more could be revealed.14 There is little doubt in my mind that this story I have told would be considerably strengthened by more field work, particularly with teachers, students and parents. I would be able to say much more about everyday life from a range of perspectives.

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13 This argument is also that of Whitty, Power and Halpin (1997), who use different theoretical tools and a much broader research sweep to reach much the same conclusions. It is interesting that my small local research project is so congruent with their research which covers five countries and reviews a vast body of literature.

14 If a grant application is successful, this may even happen.
However, what seems to me to be the most important political question at issue in Australia, and in South Australia, is the obliteration of the social from the policy agenda. This midterm study, and the number of sites involved, does provide evidence that the social context matters, and that the social context can make significant differences even between schools that may on the basis of broad brush policy and population data, seem to be the same. This supports the argument that the social context cannot be easily screened out using population and related data. It also supports an argument that a simple 'school effectiveness' policy approach to school reform might set up impossible goals for 'disadvantaged schools' while obscuring the role of systemic policy in what actually happens. That seems to me to be more important at this moment in time than a more expansive study, which would anyway be beyond the capacity of a sole doctoral student working within a scholarship time line.

The administrator focus has been more problematic. One of my explicit goals has been to provide a space for my colleagues to tell their stories about life in 'disadvantaged schools' and I deliberately use long quotations, and many of them, as one means of doing this. My transcript poems are another effort to make their voices stand out in the text, separate from my meta commentary. I was conscious, in doing so, of censoring pieces where my colleagues would be shown in a less than flattering light.

In one school for example I could guess that there were difficulties between the school administration and the staff, not atypical in any school. Reading between the lines in the transcript I could guess some of the dynamics that were at work. However after some soul searching I decided to omit this piece of the particular transcript altogether, since I was not in a position to go into the situation thoroughly, and rather than present one point of view about the situation, and the administration's view at that, I chose to pass it by. But it did demonstrate that particular teleologies and philosophies of school reform could possibly have material impacts in a school. I dealt with this through a discussion about the importance of an imaginary of social justice, but it really is an issue which requires further research.

In another case, the administrator almost refused point blank to comment on the difficulties people in the local neighbourhood were experiencing. I presumed that this was to avoid what I might do to sensationalise, make 'exotic and other', the students and parents - a project with which I have considerable sympathy but also little tolerance, given the current desire of policy to either ignore or to blame socially and economically constructed problems on individual people. At the same time the transcript revealed that the administrator used a plethora of Special Education categorisations (that I found extremely disquieting) sitting alongside critical theory. I wrestled with whether I should highlight this or not. I chose to discuss the encroaching of Special Education categorisations into 'disadvantaged schools' separate from this person (and others) who were similarly 'being spoken' by such psychological discourses.

There is little doubt that what I saw and heard were 'multilingual principals' as Ball, and Gerwitz (1998b) dub them. Their research suggests that head teacher subjectivities are changing. The administrators in their study were required to move easily between the language of public service, the language of the market, the language of equal
opportunities, the language of financial management and the new language of curriculum. Ball and Gerwitz argue that one of the skills of the new headship is to translate between these languages and to move across the various subcultures within which they are embedded. They further suggest that the disciplines of the market are becoming 'thinking as usual' of the heads in their study. I did not read my transcripts from this perspective. Yet the points that Ball and Gerwitz make were readily apparent in the transcripts I have in my files. The multiple discourses leapt out at me. It could be argued that I have been remiss in not writing specifically about this. I have certainly selected quotations with an eye to illustrating the 'heteroglossic' nature of their conversations and signalled separately in the text the effect of the market discipline on nearly all administrators.

In the end I decided that I hadn't chosen to study the effects of policy on the principals themselves but had asked them to talk about policy. I am not comfortable with analysing in too much detail the words of my colleagues for reasons that are both methodological and ethical. This research project was constructed around the question of every day life in the 'disadvantaged school', not as the impact of current policy on school administrators. The school administrators were asked to be 'expert witnesses' and 'co-theorisers' rather than research subjects. If I had initially told them that their words, and they, were to be the object of my analysis, they may have refused to participate or responded in different ways. They were almost to a person clear that they gave time from their busy schedules because they cared about the topic of justice. So it seems to me that to focus now on their words would be a distortion of our initial contract.

But the words of the administrators are not 'truths', and as such are not substitutes for other kinds of evidence. Wherever possible I have sought to reference the words of the administrators, not only against my own experience, but also against other research and other sources of information. As an editor of their stories, I have in a sense to put their words out on the page so that readers can make some of these judgements for themselves. Just as I do not think that my research is the product of what Jenks (1995) calls 'immaculate perception', neither do I think that the administrators' words are so formed. Like mine, their position is partial, conditional and situated.

But what school administrators think and do, does shape their schools. What they believe to be the case matters. I have tried to deal with this through the notion of positioning, the 'situational'. For example, I argued that a concern with marketing was different depending on the sector of the school and a range of locality issues, but that it was almost inevitable in the current situation. I have tried to take the positioning, rather than the person, as the focus. The intellectual and discursive resources that administrators had were highly significant in their own reflexivity as well as in their schools. But if I wanted to look in detail at the ways in which administrator axiologies, teleologies, knowledges and narratives worked their ways into each school, I would have had to collect different kinds of data, and use ethnographic case study methods. It would have been another research project.

I am stuck it seems with taking on face value much of what the administrators said, not subjecting their words to more than a surface deconstruction or empirical interrogation.
This is just one of the ways in which this research is limited. As Wagner (1993, p. 5) puts it:

If we keep the ends of research as well in mind as the means, we must acknowledge that blind spots and blank spots are at the core of all research endeavours. We can then apply to educational research, teacher research, and other forms of practitioner research ... "ignorance-based" standards we apply to research writ large. In doing so, we move away from asking whether or not the research generated truth but rather whether it reduced ignorance, what kind, and for whom. Did the research help researchers, policy makers, participating teachers, or others involved with it to fill in blank spots or to illuminate blind spots? If so, it was probably useful.

In the end this is the test I would want to make and hope that the pieces of the puzzle I have helped to fill in with this 'mid point, post policy analysis' are sufficient to warrant other omissions and co-missions. However I may well be fooling myself. As Bourdieu (1991, p. 126) says:

The veritable miracle produced by acts of institution lies undoubtedly in the fact that they manage to make consecrated individuals believe that their existence is justified, that their existence serves some purpose.

Despite Bourdieu, I now want to move to consider other research that might complement this study.

Further research

There is more than policy change that would help the 'disadvantaged schools' in this study. One of the 'findings' I made is that administrators do call on a wide range of theorisations about 'doing justice' and that many of these are generated from the work of local and international scholars. They also use research in their schools and want research that is of use to their reform agendas.

'Disadvantaged school' administrators are looking for three things from the academy:

- **Research that supports claims for particular policy consideration of disadvantage.**

This has been my intent in this study, but given the current neoliberal policy actors' predilection for quantitative research, different methods might well be used to re-examine many of the issues I raise. In particular, if the 'thisness' list is to have any purchase and if the claims I make about time and money are to stick, then further research is required. For example, while the principals were prepared to make percentage claims about the amount of time they spent on disciplinary matters, a systematic study that followed up the situation in both disadvantaged and privileged schools might be very instructive, provided it did not adopt a 'blame the student, families, neighbourhoods or cultures' approach. Similarly, a local study of school funding,\(^\text{15}\) not unlike that of Townsend in Victoria (1998c; 1998d), would assist in the arguments that 'disadvantaged schools' do more with less.

\(^{15}\) Rumour has it that one was conducted by the state system to inform its committee on school devolution.
• Research that assists schools to identify places and practices where they need to 'do justice' 'less worse'.

It is important to research how it is that students 'fail' and 'succeed' and how it is that teachers produce inequity. It is important to continue to deconstruct policy and the textual practices of schools as institutions. It is also important that these do not become what Fine and Weiss (1998, p. 286) aptly call "texts of despair". Narratives of the real life of schools attempting to change, narratives based on empirical study that do not seek to create 'best practice' and models, but rather tell particular stories that exemplify potentially useful principles for ways of working, have some hope of connecting with the reform efforts of other real life schools (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Such research would best be mutually constructed and conducted.

In particular, this research highlights that it would be useful to have more ethnographic work that focussed on the ways that discipline and welfare, curriculum and school reform projects work together in different locations; studies of the ways that school administrator discourses play out through schools; and further work on principal 'habitus' in specific places.

• Sharing narrative resources

There is a pressing need, in the absence of justice and equity policy, to continue to support teachers and schools making efforts to 'do justice'. It was evident in the conversations of school administrators that the scholarly community in the universities and professional associations can be very important - sharing concepts, languages and connections that become resources on which schools can draw as they work to make local sense and actions from imposed policies.

My own recent experiences in talking with clusters of schools about the process of de-industrialisation in their particular location, the deconstruction of the welfare assistance state and the workings of new public management have been salutary. For busy and tired administrators, finding a lexicon with which they can reframe their experiences is an important 'distancing' step and it provides resources that can be used in making of tactical everyday decisions. There is a significant task for scholars in making more accessible to people in schools the theoretical tools that we use.

While there are many other possibilities for research these are the foci that schools would find most useful.

LAST WORDS

This study has looked at the everyday life of 'disadvantaged schools' and told stories of intensified pressure and paradoxical demands and expectations. Despite the utopian and irrational expectations of policies that work to deny that the social matters, 'disadvantaged schools' work with imaginaries of 'doing justice' as well as the daily realities of hard lives.

One of the criticisms of research on poverty, disadvantage or class is that it is 'researching down', it is an exercise by the academy that reproduces and produces
dominant power relations. I have to say that that has not been my major concern in this research, as perhaps it should have been. I have been very worried all the way through this text about dealing with the everyday of 'disadvantaged schools'. The most common stigmatisation of these schools is that they are blackboard jungles and the students feral. Sometimes researchers try to avoid these issues focusing instead on pedagogy and knowledge, or constructing the 'daily onslaught', as one principal described it, as a welfare problem or a parent-school relationship problem - and I can understand why. It is of course all of those things and more.

I chose to try to deal with what for me, and for my colleagues, is a hallmark of the 'disadvantaged school' - the time taken managing order and welfare, and the resulting lack of time and resources to do as much as might be done with curriculum and pedagogy. I therefore run the considerable risk that my colleagues will be distressed by this text, that they will see it as further stereotyping and 'othering'. I run the risk that I have, despite censoring the most provocative stories, also tended to go for the 'exotic' rather than the mundane and ordinary.

So at the end, I want to reiterate one point. This is not a text of blame, nor of pity. This is not the story of inadequate and badly managed schools, nor of heroic soldiers fighting the just war. This is not the story of bad or sick or irresponsible families or cultures of welfare fraud. Nor is it the story of the political work that must go on if neoliberal policies are to be overturned.

This is one story of 'disadvantaged schools', not all stories. It is told in anger at the retraction of support for families and schools that deserve better. It is told in the hope that the telling is a form of political work and that it is one way of 'doing justice'.

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— financially — might just as
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the kind of home that will
give their children a sound basis
on which almost any school can

A good deal of educational
and experience

A BURGEONING

The weekend parents

for more likely to

Program ‘key to unlocking door to intellectual achievement’

Right parents may be
the key to landing a job

By KATE HANNON
in Canberra

School leavers

Gollan Street primary School has
received a grant of encouraging
parents to pack healthy lunches
for their children.

But with children from all over the
world, “food culture” is encouraged.

What parents of children at Gollan
Street Primary School packing
lunches for their own

Mr Allan Mots, Project Co-ordinator
for his son’s

Strokes linked to poverty

Children raised in poor

the men were

Feeling the pinch

Families out of pocket after tax

By Education Reporter
SCOTT MONK
PARENTS of disabled
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Parents fight for disabled

conscious parents keen as ever on private educat

By TIM COLEBATCH

People living in bad

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CHAPTER 12

ENDINGS
REFLECTING ON NARRATIVE

In this final chapter I consider the last of my research questions. In the second chapter I described how my own experiences with research into 'disadvantaged schools' led me to consider a narrative research method and a 'literary' approach to writing research. I chose to produce 'stories' from school administrators incorporated into a more conventional sociological genre, with a lesser 'delinquent' text comprised of images, personal writings and prose poems made from transcripts. My second research question was related to this methodological approach. It was:

In attempting to meet this set of questions I have used a postcritical narrative method which has a dual and mutually constructed focus:

- in shaping the research process
Narrative research enables me as researcher to engage in conversations with my colleagues about day to day events and to jointly engage in theorising about the effects of the current government policies and broader socio-economic and cultural changes. It places me as researcher in the position of the editor of my colleagues' perspectives.

- in constructing a narrative research text
I am experimenting with the construction of a 'literary' text (Barone, 1992; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Denzin, 1997; L. Richardson, 1994, 1997) which acts to allow multiple readings, a step away from the modernist scholarly genre. I use an arts based approach (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999) that promotes aesthetics, empathy and imagination. I employ fiction, prose/poetry, autobiography, typography and photography to create a 'reflexive' text consisting of a dominant narrative and delinquent stories (de Certeau, 1988) to interrupt the main text.

My second research focus then is on what this particular postcritical narrative research method has enabled me to do, what it has prevented, what it has foregrounded, what it has left in shadow.

I will consider first of all my positioning of myself as a 'practitioner' researcher throughout the narrative and as an editor, then go on to discuss the technical difficulties I experienced while trying to construct the text I imagined. This encompasses a discussion of images, maps and typography. I then re/consider the 'ideal' of a literary text.

THE POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER

In Chapter 2, I made a number of claims about using my own experiences. I boldly suggested that the research that I had encountered about 'disadvantaged schools' did not tell things the way that I understood them, and that I was going to redress that. I proposed three areas of concern - that of university/school research, of inside/outside researching and of writing back. I suggested that I would address these by making myself present in the text through the use of personal stories, that I would act as an
editor for the stories of my colleagues, and happily asserted that the entire text was really mine - multiple, partial and situated, to use the orthodox lexicon of postcritical and feminist academe. What this construction fails to acknowledge is that the 'I' who began this research is not the 'I' who decides it will now be finished, ready or not.

Can 'I' know if 'I' have been successful?

McLaughlin (1996) argues that practitioners and activists often have partial but sophisticated theorisations of the world, theorisations that might be dismissed by the academy because 'vernacular theory' is 'street level' knowledge and does not conform to the genres expected of scholarly knowledge. He argues that scholars need to take account of such theorisations rather than be dismissive of them, and that they should support what Foucault (1980) calls 'subjugated knowledges'. This is congruent with the kind of position with which I began this research. I did situate my practitioner knowledge, although I was perhaps a little less homogenising of the academy than McLaughlin, seeing (and explaining) the school-academy separation as more to do with 'overlapping but separate fields', different 'interests', and 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1984) than elitism.

McLaughlin goes on to comment further about vernacular knowledge and scholarly pursuit. He suggests that academic theorisation should be thought of, not as an elitist and totalising activity, but as a rigorous and scholarly version of the widely practiced analytical strategy of vernacular knowledge, that is, of making sense of intensely local issues. He suggests that for postcritical educators, the differences between the two have more to do with status, style and systematic and sustained pursuit of ideas rather than with the goals and strategies of the two practices.

This is a helpful perspective. It challenges my notions of 'inside' and 'outside' and suggests that these do not have to be a binary, rather something that is connected. It provokes me to consider that at the outset of this research project, the researcher 'I' began with vernacular theory, partial, grounded, and with some purchase on the local situation of 'disadvantaged schools' and the broader social and policy contexts. Through the process of doing the research, which has been 'writing research', a changing researcher 'I' has subjected those ideas to scrutiny and 'I' have read widely to find other perspectives. 'I' have been both systematic and rigorous, and most importantly, prepared to change some views.¹

It is also a perspective useful when considering one of the problems of bringing the researcher into the text, that is the tendency for solipsism and narcissism. If all that

¹ For example, I had been most reluctant to concede that there were substantive differences between 'disadvantaged schools', that some really did have greater needs than the rest. I now do believe that there are a few locations which need much more and different support than everywhere else because of the sheer concentration of intense hardship in their neighbourhood. This is not to say that resources should be take away from those schools currently receiving DSF/CLP funds, rather it is that it is necessary to argue for an increase, and a differential increase for some schools.
happens in the research process is that the researcher tells personal stories and uses them as truths, fails to connect them with other perspectives and ideas, does not distanthiate herself from the stories she produces, then there has been no scholarship, no rigorous meaning making in the time away from intense local issues. The researcher will have stayed with their vernacular knowledge. I ask myself then, did I do more than just indulge myself in the textual practice of self disclosure? The 'I' that writes at the end of this research process rests assured that the use of the personal in the research text, and of the vernacular knowledge she possesses, has been subject to interrogation and has been brought into dialogue with large numbers of scholars who have something to say on her chosen topic.

What McLaughlin neglects to note is that there are circumstances where the scholarly development of vernacular knowledge occurs as an initiation to the academy through postgraduate study, one of the aims of which is to produce the 'scholarly habitus'. This is also the 'I' story of this research. During full time years in which this field work and writing work was undertaken, the 'I' wrote university course materials, developed a new postgraduate course, and secured a position teaching that course at the completion of this doctoral work. The 'I' had 'successfully' learned the genre of academic writing, pedagogy and bureaucratic process.

Given that, the current neophyte academic 'I' may well not be in the position to judge whether this text meets the exacting requirements and impossible dreams of the 'I' practitioner who began.

On editing re/presentations

Fine and Weiss (1998, p. 281), reflecting on their own research with young adults in the inner cities of Buffalo and Jersey City, identify what they call the "triple representation problem ... how we present (1) ourselves as researchers choreographing the narratives we have 'collected'; (2) the 'narrators'" (in this case the school administrators), "and (3) the 'others'," in this case the teachers, children and parents who are spoken about. I will firstly consider the narrators and then the 'others' that have been part of this research.

- Narrators

I set out on this research as a disadvantaged school administrator who would act as 'editor' for the narratives of colleagues. As an 'editor' I was relatively generous in the allocation of space to 'narrators'. When I checked back through both the transcripts and the collection of prose poems and stories I had separated out from the transcripts into a discrete file, I found that I had used large sections of most of the research conversations. Where there were omissions it was on the basis of repetition or related to an explicit concern - the material made the person and/or the school too recognisable, or the words were about a topic that needed more coverage than I was prepared to give. This was the case with a few stories about Central Office and individual stories of discrimination. I judged that these might be politically counterproductive, needed more investigation and made the administrator more vulnerable to the same behaviour, if their allegations were true.
I used slabs of selected, largely un-doctored transcripts to simulate multiple 'narrator voices' and perspectives and, where possible, to carry the arguments I was constructing. In the last chapter of the research text I made comment on the difficulty that this raised in terms of treating the transcripts as if they were 'truths' and outlined some occasions when I decided to omit, or deal with in another way, the discourses of my colleagues that I found problematic. But this was not the only difficulty I encountered. Some of my colleagues, more than others, engaged in overt theory making about equity and justice and so I had to modify my initial hopes that this would be an exercise in co-theorisation. What eventuated was that sections of the arguments I built used some theorisations from my colleagues. There are pieces of some chapters that are co-theorised, but others where my analysis takes precedence. This also is not surprising, since I had time to consider the whole complex of policy around justice and equity and to process my vernacular knowledge and, given that the longest conversation with any one of my colleagues was only two and a half hours, it is reasonable to assume they did not say everything they thought on the topic.

I had blithely assumed, on the basis of my own experiences, that small quotations were inferior to large slabs of transcript, which I believed were a fairer representation of the views of research participants (Chapter 2). I encountered one situation which made me rethink some of my ideas on this use of transcripts. This specific situation concerned a series of events that had been highly distressing to the particular principals involved. The events themselves were common knowledge. The principals did not have difficulty talking with me about the issue on tape nor did they make changes to the transcripts I returned to them. But, because of the nature of the circumstances I decided that I would return to them for approval a draft of the text I proposed to include in this dissertation text.

Immediately there were a series of very difficult negotiations which eventually resulted in me removing their words from the text altogether. The principals felt completely exposed and vulnerable seeing their words and sentences on the page and immediately wanted to hide, and in fact asked that this particular section of the research text be made unavailable to readers other than examiners. I had inadvertently, by wanting to provide a 'safe space' for them to tell the story in their own words, added to the distress caused by the initial events. This was very difficult for them, and salutary for me.

In the first instance I realised that the relationship I had with these particular people, which was one of long association and friendship, was what had taken precedence in the research conversation. They had felt comfortable talking to me about the issues because they were talking with a colleague and a friend. They had not really considered how it was that I was also a researcher and I had not made that obvious enough. Like Coyote, I appeared in one form but later took on another that had been lurking beneath the surface all the time. I also realised how much words, speech patterns and stories are tied up with the sense of self. These principals believed that there was no way that I could make their words anonymous, and felt that they would be recognisable from the ways that the sentences flowed and the words that were used. By reproducing slabs of their transcripts, I was putting them out as 'selves', putting them out on public display. I could not guarantee their confidentiality, they felt, as long as I used their words. This
points to the power move that this narrative device makes. It is only a slight exaggeration to suggest that I had been more motivated by my own 'will to truth' than by thinking through empathetically what the consequences for my colleagues might be. It suggests that there may be times and places when it is not appropriate to use large direct quotations, that it is necessary to inform research participants that that is the intention (I had actually done this) and that the researcher must be mindful of exposing research participants to unwanted reader scrutiny.

At the same time I also need to acknowledge that the 'editorial' device of using large slices of narrative from transcripts gives the impression that these are 'authentic' representations of the people concerned, whereas they are the words I have selected to stand in their place in the text. Sometimes the speakers of the original words will find them 'real', and sometimes they won't. I originally wanted my colleagues to see that their words had not only been recorded, but were also important by virtue of being visibly included and made available to the reader. Having achieved that, I now understand however, that this does not overcome the usual power relations between the researcher and the researched, nor the manipulation of the editor-writer-researcher in choosing displaying them. This narrative text is no less manipulated, no more or less a researcher dominated exercise than any other.

The textual play of allowing the narrators' 'space' is perhaps more deceptive than the usual sociological convention of using small quotations sandwiched in the main narrative. It creates an illusion of transparency, and of the presence of 'real' speaking subjects. This duplicity is inevitable to some degree in both narrative and ethnographic research where the researcher always has the last say - until the text is read by others. What the added deceit of large slabs of transcript appearing to be 'real voices' allows is for more empathetic readings, one of the prime goals of arts based methods (Barone, 1992; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999). My own reading of the text I have produced is that in some places this is certainly the case, and I have succeeded in creating sometimes, a text that 'moves'. I still cannot read the words of my colleague deciding to leave their school without feeling very saddened, nor the words of my former workmate describing the principles of 'doing justice' without feeling heartened.

But this empathy is undermined by the conventional use of the smaller font size for transcript quotations. I briefly experimented with other ways of incorporating the words of my colleagues, reversing the font sizes, so that my commentary was smaller; using break out boxes, but there were rather too many to make this a useful device; using different fonts of the same size, but this was also confusing; using a playscript convention but there were too many characters. In the end I unhappily opted for the standard typography, knowing that it undercut my intention to deceitfully create empathy.

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2 It did however reinforce a decision to 'neuter' transcripts: which made a gendered analysis impossible but does add another protective layer between my colleagues and readers.

3 Bloom (1998) makes the point that the researched also choose the level of their involvement and most of the narrators in this study made it clear that they did not want more involvement than the conversation.
• Others
I continue to find disconcerting the absence in the text of teachers, parents and students, the 'others' who are spoken about. This research duplicates the hierarchical power-knowledge construction of schooling and education policy, where school administrators talk on behalf of their many school communities and where administrators are taken more seriously than those of the school majority.

There is no particular reason for this research to have stopped at principals, save the absolutely practical one of possibility. I well recollect having a conversation with a friend, the late Barry Troyna, about the research he and Richard Hatcher had conducted looking at racism among children (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992). I asked him then why had he neglected to talk with parents. He just shook his head and said, "No time. Plenty of regrets". I think that that is the kind of response I will have to make about the absence of 'others' in this study. Fortunately (and also predictably since they were chosen for their commitment to equity and justice), none of my colleagues spoke with lack of respect for teachers, parents and students and so the kind of 'hate speak' and 'status quo' talk encountered by Fine and Weiss (1998) was not a major ethical issue for me. I did make the editorial decision to omit several narratives about administrator interaction with parents and students because I decided that they were such that they needed both sides, or multiple sides, of the story to be told.

I also briefly considered including more student poems, stories and drawings, of which I have a large collection, in the research text but decided for reasons, both technical and aesthetic, not to do so.

I will now discuss those issues.

IT’S THE SOFTWARE, STUPID

My initial idea was to construct a research text that was very interrupted by stories, poems and pictures of various kinds. There are two reasons that thwarted this project, one technical, the other aesthetic.

Technology matters

There is no doubt that the advent of computing has assisted researchers in the storage and retrieval of data and in the basics of word processing. It can even help with analysis through key word searches and specialised software. As a moderately competent computer operator, having constructed some simple web sites, a CD ROM, manipulated graphics and photographs using specialised software, I thought that producing a multiple text would be time consuming but possible. I did not reckon with how much time, and the limitations of the average home office.

Without wanting to indulge in an orgy of detail, it is sufficient to say that once I had decided that I would not 'contract out' any aspect of the production of this text to specialised services, I was reduced to what I could do with my own hardware and software. I have learnt more than I ever wanted about the amount of memory printers
require in order to deal with high quality scanned images and the inadequacy of low resolution scanning. The failure of the publishing software in my possession, which was perfectly adequate for brochures and other small pieces of work, to be adjusted for many pages with variable page layouts, drove me to distraction. I retreated to standard word processing and the use of alternate pages for text and images which could be produced using separate software packages. I abandoned the goal of a fully digitised text (well beyond the capacity of my hardware) and opted for a second best technical solution, rather than spend the time it would require to achieve technical nirvana.

To make things even more fraught I did not have multiple images spread evenly across all of the research content. I took large numbers of photographs that sat easily in the geographical and meta policy chapters, but was then reduced to only a few images and largely text for the school policy and school empirical/narrative chapters. In order to create some kind of aesthetic balance then, it was necessary to wind back the image content of the first section of the text, in order to give the last sections an equal treatment.

But this was not all.

The reader matters

At the same time as these technical sagas went on, I was having difficulty designing, even in the abstract, a multi-layered text. I looked for examples - Lather (1997) on angels, Bourdieu (1984) on 'taste' and 'distinction', Lippard (1997) on local geographies and cultures, and the 'experimental research' collections of Stronach and Maclure (1997) and Jipson and Paley (1997). I found that much typographic experimentation is directed towards shorter pieces of work (e.g. Griffiths, 1998b; M. Morris 1988), rather than longer. Hypertext, which is the epitome of a reader directed, multiple, fragmented text, does not attempt to create a sustained narrative. The longer pieces of work which did sustain multiple layouts and a continuing narrative, I found, quite frankly, hard to read.

I experimented with vertical and horizontal columns, boxes, multiple typefaces, and magazine layouts but decided, in the end, that it is much easier to theorise about experimental layout, delinquent stories and multiple texts, than to actually do it. This was of course a convenient decision, given that at the same time I was experiencing considerable technical difficulties and image deficiencies.

The end result is a more modest experiment than I would wish, but it is one that I think is readable. In the final analysis, I decided that the dominant narrative was the most important, because my political intent had been to produce a text that would be accessible to both my colleagues and at some later stage, to a wider audience.

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4 I could have made the decision at the point to go and take photographs in the sixteen schools but decided that since they would be largely of parents, teachers and students, they would be even more obviously silent in the text. Rather than just a 'blind spot' in the research, they would be reduced to voiceless objects.
This does not mean I have given up on this version of postcritical narrative method. Rather, I now understand that it may be more suited to other kinds of projects, and that a fully fledged interrupted text would disrupt the flow of this quite busy analysis too much. Perhaps such an approach is more suited to a different and less complex task. I might also do well to remember that in Chapter 2 I expressed my 'desire' to find a way to construct such as text, and that this, like many desires in the consumer society, may well continue unfulfilled, never to be satiated.

A LITERARY TEXT

Another of my initial goals was to construct a 'literary' text with aesthetic qualities. I hoped to use narrative combined with literary sensibility to create a text that would move, influence, and promote affect and effect. I am not at all confident that I have done so. I have rather too many theoretical interludes, too many references to scholarly works, to create a literary text. However, this is not to suggest that the text I have produced does not have connections with literary approaches, and it has certainly been influenced by literature. This is a positive claim.

I can find support for a sociology influenced by literary sensibilities. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 208) for example says:

Literature, against which a good many sociologists have, from the origins to this day, thought necessary to define themselves in order to assert the scientificity of their discipline... is on many points more advanced than social science, and contains a whole trove of fundamental problems - those concerning the theory of narrative for instance - that sociologists should make their own and subject to critical examination instead of ostentatiously distancing themselves from forms of expression and thinking that they deem compromising.

Such a sociology might be explained as a product of "polymorphism" (Foucault, 1991c). Polymorphism occurs when elements are brought into relation with each other, elements that emerge from various domains of reference. Foucault (p. 78) suggests that this produces at once "too much and too little":

There are too many diverse kinds of relations, too many lines of analysis, yet at the same time there is too little necessary unity. But for me this is precisely the point at issue, both in historical analysis and in political critique. We aren't, nor do we have to put ourselves, under the sign of a unitary necessity.

And Bakhtin (1981) writing specifically on the novel would lead the argument that what literature would have to contribute to the refusal to find a unitary necessity is a 'heteroglossic' in which:

- temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always coloured by emotions and values. (p 243)

Writing recently on educational studies, Ball (1998a) argues for a theoretical approach in education sociology that is not "parsimonious, certain and closed", that might instead be "destructive, disruptive and violent" of everyday familiar events (p. 79). Such an educational sociology takes up ideas from cognate disciplines to avoid intellectual stagnation and a slide into technical rationalism and policy entrepreneurship. I've opted
for the somewhat more gentle notion of multiple perspectives, using different lenses through which to construct different pictures, hoping that through different 'takes', I can represent alternative ways of thinking about the 'local', everyday life in 'disadvantaged schools' and neighbourhoods. One of those lens is that provided by literature.

This last discussion perhaps illustrates my dilemmas in relation to constructing a literary text. Bourdieu says that theory, which includes research method, is only a:

temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work. Consequently it has more to gain by confronting new objects than by engaging in theoretical polemics that do little more than fuel a perpetual, self-sustaining and too often vacuous meta-discourse around concepts treated as intellectual totems. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 161)

My success or otherwise in constructing a literary text, or a text which combines literary approaches with others, is easier to theorise and indeed to totalise than it is to judge. I do not think I have produced a literary text. I think that I have produced a text which is not closed, which is polymorphous, heteroglossic, too much and too little - with literary leanings. The reason for this I take up as my final word on the matter (for now).

END NOTE

A concluding chapter is intended to provide the researcher with the opportunity to think about the research project, the evidence, the meanings that might be made of it, and the processes she used. I have been variously inclined to update some of the stories, to engage in confessional wringing of hands, to appeal evasively to the reader(s) to judge for themselves the validity or otherwise of the research and to finish with the theoretical equivalent of a fireworks display. What I have wanted desperately to avoid is an anticlimax, the disappointment of the skyrocket that falls down before it reaches its promise.

I have decided that I will finish with a story, bringing delinquent personal fiction into the main text. I began with a story about myself and my growing up. I want to finish with the story of another's growing up and the story of the disadvantaged school that helped. I wrote a version of this story in the early 90s (Thomson, 1991) and it has been reprinted many times in teacher publications and staff rooms. It does make its point.

Sharon's Story

Her name was Sharon.

Sharon came to Paralowie in 1985 in Year 8. We knew she was a Special Ed. kid from the information on her form but that didn't prepare us for the shock we got when we saw her. She was very little and very thin and she was so pale she was almost translucent - white blonde hair and pallid skin, dark rings under her eyes. We all started to use words like gaunt and pinched to describe what we saw.

After not too long it became clear that the operative word was hungry. She never said she was hungry mind you - it's just that she always was. Sharon got to do extra Home Ec. classes.
The Special Ed. teacher instituted what euphemistically gets called a survival curriculum - cooking and reading. Sharon was always very enthusiastic about the cooking. By this stage we realised that even though Sharon wasn't talking we had a case of something on our hands. We referred her to the school nurse.

Sharon went off for tests: growth tests, bone tests, psychological tests - none proved anything that we didn't know. The school nurse referred her to 'the welfare'.

Sharon often came to school with minor sores and cuts not attended. We applied the bandaids. She often came to school in clothes that were too small or not warm enough. We found more from the lost property.

Once she came to school covered in bruises. The school nurse took one look and referred her to 'the welfare'.

One day she cut herself very badly at school and when we rang home to get her Mum to take her to the doctor, Mum refused to even come to the school. "Oh, she'll be alright" was her response. We took Sharon to the doctor and paid for the five stitches to be put in and a few days later paid for them to be taken out.

It was now about four months into the year and we were convinced that Sharon was the victim of chronic neglect. Despite having no verbal confirmation from her, we continued what was to turn into a regular round of notifications to 'the welfare', as it was known.

No worker was assigned during the first year. Sharon wasn't urgent, there were far more acute crises to deal with, the office was short staffed, there was no verbal complaint from her...

When Sharon was in Year 9, we instituted a breakfast program in the school. We got very little funding for it. The local Council gave us a bit of cash now and then, as did our local adolescent health service. The Parents' Club scrounged left over bread, and drummed up donations of cereal and milk. They also fund raised for the program.

The breakfast program worked like this. Classroom teachers could book their classes into breakfast to reinforce their health programmes. There was a small charge -20 cents for those that could easily pay - to help with the costs. Some other kids just dropped in. Sharon was a regular.

In both Year 9 and Year 10 Sharon was referred to 'the welfare' at frequent intervals. No worker was assigned. Sharon wasn't urgent enough, there were too many desperate cases of sexual abuse, some of them also from our school...

At the beginning of 1989, Sharon was notionally in Year 11. She was still little and pinched. She'd grown to be about five feet two. She was still physically a little girl, no signs of adolescence: her jeans still flapped around her calves, just above the shoes with the holes in the toes. The counsellor and I in desperation referred the whole Sharon case to the tiny Education Department Social Work team. They pursued the matter with 'the welfare' with the same results. No worker was assigned.

'The welfare' informed the social workers that the case was unlikely to ever make the priority list and indeed, the file had been hanging around just getting fatter with the school referrals so it seemed best to just face the truth. They thought they would shred the file.
Meanwhile Sharon turned 17, 5 foot 4, skeletal, poorly clothed, the prognosis for her future pretty grim. She began stealing, mainly food from kids' bags, from the Home Ec. centre, from the staff room, from people's offices. She also stole money and was occasionally seen buying food at the canteen. We didn't pursue the thefts with our usual vigour.

We again referred her to Child Health. The school had, under the (now defunct) Child Health Social Justice Strategy, both a visiting doctor and a visiting nurse. The new nurse was a veteran of English slum schools and knew what she was looking at. To her it was simple - clear and undeniable evidence of long term malnutrition which not only accounted for the retardation of the onset of puberty, the general lack of growth but also was the likely cause of the Special Ed.-ness. She did two things. She stormed over to 'the welfare' and roundly abused all and sundry. This, nor the other three times she repeated this performance, still did not produce a case worker.

She also referred Sharon to the doctor. It was decided that Sharon was so developmentally backward, so physically behind that she could well have a medical condition. Certainly one would need to rule out the presence of some kind of syndrome before deciding that the cause was malnutrition. However in order to decide if the problem was medical we needed the parent's permission to get her to the Children's Hospital. No prizes for guessing that the request was just ignored by Mum. And what had happened to those tests from five years previously we wondered?

At the beginning of 1990 Sharon was 17 and a half. Time was running out. She would be an adult at 18. Only 6 months to go if anything was ever to happen.

We got a new Special Ed. teacher and a new post compulsory Special Ed. class in the school. We were trialling a new combination of school, training, and work. Our first pilot group was only 8 kids, Sharon was one of them. They worked with a local volunteer agency and were trained, and worked as a team, doing home repairs, gardening and cleaning in the community. We hoped that they would become a self sufficient small business able to be contracted by the local Council to do this work.

Some of their training was provided by TAFE through the (now defunct) TAFE Social Justice strategy at the Elizabeth campus.

One day at the end of second term, the teacher and the kids were standing in the TAFE cafeteria quadrangle, and Sharon asked if she could be dismissed early. The teacher couldn't work out what Sharon wanted and she gave no special reason, so he said no. Sharon suddenly burst into tears.

She'd seen somebody throw a sandwich in the bin and wanted to go and get it. She was hungry she said. She couldn't go back home, she hated it there, her mother never fed her, nor her sister. She realised from the work she was doing with her new teacher and from the other kids - the first friends she'd ever had, she said, who didn't tease her about how she looked -that what she had at home wasn't normal. She realised that she didn't have to put up with it.

She wanted to leave home. She couldn't put up with it any longer. So off to 'the welfare'. NOW they could do something. Sharon had made herself homeless and needed emergency support. They found her a short term foster home.
Sharon could not go into a shelter - she didn't yet have the skills to manage on her own. She was too old to be fostered. The only place 'the welfare' could put her was in a home for naughty kids. This was not really appropriate. Sharon needed a family not an institution. She needed some warm and affectionate parenting... isn't everybody entitled to that when they're growing up?... and surely even a bit for Sharon would have done so much good.

In the first week away from home, Sharon ate regularly. She put on 4 kilos. She was overwhelmingly happy with just the simple things she got, like new clothes. She had a decent haircut. She was fed. She made friends and was learning work skills. These were new experiences for Sharon and she was happier than she'd ever been with the things WE all take absolutely for granted.

Her sister still lived at home. Sharon was not allowed to see her, and the 'Special' school her sister was in wouldn't go against the parent's wishes and let her. Sharon worried about her and she worried about running into her Mum at the local shops.

Sharon got angry about what happened to her and every now and then she let a little more of it out. We probably never knew what really happened to her and she may never tell but she will carry round emotional wounds as profound as her physical condition was as a teenager.

Sharon stayed in the welfare home for three years. She finally left school at the age of twenty and went to a sheltered workshop but for some time after she still rang her Special Ed. teacher. And why not? For eight years the school was really the most stable and caring part of her life.

And as for us at the school? Well I guess we were vindicated in a way. If we hadn't hung in there for Sharon no one else certainly was going to. But, when those of us who were involved with her talked about it, we agreed on two things: Firstly that this was one 'case' that got to all of us. We all cried about it at some time or other. The effects of brutalisation and cruelty, and her innocence, were so clear and yet we were so powerless to do anything other than hang in there. Secondly we were enraged by that fact. We didn't blame 'the welfare'. We knew that they were grossly understaffed. We knew that they worked with a policy that said they had to deal with crises and physical and sexual abuse first. We knew there was no way that our local office could even keep up with the emergencies.

But the fact that it had to be left to Sharon to precipitate the crisis was not good enough. No child in a country as affluent as Australia should have to go through this as childhood.

Post script: Sharon is completely grown up now and lives in a residential home for people with a range of mild disabilities. The government funding for the home is being progressively reduced. After some years of being looked after, there is little obvious sign of the deprivation she suffered. She has a job and pays her own way.

Telling this story runs the risk that this entire research project has run. This story could just reinforce a number of stereotypes - a young person eating from a bin, a neglectful parent, a noble school. But that is not enough reason not to tell it. I tell this story at the end because it sums up what I really want most to say.
This story says that 'doing justice' in schooling is important. 'Doing justice' needs resources and it needs to be coordinated with other agencies and it needs to be done with local people, not for them. 'Doing justice' is not just about literacy, although that is important. It is not just about getting a job, because that is getting harder to do. It is not just about responding to need, although that is vital because that can change lives, like Sharon's. 'Doing justice' is not short term and cannot be easily measured. 'Doing justice' is about everyday acts that add up, in the end, to making some difference. That is what this story says.

What this story cannot say is why Sharon and her family are in this situation and why it is that Sharons continue to appear in schools. It cannot say that the social relations that produce Sharons also produce Nguyens, Marias, Pedros, Simons, Janets and Shanes, some of whom may well be very privileged indeed. It cannot say how it is that public policy and schools might do more than deal with individual cases and 'see' that there are large numbers of people similarly and differently and systematically placed in various places in the social space that is class. It cannot say what it is that schools and social policy might need to do in order to 'do justice'. That story requires more in the telling than a literary turn. What is needed to tell that story is a sociology of education that is unafraid of the economic, unafraid to put not only policy and difference but also the class back into the classroom.

It is to that project that I perhaps can claim to have made some contribution.
## APPENDIX ONE: SCHOOLS
(extract from working notes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Everyday Life is focussed around:</th>
<th>Threats that shape life in the school:</th>
<th>School Reform</th>
<th>Catchment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park Vista Primary School</td>
<td>Alienation of parents from school resulting in anger directed towards teachers who feel resentful and depowered. Subterranean issues.</td>
<td>Longer term impact of redevelopment of public housing. Class sizes too big.</td>
<td>New principal.</td>
<td>Same area as Park View, slightly higher home ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction Park High School</td>
<td>Health issues, substance abuse, gender imbalance, constant discipline issues, high NESB numbers. National Action activity. Competition for enrolments.</td>
<td>Surveillance by media, National Action, parents. Lack of coordinated support from Central Office and lack of interagency support. Feelings of isolation.</td>
<td>Mopping up after series of reviews which threatened closure or amalgamation. Has been seen as 'academic' high school which achieves enrolments but fuels a curriculum mismatch and some unrealistic teacher expectations.</td>
<td>Local area rapidly changing with increasing unemployment, and transience. Lack of nearby interagency infrastructure but substance abuse task force recently formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Name</td>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Reforms</td>
<td>Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Gardens High School</td>
<td>High numbers of South East Asian students. Racism in community ripples into school. High Special Education numbers. Health issues. Managing behaviour of students is time consuming. Facilities upgrade less than hoped for.</td>
<td>Has been subject to national media attention and 'gang' panics - mopping up. Has been perceived as 'academic' School, now in competition with low fee non government schools and eastern suburbs for image and enrolments. More staff needed.</td>
<td>Perceived by local welfare workers to have &quot;closed&quot; off to outside gaze. View from inside is of early stages of long process of reform.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sea Lakes Primary School</td>
<td>Some transience. Parent-school relations and behaviour management need constant attention. Trying to balance time</td>
<td>Increasing bureaucratisation and controls might stifle ability to innovate. More staff needed.</td>
<td>Well established reform with innovative curriculum and strong community orientation. High levels of parent</td>
<td>Small pocket of mainly public housing amid increasingly gentrified surrounds. No other public infrastructure for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Situation Description</td>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>Community and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose Gardens Primary School</td>
<td>Constant behaviour management required. Many in community in crisis. Anger in community often directed towards school.</td>
<td>Principal can no longer balance demands of social control with making a difference and will leave at the end of year. Supportive public agency and cluster structures in decline. Class sizes too big. Interagency structure desperately needed.</td>
<td>Extremely poor. High unemployment. Area seen as undesirable public housing. Elizabeth-Munno Para Project collapsed and interagency infrastructure now de-funded and dysfunctional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holden View Primary School</td>
<td>Transience, high numbers of Aboriginal and NESB children, constant management of behaviour. Continued campaign to get better resources and facilities.</td>
<td>Redevelopment of public housing in the school vicinity. Reduction in resources. Class sizes.</td>
<td>Small public housing estate, with settled and stable core with established networks but also transient population.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peninsular Primary School</td>
<td>Health and discipline issues caused by new arrivals in the district and increasing crisis in the community. Little non education infrastructure support</td>
<td>About to close and amalgamate on another site. The small size of the school has meant they have almost no additional support staff and the Principal and teachers are over-stretched.</td>
<td>School draws from outside local vicinity due to single grade structure. Core of closely local people. Largely public housing. The Peninsular is very territorial and bounded. People are</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highway High School</td>
<td>Attendance and retention in junior secondary. School-community relations. Lack of fit between kids and curriculum. Staff reluctant to move from competitive two tier curriculum.</td>
<td>Recovering from onslaught by National Action. Competition with public and low fee paying schools. Needs more staff.</td>
<td>New Principal continuing previous directions. School is perceived to be more middle class and academic. Shifting this is a major issue for reform. New housing area. Expanding population. Significant Vietnamese population in addition to established English migrant groups with networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose Gardens College</td>
<td>Attendance, retention and continuity of learning.</td>
<td>Child care under threat. Lack of resources for special</td>
<td>Well established program with flexible structures and</td>
<td>Draws from wider area than immediate neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High numbers of at risk reentry students.</td>
<td>measures. Needs more staff.</td>
<td>flexible delivery.</td>
<td>By its nature attracts low income students from the northern region. Located in area of high unemployment and public housing, little public infrastructure, poor public transport.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seashore Views Primary School</strong></td>
<td>High transience. Minority of families in crisis getting more extreme - drugs, domestic violence. Large numbers of students with learning difficulties.</td>
<td>Continuation of funding. Large classes.</td>
<td>Well established reform and stable staff. Principal in school for long time. Continuing focus on literacy. School recently renovated.</td>
<td>Located in pocket of largely upgraded public housing. Rubbing shoulders with a wealthy suburb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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