Carmen Mills · Trevor Gale

Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities

Playing the Game from the Back of the Field

Springer

Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities

Carmen Mills • Trevor Gale

Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities

Playing the Game from the Back of the Field

Springer

Dr. Carmen Mills
School of Education
The University of Queensland
Brisbane, QLD 4072
Australia
carmen.mills@uq.edu.au

Professor Trevor Gale
National Centre for Student Equity
in Higher Education
University of South Australia
Adelaide, SA 5001
Australia
trevor.gale@unisa.edu.au

ISBN 978-90-481-3343-7 e-ISBN 978-90-481-3344-4
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009937766

Cover design: Boekhorst Design b.v.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge and express our gratitude to several persons without whose support this book could not have been completed. First, to the staff, parents and students of the Crimson Brook Secondary College community within which this research took place who graciously welcomed us into their school and gave so generously of their time. Special thanks go to those who participated in the interviews and provided such valuable insights into reproduction and transformation in disadvantaged schools.

We would also like to thank those whose interest and encouragement contributed more directly to the production of this work. They include: the staff at Springer, who were so obliging and patient with us; our colleagues at The University of Queensland and University of South Australia, for their valuable feedback and advice; our friends and family, for encouraging us throughout the production of the manuscript; and, most importantly, our respective partners, Nathan and Pam, for their ongoing love and support. The manuscript was produced during a period of great personal and professional challenge, so we thank you all for helping us to keep our 'eye on the prize'.

Finally, portions of this book have appeared elsewhere in different forms and have been reworked for inclusion here. We would like to thank the publishers for permission to make use of the following materials: a version of Chap. 2 originally appeared in Mills, C., & Gale, T. (2007). Researching social inequalities in education: Towards a Bourdieuian methodology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *20*(4), 433–447 and can be accessed from http://www.informaworld.com; Chap. 6 in Mills, C. (2007). Transforming the capital that counts: Making a difference for students with cultural capital in the 'wrong' currency. *Curriculum Perspectives*, *27*(3), 11–21; and Chap. 8 in Mills, C., & Gale, T. (2004). Parent participation in disadvantaged schools: Moving beyond attributions of blame. *Australian Journal of Education*, *48*(3), 268–281. Reproduced with kind permission. Subscribe by visiting http://www.acer.edu.au/aje/subscriptions.html. Reworked portions of Chaps. 4, 5 and 7 also appeared in Mills, C., & Gale, T. (2003). Transient teachers: Mixed messages of schooling in regional Australia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *18*(3), 145–151; Mills, C., & Gale, T. (2002). Schooling and the (re)production of social inequalities: What can and should we be doing? *Melbourne Studies in Education*, *43*(1), 107–128; and Mills, C. (2008). Opportunity and resignation within marginalised students: Towards a theorisation of the reproductive and transformative habitus. *Critical Studies in Education*, *49*(2), 99–111.

Contents

Chapter 1
Locating the Research

This book tells the story of one secondary school and its community of students, teachers and parents. It is a community that is positioned at the 'back of the field', not simply because of its location in a relatively isolated region of Australia, although that has its own drawbacks, and not just because of its depressed economy. The story is also about the cultural aspects of doing school in a disadvantaged community, a community that is 'without' on a range of social and economic indicators and which impact on students' capacities to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). By comparison, the 'better off' have:

> a more complex experience of the relation between a wide range of ends and means … a bigger stock of available experiences of the relationship of aspirations and outcomes … a better position to explore and harvest diverse experiences of exploration and trial … [and] many opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options. (Appadurai, 2004, p. 68)

In thinking about advantage and disadvantage in this way, we offer a somewhat different perspective from the norm on what it means to 'do school', particularly in the way that disadvantage is reproduced for marginalised students. It also provides us with a position from which to explore opportunities or spaces for agency to generate alternatives.

We approach this task through the examination of a specific context with specific needs. The community in which the school is located is characterised by high levels of unemployment, high welfare dependency[1], a significant Indigenous population and teacher transience. Yet, in Western nations there are increasing numbers of communities and schools in similar circumstances. Crimson Brook Secondary College (the pseudonym that is used for the school throughout) provides a window through which to explore the possibilities and opportunities of schooling in these disadvantaged communities more generally. Historically, schools have been involved

[1] The term 'welfare dependency' has been used throughout this book consciously but with caution. We recognise that this is a contentious term and do not wish to subscribe to deficit explanations of individuals who are recipients of unemployment benefits. We use the term to illustrate the way that reliance on government funding for their day to day existence is thrust upon members of the Crimson Brook community due to the precarious nature of employment. This is not necessarily a reliance that they would choose for themselves. See Chaps. 3 and 7 for further discussion.

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_1, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

in the business of reproducing social inequalities, tending to "connect best with, and work best for, students of middle-class, Anglo, male backgrounds" (Ladwig & Gore, 1998, p. 19). With their reduced access to the cultural capital of the dominant, marginalised students are at a disadvantage in the classroom, suffering educational repercussions for having a cultural capital that is in the wrong currency (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995).

In *Schooling in disadvantaged communities: Playing the game from the back of the field* we explore this reproduction—but also the possibility of transformation—in the context of schooling and particularly in 'disadvantaged' schools. We contend that teachers, parents and students themselves are all involved in the game of reproducing disadvantage in schooling, but similarly, they can play a part in opening up opportunities for change to enhance learning for marginalised students. Rather than only attempting to transform students, teachers should be also be concerned to transform schooling; to provide educational opportunities that transform the life experiences of and open up opportunities for *all* young people, especially those disadvantaged by poverty and marginalised by difference (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003).

In laying out this ambition, the book draws upon the theoretical constructs of Pierre Bourdieu and his significant contributions to understanding the role that school systems play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage (Bourdieu, 1998b). As an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function, the educational system is an example of institutional symbolic violence exercised by the dominant over the dominated under a cloak of legitimacy. In contemporary Western societies wedded to democratic ideologies of equality of opportunity and meritocratic achievement, the hereditary transmission of power and privilege is frowned upon. Yet schools have become artefacts of the dominant social and cultural faction (Harker, 1990), sharing the task of reproduction with families unequally endowed with the legitimate cultural capital and the disposition to make use of it (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Indeed:

> among all the solutions put forward throughout history to the problem of the transmission of power and privileges, there surely does not exist one that is better concealed, and therefore better adapted to societies which tend to refuse the most patent forms of the hereditary transmission of power and privileges, than that solution which the educational system provides by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function. (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 72)

It is the illusion of the absolute autonomy of the educational system that enables it to serve external demands—the interests of the dominant classes—"under the guise of independence and neutrality … to conceal the social functions it performs and so to perform them more effectively" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 177–178). This illusion is intensified in state educational systems by the fact that "education is not paid for directly: it appears to have the open access of being 'free'. The work which teachers do therefore appears as 'disinterested' and motivated solely by ideals of education and learning" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 109). Its function of "conserving

'the social order' [is] so perfect that its dependence on the objective interests of the dominant classes [can] remain unnoticed in the happy unconsciousness of elective affinities" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 197–198).

It is familiarity that prevents us from seeing that which is concealed in the achievements of the school institution (Bourdieu, 1998b). The unmasking of this cultural privilege "destroys the justificatory ideology which enables the privileged classes, the main users of the educational system, to see their success as the confirmation of natural, personal gifts" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 71), thus challenging the principle on which the system is based. Bourdieu enables us to do this, to understand how it is that this system of reproduction of advantage and disadvantage works.

A secondary function of the book, then, is to stimulate understanding of the work of Bourdieu and a Bourdieuian research methodology which "simultaneously straddle[s] disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological divides … [and] theoretically, stand[s] at the confluence of intellectual streams that academic traditions have typically construed as discordant or incompatible" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 218). This work first came to be known to many educationalists in the English speaking world in 1977 via the publication of the translation of *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Although Bourdieu has made significant contributions to understanding the role that schools and school systems play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage (Bourdieu, 1998b), the work is still widely misunderstood and attracts fierce criticism for apparently mechanistic notions of power and domination, an overly determined view of human agency, and the oversimplification of class cultures and their relationships to each other (Giroux, 1983). According to his critics, Bourdieu's theory leaves no room for notions like resistance. In their view, his world is far more reproductive than transformative; his social universe "ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 91).

While Bourdieu has often been (mis)represented as a determinist, we see transformative potential in his theoretical constructs and suggest that it is possible for schools—such as Crimson Brook Secondary College—to be more than reproducers of society, even within the changing economic, political and cultural context in which schooling now takes place. We make the case that Bourdieu is a socially critical and post-structural theorist who is concerned that schooling reproduces society but confident that by destroying the myths that cloak the exercise of power and the perpetuation of domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), we can also work towards transforming it. Offering an alternative reading of Bourdieu's work, the book draws together three major areas of contribution to this theme of transformation; first, characterising Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (often criticised as too deterministic) as constituted by reproductive *and* transformative traits and considering the possibilities for the restructuring of students' habitus. Secondly, our discussion of *cultural capital* suggests that teachers can draw upon a variety of cultural capitals to act as agents of transformation rather than reproduction. And thirdly, we argue for the necessity of a transformation of the *field* to improve the educational outcomes of marginalised students.

These are the broad theoretical, methodological and empirical issues that are explored in this book through the context of one community. We introduce the community below.

An Introduction to Crimson Brook and the Research

As noted above, the unit of our analysis is Crimson Brook Secondary College and its students, and their particular location in an economically depressed Australian rural town and community. The town was established early in the twentieth century to service the local mine, which closed around a decade ago. Reputed to have been the richest mine of its type in the world, its success extended far beyond the community, with its wealth also stimulating the growth of nearby regional towns. Having provided work for tens of thousands over its lifetime, the economy of the town became dependent upon the continuance of mining. As a small district that had relied primarily on a single financial source, the long-term downturn of mining in this community has led to economic jeopardy. Since the mine's closure, the community has experienced considerable economic depression and a high proportion of its residents are now unemployed.

Described at the time of our research as the most socio-economically disadvantaged town in its state, it has the state's highest unemployment level (22.3%) and the nation's fifth-highest ratio of welfare dependency: for every 100 wage and salary earners, there are 175 recipients of unemployment benefits, disability support, parenting payment or the age pension. Enrolments at the school vary between 220 and 255 in any one year. There are 20 classroom teachers, 3 special education teachers, and 4 senior staff (including the Principal). 75% of the schools' students live in the town, the remainder are from surrounding rural areas. Approximately 28% have been identified as having learning difficulties and 2.4% have been ascertained as 'Intellectually Impaired'. There is also a significant Indigenous population (24% of students). The town is also characterised as a place of relocation for many uprooted and transient people—among other things, attracted by the inexpensive housing available in the area.

With reduced employment opportunities, fewer people have money to spend in the community and many small businesses have had to close as a result. The students are conscious of Crimson Brook's economic vulnerability and know that it will be difficult to obtain employment there. Although educational qualifications are viewed by many as a proven way of accessing more secure, well-paid jobs offered by national labour markets (see, for example, Ainley & McKenzie, 1999; McClelland, Macdonald, & MacDonald, 1998), in this town there tends to be disillusionment, especially among older students, about the real value of schooling, given the lack of employment opportunities in the community. Corbett's (2004, 2005) study of schooling in one Canadian coastal community in Nova Scotia reported similar scepticism about the uncertain economic payoff for formal education, particularly among young men, which helped him to explain

continuing high male dropout rates and local traditions of ambivalence and resistance to schooling.

Like many disadvantaged schools, the school has difficulty attracting and retaining high ability teachers, instead relying on a high turnover of often reluctant staff who are sent (or feel compelled) to fill positions unable to be resourced through teacher choice programs. Overlaying this is a general lack of experience of the entire staff. At the time of the research, the staff profile included four first year teachers, a Deputy Principal who had been in the position for ten weeks, and a Head of Department who was also a first year teacher. There are few mentors for staff other than the Principal and the second, slightly more experienced, Head of Department, who was responsible for the induction program for first year staff.

To illustrate the case, we draw on data from 23 semi-structured individual interviews with teachers, parents and students from the Crimson Brook Secondary College community. It is a purposive rather than a random sample; a mixture of teachers, parents and students differentiated by such attributes as gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status (SES), involvement in schooling, and levels of academic achievement. While the interviews were conducted over a fairly intense three month period, we worked closely with the school for approximately one year. After the completion of interviews, recordings were converted to textual form within word processing documents for ease of manipulation and discourse analysis was applied. School and community documents also formed part of the analysis. Results of the research were reported to the school.

With its heavy reliance on direct quotations and its intense interest in personal views and circumstances, it is not hard to imagine scenarios in case study research in which the identity of participants can only be thinly disguised. Even though all participants, schools and locations are anonymised, they are always potentially identifiable at least to those involved, if not to wider audiences. While we have indicated that the school is located within Australia, we have purposely withheld other information to preserve the anonymity of the school, its staff and students, and the community as a whole. In addition, differentiation between participants' comments is indicated only by their position in the field (teacher, parent, student) and by number (for example, Teacher # 17).

The Growth of Inequalities in New Economic, Political and Cultural Contexts

The specific circumstances of Crimson Brook Secondary College are better understood in conjunction with the growth in inequalities we are experiencing in new economic, political and cultural contexts. Young people are living out their lives in a changing social and economic world where 'work' is differently conceptualised. Employment is precarious and far from guaranteed; there has been a rise in the casualisation of jobs; unemployment is a reality; apprenticeships and job-training are difficult to obtain and there are less secure working conditions across Australia

generally (Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2004; Alston, 2004). This has been exacerbated by the recent world economic contraction and in many cases, recession. While there are more young people in part-time than full-time employment, research suggests that this is not their preference, but they are constrained by the lack of demand in the youth labour market (Kenyon, Sercombe, Black, & Lhuede, 2001).

The challenges that are brought about by national and international trends in the economy and labour market restructuring that face all young people are even more pronounced for rural young people (Alloway et al., 2004; Black et al., 2000; Kenyon et al., 2001). Unemployment and welfare dependency outside metropolitan areas is higher and more prolonged, job opportunities are limited and often poorly paid and the youth jobs that have not disappeared have been casualised in the quest for a more flexible and cheaper labour force (Alston, 2004; Collits, 2000; Kenyon et al., 2001). While some areas of rural Australia enjoy low rates of unemployment, more have higher than average unemployment with few prospects for growth (Black et al., 2000).

This vulnerability is compounded by the educational disadvantage young people in regional Australia often experience—in access to schools and reasonable curriculum choice, to a stable and capable teaching force, to higher education and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) programs, and to other training programs like apprenticeships and traineeships (Alloway et al., 2004; Kenyon et al., 2001). Together, these factors seem to suggest an abandonment of education by some rural young people because they see limited opportunities for employment at the end of their training (Black et al., 2000). This relatively low level of formal education translates into a "loss of skills for rural communities and the perpetuation of educational disadvantage of many rural areas" (Black et al., 2000, p. 40).

Rurality and low socio-economic status combine to produce increased educational disadvantage, prevailing against completion of schooling and entry to higher education and affecting the development of post-school aspirations and expectations of young people (Alloway et al., 2004; James et al., 1999). While socio-economic factors impact heavily upon many young Australians, "for young adults in rural areas, financial issues emerge as a particularly powerful influence upon the construction of plans for the future" (Alloway et al., 2004, p. 58). These factors are serious inhibitors or barriers for some young people and their families and make it impossible for them to consider aspiring towards expensive pathways (Alloway et al., 2004; James et al., 1999).

Low SES and rural students are less likely to complete school, less likely to see higher education as relevant to life and employment, and more likely to be worried by the overall cost of university (James et al., 1999). Kenyon et al. (2001) point out that for many rural students, few of their family members have engaged in post-compulsory education and even fewer have tertiary qualifications. This implies that they may have few role models in their communities who emphasise the importance, benefits and value of such education (Kenyon et al., 2001).

Gender is also an important influence in the formation of young people's aspirations and expectations. For many young men and women in rural communities, it

is difficult to construct aspirations that move beyond the gendered stereotypes and conservative values of the communities within which they live (Alloway et al., 2004; Corbett, 2004). Alloway and Gilbert (2004), for instance, have documented the traditional masculinist stances of rural young men in regional North Queensland, Australia. These men regard higher education as non-masculine; getting a job and being financially independent are high on their list of desirable aspirations for the future, where extended 'schooling' time is not. Appadurai (2004) would explain this in terms of the uneven distribution of the capacity to aspire. As he explains, the better off you are (in terms of material resources), the more likely you are to have a bigger stock of available experiences, which places you in a better position to imagine possibilities and options that you may not otherwise consider. Concomitantly, poorer members of society, precisely because of their lack of opportunities, have a more brittle horizon of aspirations.

While young women are more likely to choose higher education pathways than are young men, they are less likely to gain an apprenticeship, and more likely to be 'trapped' by a lack of employment opportunities; finding it far more difficult to obtain work that pays well and is relatively stable (Alloway et al., 2004; Alston, 2004; Warner-Smith & Lee, 2001). Warner-Smith and Lee's (2001) research also indicates that:

> rural young women are more liable to be caught up in a developing female polarisation: between young women who have an interest in getting higher education, pursuing a career and deferring motherhood, and "young women who have not been particularly interested in school, or who see femininity as equated with demonstrable sexuality and motherhood and do not aspire to further education" (2001, p. 34). They have argued that young rural women are disproportionately represented in this latter group of women, and are therefore at risk of being locked into the secondary labour market or out of the work force. (Alloway et al., 2004, p. 52)

The impact of ethnicity and race also needs to be considered. Without doubt Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) constitute the most disadvantaged and least privileged section of the Australian population. In comparison to non-Indigenous Australians, they are less likely to complete compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, less likely to participate in higher education and training, and more likely to be unemployed (Alloway et al., 2004; Bowser, Danaher, & Somasundaram, 2007; Kenyon & Black, 2001; Kenyon et al., 2001). For young Indigenous students in rural and remote Australia, the issues of education, employment and training are even more extreme (Kenyon et al., 2001).

There are various compounding factors that influence these trends for Indigenous communities. Indigenous young people have to deal with an educational curriculum that is often culturally inappropriate or insensitive and linguistically foreign (Kenyon et al., 2001). In addition, racism within rural communities also seriously affects the aspirations and expectations of Indigenous young adults, with entrenched discrimination impacting severely upon employment opportunities (Alloway et al., 2004; Kenyon et al., 2001). Indeed, cross-cultural tension remains a strong and unresolved reality in many small towns (Kenyon & Black, 2001). And various socio-economic issues impinge on learning and employment (Kenyon et al., 2001).

One consequence of the declining opportunities in rural areas is the out-migration of young people to regional 'sponge cities' (cities that soak up population from surrounding areas) and metropolitan areas in search of education and employment (Alston, 2004; Black et al., 2000; Collits, 2000; Kenyon et al., 2001; Onyx, Wood, Bullen, & Osburn, 2005). Indeed, in the research of Alloway et al. (2004), there was more of a sense of urgency about leaving local communities among students for whom the experience of rurality was marked by absence of opportunity, lack of lifestyle and a sense that their community offered them little to look forward to socially or economically. Their data suggests that an inverse relationship exists between the strength of the local economy and the determination of students to pursue their lives and careers elsewhere.

This cycle of decline can be even more prominent in communities heavily dependent on narrowly based economies such as mining in which alternative forms of employment are limited or virtually non-existent (Collits, 2000; Kenyon et al., 2001; Maude & Hugo, 1992; Onyx et al., 2005). In Australia's mining history, such communities have been vulnerable to moving through boom-bust cycles:

> with varying speeds as the inevitable sequence of discovery, development, production, and exhaustion of deposits takes its course … [T]here are many ghost towns across Australia which bear mute testimony to the impact of fluctuations in world demand for, and prices of, minerals as well as the working out of some deposits. (Maude & Hugo, 1992, p. 68)

The challenges that face all young people—but particularly rural young people from low socio-economic backgrounds—as they live out their lives in this changing social and economic world must not be discounted. These challenges, faced by many students from the case school, can prevail against completion of schooling and entry to higher education and affect the development of post-school aspirations, producing great educational disadvantage.

The final section of this chapter describes the organisation of the book; its chapters, their groupings, intent and content. Their perusal here provides a rationale and an overview for what follows.

An Outline

For some students, schools are wonderful places. But that is not the experience of many whose voices permeate the pages of this book and the classrooms of schools in disadvantaged communities. This book, then, sheds light on how teachers, parents and students—and particularly those that find themselves at the back of the field—can play the game of schooling in ways that "transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99). Schooling is not a level playing field; it is pottered with advantage and disadvantage. Many students and parents from Crimson Brook Secondary College do not understand the rules of the game to begin with and some do not even recognise the game. Berry's (1977) classic work draws on the analogy of a running race to describe the unfair playing field in Australian schooling in the following way:

> The Australian situation … more closely resembles the case where a few competitors start one metre from the finishing line, a few more fifty metres back up the track, a larger group are further back hammering in their starting blocks, others are still changing in a crowded dressing room, while the remainder are at home under the impression that the race starts tomorrow (p. 43)

However, in imagining a different kind of relationship with the rules of schooling, we do not wish to encourage students or others to simply rile against the rules, but to engage with them in critical ways that might change the rules themselves. How each chapter contributes to this imagining is outlined below.

Chapter 2 argues that education requires researchers' renewed examination and explanation of its involvement in the construction of social and economic differences. Specifically, we make the case for researchers to consider the theoretical work of Bourdieu—which is informed by socially critical and poststructural understandings of the world—and use research for "working towards justice, fairness and equity in education" (Griffiths, 1998, p. 3). In doing this, we explore two questions. First, what is the focus of and justification for Bourdieuian research, which makes Bourdieu's work particularly valuable for this kind of research agenda? And second, how do Bourdieuian researchers produce knowledge? These interests form the parameters for the two main sections of the chapter. In the first section we identify the focus of Bourdieu's research as social struggle and, in particular, how marginalised groups fare in this. In naming this broad research agenda, we claim Bourdieu as a critical social theorist with interests in uncovering social inequalities and, by implication, how these may be transformed. This is followed by an explanation of the central theoretical and political tenets of his methodology. Specifically, we note his theoretical dialecticism, particularly with respect to subjectivity and objectivity and how this guides his understanding of what is (worth) knowing. We also identify his radical democratic politics, which has implications for how and from where knowledge is produced.

While the current view of student achievement is that the quality of teaching students receive determines whether or not they do well at school, in Chap. 3 we draw attention to 'context' as a complementary explanation for students' academic achievement, particularly regarding achievement differences between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Our focus is on the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students and schools as well as the institutional stance that schools take in relation to their students. While we acknowledge that these arguments are by no means new, we work from the premise that context is being forgotten in the rush to attribute student achievement solely to what teachers do. The chapter begins with a brief rehearsal of the association between students' (low) SES (socio-economic status) and (low) achievement in Australian education; one that is exacerbated when it converges with rurality. We then proceed to locate Crimson Brook Secondary College within these broader issues. Through a dual exploration of the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students and schools from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the way that this positioning informs the stances that schools take in relation to their students, we argue for factoring back in the context of students' schooling as a complementary explanation for students' academic achievement.

Chapter 4 explores the transience and mobility of teachers working in this community, particularly as it relates to the ways that disadvantage is reproduced for marginalised students in the school. We argue that teacher mobility can influence the educational opportunities of students who are 'on the margins' of school success and of the socio-economic structure. In making this argument, we draw on Bourdieu's notion that, unlike economic capital, cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; that its accumulation requires an investment, above all of time. In this chapter, then, we explore the ways that teacher mobility may reproduce disadvantage by limiting students' access to the dominant cultural capital of schooling. We begin our account with a brief rehearsal of Bourdieu's analysis of the schooling system as generally reproductive of disadvantage. This is followed by our focus on teacher mobility; first, on the difficulties the school experiences in attracting 'good' teachers (those endowed with high levels of the dominant cultural capital); secondly, on the high levels of teacher turnover (even among those with low levels of the dominant cultural capital); and thirdly, on teachers who reside in the community but are not part of it. We conclude that what is needed is a transformation in policies governing staff placements to establish alternatives that redefine the reward system for teachers in ways that permit these students to succeed.

Chapter 5 explores socially just ideals and practices in the context of schooling. It begins by questioning how effective schooling 'really' is in advancing the interests of all students; asking for whom schooling is effective and the ways in which it recognises and deals with diverse interests. The chapter then considers how things might be better, first in relation to what happens in classrooms and, secondly, with respect to what happens in school communities. In our view, these two interests—in (i) who benefits (and who does not) by current social arrangements and (ii) what can be done about them—are the central tenets of a socially critical orientation. The chapter begins with what we (now) know about schooling and its effectiveness in moving schooling beyond the goal of 'compensation' for the least advantaged and towards the reorganisation of the cultural context of education as a whole. Having made the judgment that things could be better from the perspective of the least advantaged, it then canvasses areas in need of revision and draws out from the contemporary literature what those revisions might entail. Specifically, the chapter addresses: (i) what should be the (learning) experiences of students in schools; and (ii) how and by whom should schools be managed?

Historically, schools have tended to "connect best with, and work best for, students of middle-class, Anglo, male backgrounds" (Ladwig & Gore, 1998, p. 19), with the values, experiences and perspectives of these privileged groups parading as universal. Chapter 6 explores what this means for marginalised students from Crimson Brook Secondary College, where the cultural capital of their families is not always highly valued. It also attempts to make visible the unfair advantage that students from dominant groups bring to education by virtue of their extended exposure over time to the cultural capital that is highly valued and rewarded by schools. While Crimson Brook is a specific context with specific needs, in Western nations there are increasing numbers of communities and schools in similar circumstances, enabling the case to potentially speak to these other contexts. We argue that for

teachers who desire to make a difference in such schools and communities, the challenge is in transforming the capital that counts: teaching the academic skills and competencies required to enable their students to succeed in mainstream societies, while also ensuring that this context acknowledges and responds to the needs and interests of the cultural diversity of the communities they serve and simultaneously engaging with the deep structures that generate injustice. We conclude that such a socially just curriculum can open up ways of transforming the situation of the marginalised, equipping them with understandings that can empower them to improve their circumstances and lead fulfilled lives.

Chapter 7 examines the restructuring of marginalised students' habitus; specifically, the pedagogical messages of schooling that frame what it means to be identified as a student. We explore the tensions between how marginalised students see themselves and how they are seen by their peers, teachers and fellow community members, with reference to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. We propose that the way students see themselves and the way they are seen by their peers, teachers and fellow community members, fall largely into two categories: those with a *reproductive habitus*, who recognise the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and tend to read the future that fits them; and those with a *transformative habitus*, who recognise the capacity for improvisation and tend to look for opportunities for action in the social field. Although some teachers appear to be attempting a transformation of students, the chapter concludes that teachers should also value and give voice to who students are, as they identify themselves. They should be more concerned to transform schooling; to provide educational opportunities that transform the life experiences of and open up opportunities for *all* young people, especially those disadvantaged by poverty and marginalised by difference (Lingard et al., 2003).

The final chapter of the book attempts to elucidate the complex relations between schooling and socio-cultural contexts which can lead to inequalities of opportunity for parent participation in schooling and work to maintain disadvantage for marginalised students. Our analysis begins with largely traditional explanations for the non-participation of parents. We then explore the explanations of these parents themselves—the reasons they give for not getting involved in the life of the school. Finally we consider their responses to what can be done to increase the involvement of parents in schools. In doing so, this chapter identifies agendas that serve socially just purposes for schools and their communities. Throughout this analysis, we make use of Bourdieu's notion of *field*, because of its explanatory power in elucidating the inequalities of opportunity in schooling. The chapter draws the book to a close by attempting to make visible the structural constraints which affect parental participation in one disadvantaged school, with a view to moving beyond attributions of blame and thinking through ways in which we can engage with the current arrangements.

It is in this spirit of transforming the understandings and practices of those involved in schooling in disadvantaged communities that we begin Chap. 2.

Chapter 2
Coming to Terms with Social Inequalities in Education

Education is often perceived to be the great equaliser in an otherwise unjust society. Since the introduction of mass schooling in the mid-nineteenth century, many Australians have looked to public education as a basic right and a vehicle that will furnish them with the rewards and opportunities to experience more fulfilling and satisfying lives (Gale, 2006). Yet, as Thomson (2001) points out, there has never been a free and democratic public education system. Because access to education has always been at a cost to parents, schools have always favoured the rich and powerful (Connell, 1993).

Mindful of the current environment in which differential student outcomes are attributed simply to (teachers' and/or students') hard work or the lack of it, we argue that renewed examination and explanation of the involvement of education in the construction of social and economic differences is required. Specifically, we make the case for researchers to draw on the theoretical work of Bourdieu—which is informed by socially critical and post-structural understandings of the world—and use research for "working towards justice, fairness and equity in education" (Griffiths, 1998, p. 3). This requires "starting the process of educational research with a set of values that guide decisions about *what* is researched, and *how* and *why*" (Griffiths, 1998, p. 3, emphasis original). In pursuing this agenda, we explore two questions: what is the focus of and justification for Bourdieuian research, which makes Bourdieu's work particularly valuable for this kind of research agenda? And how do Bourdieuian researchers produce knowledge?

These interests form the parameters for the two main sections of the chapter. In the first section we identify the focus of Bourdieu's research as social struggle and, in particular, how marginalised groups fare in this. In naming this broad research agenda, we claim Bourdieu as a critical social theorist with interests in uncovering social inequalities and, by implication, how these may be transformed, although we are conscious of his critics on this latter point. This is followed by an account of knowledge production, *a la* Bourdieu. In this explanation we resist the temptation to resort to the minutiae of particular research methods, casting some in and some out of consideration, for this is not Bourdieu's style. Rather, we focus on the central theoretical and political tenets of his methodology, identifying these as the broad intentions that inform his research. Specifically, we note his theoretical

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_2, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

dialecticism, particularly with respect to subjectivity and objectivity and how this guides his understanding of what is (worth) knowing. We also identify his radical democratic politics, which has implications for how and from where knowledge is produced. In both of these we note Bourdieu's predilection to make public his own positioning. On the surface, this would seem to make an account of a Bourdieuian methodology somewhat easier, although Bourdieu himself would be wary of taking at face value what is claimed about oneself.

We begin, then, with an account of Bourdieu's socially critical disposition for research, particularly with respect to how this plays out in the context of schooling and society more broadly, and affirming the value of his work in guiding researchers in their examination and explanation of social inequalities in education.

A Bourdieuian Focus: Taking a Critical Standpoint on Social Inequalities

Pierre Bourdieu and those who employ his theoretical concepts have made significant contributions in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to understanding the role that schools and school systems play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities and legitimating certain cultural practices through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage (Bourdieu, 1998b). In the main, their assessment has been that despite ideologies of equal opportunity and meritocracy, few educational systems are called upon by the dominant classes "to do anything other than reproduce the legitimate culture as it stands and produce agents capable of manipulating it legitimately" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 59–60).

Informed by his research exposing the fallacy of individuals familiar with bourgeois culture possessing any more innate intelligence or 'giftedness' than those who are unfamiliar with it (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1974; Bourdieu & de Saint Martin, 1974), Bourdieu argues against what he sees as a meritocratic illusion. In such work, he argues that it is the culture of the dominant group—that is, the group that controls the economic, social, and political resources—which is embodied within schools. In other words, educational institutions ensure the profitability of the cultural capital of the dominant, attesting to their gifts and merits. Educational differences are thus frequently 'misrecognised' as the result of 'individual giftedness' rather than class based differences, ignoring the fact that the abilities measured by scholastic criteria often stem not from natural 'gifts' but from "the greater or lesser affinity between class cultural habits and the demands of the educational system or the criteria which define success within it" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 22). Bourdieu's sociological account implies a major break with human capital theories, western psychology and the neo-liberal politics that drive educational policy, all of which 'explain' differences in scholastic outcomes as an effect of natural aptitudes.

The notion of 'cultural capital', explored further in subsequent chapters, was proposed by Bourdieu in the early 1960s to describe familiarity with bourgeois culture, the unequal distribution of which helps to conserve social hierarchy under the cloak

of individual talent and academic meritocracy (Wacquant, 1998). Cultural capital refers to a way of thinking and a disposition to life where the "expected behaviours, expected language competencies, the explicit and implicit values, knowledge, attitudes to and relationship with academic culture required for success in school are all competencies which one class brings with them to school" (Henry, Knight, Lingard, & Taylor, 1988, p. 233). Yet "the school assumes middle-class culture, attitudes and values in *all* its pupils. Any other background, however rich in experiences, often turns out to be a liability" (Henry et al., 1988, pp. 142–143, emphasis added).

It is this existence of a world "characterized by socio-economic and cultural inequalities where researchers have an interest and a part to play in trying to emancipate oppressed groups, those who suffer from social and economic inequality and exclusion and a lack of social justice" (Johnston, 2000, p. 69), which motivates socially critical research. Committed to social justice and addressing social inequalities, critical theorists conduct research in cultural and social criticism (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994), directing their emancipatory work toward uncovering "the subtleties of oppression so that its invisibility to those affected by it might be removed; so that oppression might become challenged, and changed" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 7). Socially critical research, like the research reported in this book, "can set out to explain how injustices and inequalities are produced, reproduced and sustained … [and] can provide a basis for the development of strategies of social transformation" (Ozga & Gewirtz, 1994, p. 123).

It is an approach to research that attempts to dig beneath surface appearances, asking how social systems work, and how ideology or history conceal the processes that oppress and control people, in order to reveal the nature of oppressive mechanisms (Harvey, 1990). In this way, by asking "whose interests are being served and how" (Tripp, 1998, p. 37) in the social arrangements we find, socially critical researchers hope to "work towards a more just social order" (Lenzo, 1995, p. 17) in which the subordinated may become "empowered to take control of their lives and change the conditions which have caused their oppression" (Beder, 1991, p. 4). Implied here is that critical researchers are committed not just to knowing, but to transforming; to changing the world, to combating discrimination and oppression (Figueroa, 2000). In this they seek to "go beyond … describing 'what is going on' and explaining 'why' … For them, unmasking oppressive structures and contributing to social and political change … is … integral to … research" (Troyna, 1995, p. 398).

It is on these grounds in particular that we claim Bourdieu as a socially critical theorist, although some might question his commitment to imagining how things in society and education might be different. At least regarding the first of critical theory's interests, Bourdieu harbours a concern that schooling reproduces society and provides explanation of how this system of reproduction of advantage and disadvantage in education works. To be of practical and emancipatory value, research must do more than assist in understanding the human condition; it must also offer some vision of an alternative to the present arrangements (Benhabib, 1986), as we attempt to do in this book. In educational contexts, Carlson and Apple (1998) have chastised critical educators and researchers, arguing that they need to become more engaged in "not only critiquing existing discourses and practices in schools but in

the formulation of democratic and progressive visions of what could be" (p. 30). Like many socially critical theorists, Bourdieu has been criticised for his emphasis on reproduction at the expense of possible action to create a new and different world. According to his critics, Bourdieu's theory seems to leave no room for notions like resistance (Grenfell & James, 1998a). However, in our view, his work is largely misunderstood.

For example, consider his concept of habitus, which is explored further in Chap. 7. Habitus, as Bourdieu uses the term, characterises the recurring patterns of class outlook—the beliefs, values, conduct, speech, dress and manners—which are inculcated by everyday experiences within the family, the peer group and the school. Implying habit, or unthinking-ness in actions, the habitus operates below the level of calculation and consciousness, underlying and conditioning and orienting practices by providing individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives "without consciously obeying rules explicitly posed as such" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 76). That is, the habitus disposes actors to do certain things, orienting their actions and inclinations, without strictly determining them.

Bourdieu's attempt to "undermine the dualisms of objectivism and subjectivism, structure and agent, determinism and phenomenology" is a central element of his work (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 528). The notion enables Bourdieu to analyse the behaviour of agents as "objectively coordinated and regular without being the product of rules, on the one hand, or conscious rationality, on the other" (Postone, LiPuma, & Calhoun, 1993, p. 4). In this sense, habitus transcends "determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and the unconscious, or the individual and society" (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 54–55).

However, as Kenway and McLeod (2004) point out, "there remains much contestation over the extent to which this is ultimately an account of social determination and reproduction, where the habitus is reducible to the effects of the field, or whether there is space for the improvisation of agents" (p. 528). Jenkins (2002), among others, argues that despite Bourdieu's best efforts to "transcend the dualistic divide between 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism' … [he] remains caught in an unresolved contradiction between determinism and voluntarism, with the balance of his argument favouring the former" (p. 21). Although concerned to give to practice an active, inventive intention by insisting on the generative capacities of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990a), some suggest that Bourdieu does not give nearly enough credit to agency and the revolutionary potential of agents. In their view, his world is far more reproductive than transformative; his social universe "ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 91). For example, Nash (1990) maintains that Bourdieu's theory of practice "negates the theory of action, blurs the concept of choice, and introduces confusion, circularity and pseudo-determinism" (p. 445). Similarly, Jenkins (2002) argues that despite Bourdieu's "acknowledgement of, and enthusiasm for, resistance, it is difficult to find examples in his work of its efficacy or importance" (p. 90).

While it is not difficult to understand the critique directed at Bourdieu's work given the structuralist language and forms of reasoning in some early formulations

of habitus (for example, Bourdieu, 1977b; McLeod, 2005), some of Bourdieu's texts provide more space for agency than others. In more recent studies, such as *The Weight of the World* (1999), "there is a great deal of striving, resistance and action aimed at changing current circumstances as many of the poor and dispossessed, interviewed by Bourdieu and his colleagues, search around for ways of changing and transforming their lives" (Reay, 2004, p. 437). This powerful "account of how 'ordinary people' are negotiating lives in a time of major social, cultural and economic upheaval" (McLeod, 2005, p. 15) is oriented to understanding the effects of 'objective relations' in the apparently idiosyncratic and individual; to understand, in other words, "the complexity of interactions between social space/field and habitus" (McLeod, 2005, p. 15). Indeed, Bourdieu would argue, as would we, that "micro-negotiations in local contexts and macro processes of society and culture need to be seen as dialectically related" (Dillabough, 2004, p. 490).

While we agree with Jenkins (2002) that Bourdieu's conception of agency is somewhat restrained, we tend to regard this as a strength, reflecting its relationship with an equally restrained conception of structure. In short, "there is no such thing as pure agency; but a kind of (limited) agency can be identified … [S]ubjects are able to negotiate the rules, regulations, influences and imperatives that inform all cultural practice, and delimit thought and action, precisely because fields dispose them to do so" (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 540). Agency, then, is inextricably bound up with the world. That is:

> Bourdieu specifically rejects the idea of a knowing, transcendental consciousness … somehow able to free itself from its history, social trajectories, and circumstances of thought. All activity and knowledge … is always informed by a relationship between where the agent has been and how their history has been incorporated, on the one hand, and their context or circumstances (both in a general sense and 'of the moment'), on the other. In other words, agency is always the result of a coming together of the habitus and the specific cultural fields and contexts in which agents 'find themselves', in both senses of the expression. (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 541)

Bourdieu (1993) puts it best when he says that:

> the *habitus* is a product of conditionings which tends to reproduce the objective logic of those conditionings while transforming it. It's a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products. (p. 87, emphasis original)

In a similar way, we argue that the same conceptual framework that Bourdieu uses to explore reproduction can also be employed to explain situations of rupture and transformation (Wacquant, 1998). Indeed, an emphasis on reproduction does not foreclose contrary action such as revolutionary struggle (Calhoun, 1993). For Bourdieu, the social universe is the site of endless and pitiless competition. It is struggle, not 'reproduction', that is the master metaphor at the core of his thought (Wacquant, 1998). Understood in this way, Bourdieu's critique is an explanatory account of the:

> manifold processes whereby the social order masks its arbitrariness and perpetuates itself—by extorting from the subordinate practical acceptance of, if not willed consent to, its existing hierarchies. This account of *symbolic violence*—the imposition of systems of

> meaning that legitimize and thus solidify structures of inequality—simultaneously points to the social conditions under which these hierarchies can be challenged, transformed, nay overturned. (Wacquant, 1998, p. 217, emphasis original)

Central to this explanation, Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field, explored in more depth in subsequent chapters of the book, are linked to one another, each achieving their:

> full analytical potency only in tandem with the others. Together they enable us to elucidate cases of reproduction—when social and mental structures are in agreement and reinforce each other—as well as transformation—when discordances arise between habitus and field—leading to innovation, crisis, and structural change. (Wacquant, 1998, p. 223)

On the basis of these three concepts, Bourdieu has attempted to formulate a reflexive approach to social life to "uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe, as well as the 'mechanisms' which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 7; cited in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Tied to a notion of emancipation, such an approach to the study of human lives would not be worth the trouble for Bourdieu if it did not help agents to grasp the meaning of their actions. His approach seeks to illuminate "the social and cultural reproduction of inequality by analysing processes of misrecognition: that is, by investigating how the habitus of dominated groups can veil the conditions of their subordination" (Postone et al., 1993, p. 6). This is the task of sociology: to unmask self-deception, to cause one "to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 207).

Indeed, Wacquant (1998) argues that Bourdieu's single aim is to forestall or prevent abuses of power and to disseminate instruments of resistance to symbolic domination. Social science, he suggests, "can and must contribute to the elaboration of 'realistic utopias' suited to guiding collective action and to promoting the institutionalization of justice and freedom" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 229). Bourdieu's "relentless disclosure of power and privilege in its most varied and subtlest forms" (Thompson, 1991, p. 31)—understanding the socially instituted limits of the ways of speaking, thinking and acting which are characteristic of our societies today—is the first step in creating new social relations; alternative ways of organising social and political life (Thompson, 1991).

From their earliest beginnings, then, Bourdieu's analyses of social practices were intended to elucidate the workings of social power and offer a *critical*, not simply a neutral, understanding of social life (Postone et al., 1993). What is problematic for Bourdieu is the fact that the established order is *not* seen as problematic (Bourdieu, 1998b). For Bourdieu, this is because justifications for the prevailing social order are masked by 'theoretical theory' (Bourdieu, 1977b) that offers explanations of social life removed from a rigorous engagement with social practices. It is for these reasons that we see a Bourdieuian methodology as having the potential to make a valuable contribution in researching social inequalities in education: (i) because it is an approach to research centrally concerned with the dialectic between the theoretical and the empirical, important for theorising 'what is really going on', and

also (ii) because such methodology has the potential to "denaturalize and to defatalize the social world … to destroy the myths that cloak the exercise of power and the perpetuation of domination" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 49–50). Having outlined the focus of and justification for Bourdieuian research, we move now to a discussion around how Bourdieuian researchers, like ourselves, produce knowledge about social inequalities.

A Bourdieuian Method: Producing Knowledge About Social Inequalities

In advancing this research agenda of opening up social practices to critical scrutiny, Bourdieu adopts a similarly open-ended approach to conducting research, guided by a particular philosophical stance but not method prescriptive. That is, Bourdieu preaches and practices methodological polytheism, deploying whatever data production technique is best suited to the question at hand in his own research (Wacquant, 1998). For him, it is not simply a question of what technique to use and how to use it, but rather why it is used and to what ends (Grenfell & James, 1998c). What Bourdieu does hold to, though, is the continuous use of a set of interrelated conceptual metaphors: habitus, capital and field. These are central to his method and practice, and all other considerations flow from them. They are the pivot on which he constructs his synthesis of subjectivism and objectivism (Grenfell & James, 1998c). And, as explained above, they are also the mechanisms through which he, and others like him, explore social inequalities.

It is this synthesis of object and subject that first characterises Bourdieu's methodology, which also explains his comfortableness with qualitative and quantitative data, for example. A second characteristic is his insistence on participant objectivation, given that all research is motivated by intrinsic interests of some kind. From Bourdieu's perspective, researchers need to recognise these personal biases—their values, experiences and constructions—and acknowledge that these, as well as the historical, ideological moment in which they live, will influence the direction of their research. These theoretical and political characteristics of Bourdieu's methodology are taken up more fully below, first in relation to the theory that informs this methodology and second with regard to its (political) practice.

Bourdieuian Methodology in Theory

Social theory for Bourdieu is characterised by an opposition between subjectivist and objectivist approaches. Subjectivist viewpoints "have as their center of gravity the beliefs, desires, and judgments of agents and consider these agents endowed and empowered to make the world and act according to their own lights" (Postone et al., 1993, p. 3). By contrast, objectivist views hold that "social reality consists

of sets of relations and forces that impose themselves upon agents, 'irrespective of their consciousness and will' (to invoke Marx's well-known formula)" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 220).

Similarly and relatedly, if we consider the role that institutional and structural influences have in shaping society and how much part the actions of individuals (and groups) play in the process, the structuralist side of the debate would suggest that:

> men [*sic*] can change the world through their actions, indicating the role of agency, but that they are not *free* to do so just as they please, indicating the social and economic limits to action in society. Marxist and functionalist accounts are sometimes therefore said to be structuralist accounts because they emphasise the structuring and determining quality of society over and against the voluntarist capacity of agents. Weberian and phenomenological accounts of society have sometimes, in contrast, been viewed as voluntarist, having centred too much on the actions of individuals to create and recreate the world, as if external constraints did not exist. (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990, pp. 22–23, emphasis original)

A structuralist approach therefore aims at grasping "objective relations that are independent of individual minds and wills" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 34), and a phenomenological, interactionist or ethnomethodological approach aims at grasping "what agents actually experience of interactions and social contacts, and the contribution they make to the mental and practical construction of social realities" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 34).

Evident in Bourdieu's methodology is a rejection of such dualist constructions; the stuff of 'bad' theory. For Bourdieu, as with objectivity and subjectivity, the two moments—structure and agency—stand in dialectical relationship. On the one side:

> the *social structures* that the sociologist lays bare in the objectivist phase, by pushing aside the subjective representations of the agent, do constrain the latter's practices. But, on the other side, these representations, and the *mental structures* that underpin them, must also be taken into account insofar as they guide the individual and collective struggles through which agents seek to conserve or transform these objective structures. (Wacquant, 1998, p. 220, emphasis original)

However, in rejecting the determinism of mechanistic explanations of social life, Bourdieu does not want to fall into the other trap, as he perceives it, of "viewing conscious and deliberate intentions as a sufficient explanation of what people do" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 66). Neither of these positions can adequately grasp social life. Social life, Bourdieu argues, "must be understood in terms that do justice both to objective material, social, and cultural structures and to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups" (Postone et al., 1993, p. 3).

Accordingly, Bourdieu's theory of practice seeks to establish an alternative to the extremes of post-modernist subjectivity and positivist objectivity by building "a dialectical relationship between human thought, action and objective surroundings" (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 16). His concepts of capital, habitus and field attempt to develop a sociology to transcend the subjectivist/objectivist dichotomy, providing new ways of relating subjective human dispositions and actions and the objective social world within which they are framed. Bourdieu's project is an attempt to understand how "'objective', supra-individual social reality (cultural

and institutional social structure) and the internalised 'subjective' mental worlds of individuals as cultural beings and social actors are inextricably bound up together, each being a contributor to—and, indeed, an aspect of—the other" (Jenkins, 2002, pp. 19–20). Bourdieu describes this project as 'genetic structuralism' (Bourdieu, 1990a); a method seeking to avoid the subjective-objective polarisations of both phenomenology and structuralism.

Bourdieu's theoretical approach could therefore be described as proceeding from a *relationalism* that grasps:

> both objective and subjective reality in the form of mutually interpenetrating systems of relations. All three of his core theoretical notions—habitus, capital, and field—are designed to capture the fundamentally recursive and relational nature of social life. Together, they enable Bourdieu to break out of the two homological antinomies of 'micro' and 'macro' levels of analysis and structure versus agency that presently polarize much social theorizing and to embark on a grounded search for the immanent logic of social action. (Wacquant, 1993, p. 236)

Bourdieu's scientific thought and practice "simultaneously straddle disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological divides. Theoretically, they stand at the confluence of intellectual streams that academic traditions have typically construed as discordant or incompatible" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 218).

Bourdieu transcends the seemingly antagonistic paradigms of objectivism and subjectivism by turning them into "*moments* of a form of analysis designed to recapture the intrinsically double reality of the social world" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10–11, emphasis original). The objective structures, or spaces of *positions*—"the distribution of socially efficient resources that define the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10–11)—are introduced alongside "the immediate, lived experience of agents in order to explicate the categories of perception and appreciation (*dispositions*) that structure their action from inside" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10–11, emphasis original).

According to Bourdieu, although the two moments of analysis are equally necessary, they are not equal: "epistemological priority is granted to objectivist rupture over subjectivist understanding" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10–11). Bourdieuians see the need to problematise what people say as something other than either simply a reflection of 'what is going on in their heads' or a valid description of the social world (Jenkins, 2002). Questions are raised about the degree to which the testimony of research subjects is reliable and about the limits within which they can reflect adequately upon their own practice (Jenkins, 2002).

At the same time, the post-structuralist understanding "that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate" (Harvey, 1989, p. 48), is central to Bourdieuian research. Epistemological standpoints previously undervalued make up an important focus of such research, creating spaces for marginalised voices to speak their own knowledges. This is certainly the case in the research reported in this book. Post-structuralism's close attention to 'other worlds' and to 'other voices' that have for too long been silenced (Harvey, 1989) lead many to claim that "it is only from these stand-

points that legitimate knowledge concerning them can be generated and, in some cases, known" (Gale, 1997, p. 104). Indeed, as Sandra Harding (1998) notes:

> Starting thought from the lives of those people upon whose exploitation the legitimacy of the dominant system depends can bring into focus questions and issues that were not visible, 'important', or legitimate within the dominant institutions, their conceptual frameworks, cultures, and practices. (p. 17)

Bourdieu seeks to overcome this opposition between "theoretical knowledge of the social world as constructed by outside observers and the knowledge used by those who possess a practical mastery of their world" (Postone et al., 1993, p. 3) by attempting to accord validity to 'native' conceptions without simply taking those conceptions at face value. He speaks of the artificiality both of the vision that he sometimes had by observing things from a strictly objectivist point of view and of "the vision that informants proposed [to him] when, in their concern to play the game, to be equal to the situation created by the theoretical questioning, they turned themselves as it were into the spontaneous theoreticians of their practice" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 21–22).

Utilising Bourdieu's theoretical perspective to inform data analysis, then, requires researchers to look at the dynamic interaction between individuals and the surroundings in which they find themselves and situate their accounts within a larger historical, political, economic and symbolic context; much as we have attempted to do. Bourdieu (in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 104–107) gives a very explicit account of what it means to analyse a field by thinking in terms of three distinct levels that direct the researcher to:

1. Analyse the position of the field *vis-à-vis* the field of power;
2. Map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority of which the field is the site; and
3. Analyse the habitus of agents; the systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a determinate type of social and economic condition.

Grenfell and James (1998c) claim that we can think similarly about education: as systems of power hierarchies organised within society with consequent effects on individuals who both are produced by and reproduce them. At the first level (level 1), there is the relationship between "education and the political and economic systems of society. This relationship is crucial in terms of what is expected of education; how it is organized and to what ends—in other words, what is valued and legitimate" (Grenfell & James, 1998c, p. 169). Further:

> Education does not exist as a uniform totality, however, but is made up of a series of institutions and agents, each of which can be defined in terms of their position in the field as a whole: the fields within the field (level 2). Different sectors—primary, secondary, tertiary—have particular areas of activity, which each have specific legitimate terms of governance. Such agents and institutions exist across and within sectors, and their position can be defined ultimately in terms of their relations to each other and the values of the field as a whole. However, there are also intra-institutional structural relations; that is, the way an individual establishment is organized to reflect its competition for legitimate pedagogic products and resources from the field; for example, students and pupils, talented staff, economic and cultural resources, academic achievement, etc. (Grenfell & James, 1998c, p. 169)

Finally, there is the habitus of the individuals involved (level 3):

> Such habitus, and the corresponding systems of dispositions, may well be expressed as the organizational ethos of those senior managers who are attempting to apply nationally defined policies; or, the professional activities, thoughts and beliefs of those being organized. It may also include the habitus of students and pupils, and, ultimately, that of their families. (Grenfell & James, 1998c, p. 169)

In producing knowledge, it is important not to consider one level without also taking account of the other two. However, it is not always methodologically possible to present analyses on each level simultaneously. To some degree they have to be separated (Grenfell & James, 1998c).

Bourdieuian Methodology in Practice

A second characteristic of a Bourdieuian methodology concerns its politics; in particular, Bourdieu's insistence that researchers recognise personal biases that may blur the sociological gaze and acknowledge that these, as well as the historical, ideological moment in which they live, will influence the direction of their research.

Like all social activity, critical social science is not value neutral. All research is motivated by practical or intrinsic interests of some kind. Even if one starts with the assumption that there exists one reality out there to be discovered (as positivists do), this reality cannot be viewed as it 'really is' but only as seen *through some value window* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). That is, there is no perfectly transparent or neutral way to represent the physical or social world. To suppose, for example, "that it is possible for a human investigator to step outside his or her own humanness … by disregarding one's own values [and] experiences … is to believe in magic" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 67). Yet, "if research cannot be value neutral, it can be—and, if it is to be ethical, it must be—value critical" (Figueroa, 2000, p. 88). It is the responsibility of researchers to 'come clean' about predispositions and feelings, to declare their values, though even this is not sufficient. As researchers are often not fully aware of their 'taken-for-granteds', values must be unearthed, clarified and questioned (Figueroa, 2000). As Bourdieu points out, the ground most difficult to see is always the patch one is standing on (Pollitt, 2002).

Bourdieu's (1990a) rejection of the distant gaze means that he necessarily operates within what he analyses; he is both an analyst of science and society, and an actor in these fields (Postone et al., 1993). In this very real sense, the critical sociologist also occupies a position within the game. The objects of analysis within the field are "the stakes in the game (capital), the strategies, the objectified histories of the agents (their positions and habitus) including, ineluctably, that of the sociologist" (Barnard, 1990, p. 78). This is why Bourdieu insists on *participant objectivation*: an objectivation of the social world that has made both the anthropologist and the conscious or unconscious anthropology he engages in, his anthropological practice (Bourdieu, 2000). This objectivation leads to *methodological reflexivity* when social analysts continually turn the instruments of their science back on themselves

in an effort to uncover everything that their point of view on social reality owes to their place in it (Wacquant, 1993).

Bourdieu believes that three types of biases may blur the sociological gaze (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The first is the social origins and coordinates, the position and trajectory in the social space of the individual researcher (for example, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, education, etc.). In fact, one of Bourdieu's students, Charles Souliè, has shown that research topics in philosophy and sociology are statistically related to social origin and trajectory, gender and educational trajectory. This means that:

> our seemingly most personal choices, the most intimate and therefore most cherished ones, our choice of discipline and of our favoured subjects … of our theoretical and methodological orientations, have their origin in socially constituted dispositions in which banally social, sadly impersonal properties still express themselves in a more or less transfigured form. (Bourdieu, 2000, n.p.)

As the most obvious bias, the position of the researcher in the social space is the most readily controlled by means of mutual and self-criticism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 1998).

A second bias is linked to the position that the analyst occupies in the *academic* field as distinct from the broader social structure:

> that is, in the objective space of possible intellectual positions offered to him or her at a given moment, and, beyond, in the field of power. The points of view of sociologists, like any other cultural producers, always owe something to their situation in a field where all define themselves in part in relational terms, by their difference and distance from certain others with whom they compete. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 39)

Participant objectivation here aims to grasp everything that the thinking of the researcher may owe to the fact that she/he:

- is part of a field with its "traditions, habits of thought, problematics, shared self-evidences",
- occupies a particular position (for example, the newcomer who has to prove her/himself), and
- has interests of a particular kind "which may unconsciously orient his [*sic*] scientific choices, the choice of discipline itself, or, more precisely, the choice of this or that method—qualitative or quantitative for example—or this or that object" (Bourdieu, 2000, n.p.).

Indeed, according to Bourdieu (2000), the researcher's "most decisive scientific choices depend very closely on the position he [*sic*] occupies within his own professional universe" (n.p.). For Bourdieu (1984), then, objectivation is always bound to remain partial, and therefore false, "so long as it fails to include the point of view from which it speaks and so fails to construct the game as a whole" (pp. 12–13).

This particular bias is much less often discerned and pondered, and calls for "critical dissection of the concepts, methods, and problematics [the researcher] inherits as well as for vigilance toward the censorship exercised by disciplinary and institutional attachments" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 225).

The third and most insidious source of bias is what Bourdieu refers to as an 'intellectual bias'—that is, "a tendency for subjects from certain fields (academe for one) to abstract practices from their contexts, and see them as ideas to be contemplated rather than problems to be addressed or solved" (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 545). This intellectualist bias, which entices us to construe the world as a spectacle:

> as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically, is more profound and more distorting than those rooted in the social origins or location of the analyst in the academic field, because it can lead us to miss entirely the *differentia specifica* of the logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1990b, 1990c). (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 39–40, emphasis original)

When faced with the challenge of studying a world to which we are linked, often our first thought is to deny our own involvement. According to Bourdieu (1988), this "concern to escape any suspicion of prejudice leads us to attempt to negate ourselves as 'biased' or 'informed' subjects automatically suspected of using weapons of science in the pursuit of personal interests" (p. 6). In Bourdieu's (2000) view, nothing is more false than this universally accepted maxim that the researcher must put nothing of her/himself into her/his research. On the contrary, Bourdieu believes that a researcher should constantly refer to her/his experiences, although not in a guilty, unconscious or uncontrolled way.

As excessive proximity constitutes as much of an obstacle to scientific knowledge as excessive remoteness, turning to study the historical conditions of the researcher's own production is particularly important for the sociologist who chooses to study her/his own world (Bourdieu, 1988). Given that we are generally more indifferent to the games in which we are ourselves involved, it is necessary for the researcher to "exoticize the domestic, through a break with his [*sic*] initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to him because they are too familiar" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi). Only a sociological self-analysis of this kind can really assist to:

> place the scholar in a position where he [*sic*] is able to bring to bear on his familiar world the detached scrutiny which … the ethnologist brings to bear on any world to which he is not linked by the inherent complicity of being involved in its social game, its *illusio*, which creates the very value of the objectives of the game, as it does the value of the game itself. (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xii, emphasis original)

Each of us, then, is encumbered by a past. For Bourdieu, it is only a reflexive sociology that can help:

> free intellectuals from their illusions—and first of all from the illusion that they do not have any, especially about themselves—and can at least have the negative virtue of making it more difficult for them to bring a passive and unconscious contribution to symbolic domination. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 195)

It is important, then, for critical sociologists to cast a professional eye on the world of their origin, to understand and deconstruct their own position in both the research and the academic field. In doing so, research becomes a process of self-analysis in which researchers attempt to grasp at a conscious level their own dispositions in order to make sense of those they conduct their research with/on. As Kenway and

McLeod (2004) point out, this kind of reflexivity looks very much like innovations within feminist and post-structuralist scholarship. Indeed:

> while many accounts do no more than notice (and often self-indulgently—vanity reflexivity) the autobiography of the researcher, in other research texts methodological reflexivity is deployed in a stronger form, acknowledging the partiality of perspective and the effects of different (structural and spatial) locations and power relations between researcher and researched. Such claiming of reflexivity, in contrast to the simply individualizing autobiographical acknowledgments, connects more closely with the project of reflexive sociology as described by Bourdieu. (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 527)

Kenway and McLeod (2004) claim that a consciousness of our own positions and dispositions within the field is something that feminist sociologists of education seek to keep to the fore. "This includes the effect of our presence on the perspectives we are offered by the various participants, and our own attachment to and construction of particular perspectives and truths" (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 541).

The work of Bourdieu also encourages the researcher to avoid the symbolic violence of imposing an interpretation on reality (Grenfell & James, 1998b). In other forms of research, theorising is something that is "the sole prerogative of qualified outsiders, once compliant 'subjects' have been conveniently milked" (Smyth & Hattam, 2001, p. 408). As the researcher selects, interprets and represents the data, the intended meanings of participants inevitably become distorted and reshaped (Burke, 2002). Checking interpretations and emerging constructions with respondents, then, is an important part of the conclusion drawing and verification process for Bourdieuian researchers, like ourselves. The necessity of this reflects a realisation by researchers that their interpretation is partial and limited (Walker, 1983) and, thus, they must attempt to come to understand how all those who are involved interpret behaviour in addition to the way they interpret it from their own perspective (Wilson, 1977). Reality is contested. Bourdieuian researchers, as socially critical researchers, are "aware from the outset" that their task is a political one involving "not simply telling the truth of this world … but also showing that this world is the site of an ongoing struggle to tell the truth of this world" (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989, p. 35).

A 'Toolkit' to See the World with New Eyes

According to Wacquant (2002), Bourdieu's theory and politics are "less a collection of fixed propositions and scholastic precepts than a 'toolkit' forged by and for research, aimed at posing scientifically those fruitful questions which, by tearing the veil of taken-for-grantedness, enable us to see the social world, and ourselves, with new eyes" (pp. 1–2). Sociologists such as Bourdieu force us to make conscious those things that we might prefer to leave unconscious, even though some may have a certain resistance to such analysis. By bringing to light the arbitrary and the contingent where we like to see necessity or nature, and social constraints where we like to see choice and free will, critical sociologists, "like all prophets of evil

tidings" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 15), have often been condemned for their revelations. Nevertheless, Bourdieu et al. (1999) suggest that "what the social world has done, it can, armed with this knowledge, undo" (p. 629). For example, increasing awareness of the mechanisms at work in the reproduction of disadvantage in education may help by offering a measure of freedom to those manipulated by these mechanisms (Bourdieu, 1998a) and improve access, participation and educational outcomes for marginalised and disenfranchised groups. Indeed:

> If it is true that it is not easy to eliminate or even modify most of the economic and social factors behind the worst suffering, particularly the mechanisms regulating the labor and educational markets, it is also true that any political program that fails to take full advantage of the possibilities for action (minimal though they may be) that science can help uncover, can be considered guilty of nonassistance to a person in danger. (Bourdieu et al., 1999, p. 629)

However, we should not imagine that a Bourdieuian methodology is eclectic, that 'anything goes' in unmasking social and educational inequalities. As we have argued, a focus on inequalities is a defining characteristic of Bourdieuian research but so too is a critical regard for research practices themselves. Research that lacks this reflexivity is questionable both in relation to its outcomes and also its ethics. This is not to say though that because of its reflexivity Bourdieuian methodology is beyond such questioning. All research is partial, as we have acknowledged. However, what is appealing about Bourdieu's approach is its recognition of this and its interest in inviting others to engage with this partiality.

In many ways, these two concerns—revealing how research is conceived and the purposes of its conception—are "two translations of the same sentence" (Spinoza in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105): the interdependence of theory and practice in the research endeavour. We believe that a Bourdieuian methodology, as has been utilised in this research—with its interests in uncovering and transforming social inequalities, its theoretical dialecticism and radical democratic politics—has the potential to see possibilities for socially just action in education realised.

Chapter 3
Student Achievement in Context

The current view of student achievement is that the quality of teaching students receive determines whether or not they do well at school. In this chapter we draw attention to 'context' as a complementary explanation for students' academic achievement, particularly regarding achievement differences between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Our focus is on the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students and schools, and the institutional stances that schools take in relation to their students.

By implication, this chapter takes issue with contemporary claims that all we need do to 'fix' student under-achievement is to improve the quality of teaching they receive. Our argument engages with these claims only in passing. We are more interested in drawing attention to factoring back in 'external constraints', which Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest deserve "epistemological priority … [over] subjectivist understanding" (p. 10). That is, it is not just that students from low socio-economic backgrounds (who are most strongly associated with low academic achievement) have limited access to high quality teaching; students from other socio-economic backgrounds do as well. Rather, our point is that the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely *position* students and schools from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the way that this positioning informs the *stances* that schools take in relation to their students, mean that schooling has less to offer them.

Educational disadvantage has long been a matter of interest in OECD nations, at least since the 1970s. Then, "educational disadvantage was seen as something that needed to be compensated for [either through the provision of additional resources, remedial classes or through 'equal opportunity' provisions] but not eliminated" (Teese, 2006, p. 1). More recently, "there has been a greater emphasis on student learning outcomes" (Teese, 2006, p. 1), irrespective of socio-economic status. As noted, the current popular view of student achievement, fuelled by teacher effectiveness literature and neoconservative politics, is that the factor that determines whether or not students do well at school (as much as their abilities allow) is the quality of teaching that they receive. Certainly there is research (for example Newmann & Associates, 1996; Lingard et al., 2001) confirming what others might regard as self-evident: that good teaching makes a difference. However, this is different

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_3, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

from suggesting that teachers are *the* difference with respect to student outcomes, which appears to be the conclusion that some have conveniently drawn from this (and other) research.

A recent editorial in a New Zealand newspaper captures well this crude positivist and neoconservative reading: "the obvious point is that it is quality teachers who make the difference" (in Nash & Prochnow, 2004, p. 187). This is the assumption that informed Mark Latham's proposal at the 2004 Australian Federal election, when he was leader of the Australian Federal Labor Party: student under-achievement can be redressed by transferring 'good' teachers (those whose students achieve high academic outcomes) into under-performing schools. It is also the thinking that informed Julie Bishop's (Australian Federal Minister for Education, 2004–2007) push to introduce performance pay for 'good' teachers (determined on the basis of student outcomes), as a way of lifting student achievement.

However, in this chapter we begin from a different premise. That is:

> In the face of all the evidence, it is unrealistic to expect that the attainment of middle-class and working-class families can be equalized, as some speakers within this broad discourse assert, as a result of pedagogic action by the school. (Nash & Prochnow, 2004, p. 189)

Our intention is to draw attention to the context of students' schooling as complementary explanation for students' academic achievement, particularly with regard to the achievement differences between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. While we acknowledge that these arguments are by no means new, we work from the premise that context is being forgotten in the rush to attribute student achievement solely to what teachers do. In this way, our analysis offers a countering of and an important corrective to dominant discourses related to the fashionable preoccupation with the quality of teaching, with a renewed emphasis on the social, economic and cultural contexts in which they are located.

By 'context' we mean not only students' "immediate, lived experience" (of teaching, for example) but also "the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10–11). While much school effectiveness research "bleaches context from its analytic frame" (Slee & Weiner, 1998, p. 5), we are of the view that, in isolation, these external (social and economic) constraints tend to provide better general explanation of student achievement than do subjective experiences. To disconnect these two moments of analysis (as is the approach of much teacher effectiveness research and neoconservative politics) would involve disregarding "the intrinsically double reality of the social world" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 11). Our interest, then, is not just in an account of students' backgrounds as a backdrop to their everyday experiences (Seddon, 1995), but more centrally as the aspect about which students' experiences speak and which speak to students' experiences. That is, we view context as constitutive of the object of study. In Seddon's (1995) terms, we seek to emphasise that context is:

> a lived reality which impinges on the participants of schooling as a quite tangible force … Context is no longer something simple and taken for granted, a backdrop to whatever is important. It is palpable and present. It is forced to the front of educators' attention and is central to their lived experience. (p. 401)

The unit of our analysis is Crimson Brook Secondary College and its students, *and* their particular location in an economically depressed Australian rural town and community. We make no claim that the college is representative of all schools in such circumstances but we do claim that each school is framed by its circumstances and that these matter in the schooling students receive.

To illustrate the case, we locate the comments of teachers, parents and students from the community within changing economic, political and cultural contexts. Specifically, educational and post-school prospects are poor for young people in the community who, for the most part, come from low socio-economic backgrounds (particularly Indigenous young people and those from rural areas) and social inequalities are growing at an alarming rate. Labour market restructuring coupled with a lack of demand in the youth labour market have made employment precarious and unemployment and welfare dependency a reality. In addition, industrial relations reforms introduced by the nation's conservative government at the time have led to less secure working conditions across Australia generally. Students living in such contexts are less likely to complete school or see higher education as relevant to life and employment.

The chapter begins with a brief rehearsal of the association between students' (low) SES (socio-economic status) and (low) achievement in Australian education; one that is exacerbated when it converges with rurality. We then proceed to locate Crimson Brook Secondary College within these broader issues. Through a dual exploration of the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students and schools from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the way that this positioning informs the stances that schools take in relation to their students, we argue for factoring back in the context of students' schooling as a complementary explanation for students' academic achievement.

Meritocratic Myths: The Influence of Low SES on Student Achievement

In Australia, as in most OECD nations, education (particularly schooling) has traditionally been regarded as the mechanism through which the 'poorer classes' are able to redress their low socio-economic status (SES). Indeed, most Australian states (led by the state of Victoria) introduced its citizens to compulsory schooling in the mid to late 1800s with the promise of a better life for graduates, albeit also for employers seeking a more and differently educated workforce. (See also Raymond William's 1961 account of the resolution of these competing influences at the introduction of mass schooling in England.) Hence, "with mass schooling, so it was thought, everyone was given an opportunity for social improvement, and for access to power and privilege which only a few in society had hitherto enjoyed" (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997, p. 126).

For the most part, this egalitarian view of education as the great social (and economic) equaliser is a myth. Since the introduction of compulsory schooling,

low student achievement has been highly correlated with low socio-economic status. In a recent example, Teese, Nicholas, Polesel, and Helme (2006) note that in 2004 nearly two-thirds of low achievers completing the Victorian Certificate of Education (the qualification that students in their final year of secondary schooling receive in Victoria, Australia) came from low socio-economic backgrounds, while two-thirds of high achievers came from high to very high socio-economic backgrounds.

Similarly, the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER: the 'score' allocated to Australian students on the basis of their final secondary school results and used to select between those applying for university entry) is consistently associated with socio-economic background, such that low SES students have lower TERs compared to students from wealthier backgrounds (Teese, 2000; Teese & Polesel, 2003). It is not surprising, then, that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented in higher education generally—currently at around 15% of the university student population in Australia compared with 25% of all people from low socio-economic backgrounds (DEST, 2007)—and, specifically, are under-represented in Australia's elite Group of Eight universities and in those disciplines closest to what Bourdieu (1988) describes as the fields of social and economic power (James, Baldwin, Coates, Krause, & Mclnnis, 2004), such as medicine and law.

This association between students' (low) SES and (low) achievement is a consistent theme in Australian education, not simply explained away as misrepresentations associated with focusing on one (Australian) system and not simply a feature of contemporary times. For example, while Australian school students as a group (compared to most of their counterparts in other advanced economies) perform extremely well on international PISA tests in literacy and numeracy (OECD, 2004), Barry McGaw (the recently retired Director of the Directorate for Education in the OECD) (2006) notes that the gap between high and low achieving Australian students is among the highest in OECD countries, with low achievers characterised by their low socio-economic status.[1] And, in Australian universities, the under-representation of low SES students has not altered significantly since the early 1990s (James, 2002; James et al., 2004) when these students were first identified as an 'equity group' in higher education and became the target of programs aimed at increasing their enrolment (DEET, 1990; Gale & McNamee, 1994, 1995).

It would be difficult to read such broad scale data without concluding that schooling does not simply reward able students. Indeed, Teese et al.'s (2006) reading of this data is that, "achievement differences are the means through which social disadvantage is relayed" (p. 18). The claimed meritocratic basis for schooling, particularly as this is encountered at local sites, tends to mask the social and economic roots of under-achievement (Young, 2006). It is so endemic that some suggest that the "best advice we can give to a poor child keen to get ahead through education is to choose richer parents" (Connell, 1993, p. 22). In the Australian context, rurality and low socio-economic status together combine to produce the greatest educational disad-

[1] This is a gap reminiscent of the one emerging in labour market remunerations (Gale, 2005).

vantage, prevailing against completion of schooling and entry to higher education and affecting the development of post-school aspirations and expectations of young people (Alloway et al., 2004; James et al., 1999). With their significant under-representation in post-compulsory education, the evidence suggests that:

> individuals' chances of going to university in Australia are still determined by their geographical locations and the social stratum to which their families belong. Despite the mushrooming growth in higher education and the overall expansion in access throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, regional and social imbalances in higher education participation appear strongly resistant to change. (James et al., 1999, pp. 4–5)

Locating Crimson Brook Secondary College Within These Broader Issues

One way in which to think about the influence of these broader constraints on student achievement is in terms of positions and stances. Bourdieu refers to the social contexts in which individuals act as 'fields', 'markets' and 'games': that is, "structured space[s] of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'" (Thompson, 1991, pp. 13–14). The volume and structure of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) possessed by individuals determines their position in a field and positions "interact with habitus to produce different *postures* (*prises de position*)" (Mahar et al., 1990, p. 8, emphasis original), or stances. Individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ in their stances. Concomitantly, similar dispositions can generate very different, sometimes opposing, stances depending on the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1991). For these reasons Bourdieu suggests that positions and stances warrant simultaneous analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Thinking this way suggests the necessity of a dual exploration of:

(i) the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students from low socio-economic backgrounds and the schools they attend; and
(ii) the way that this positioning informs the stances that schools take in relation to their students.

We consider each of the above in turn.

Positioning Students

The broader social, political and economic influences in this context position students from low socio-economic backgrounds adversely in a number of ways. Perhaps most apparent is the way that students are positioned as being 'without'.

Without Resources

Crimson Brook's socio-economic status creates problems that adversely influence students' schooling. Many experience problems related to:

- hunger—"they come to school and they haven't eaten since the day before" (Teacher # 17),
- homelessness—"We have many students who … haven't lived with … a parent since they were five or six" (Principal), some "wander the streets at night" (Teacher # 17), and of
- financial hardship—"sometimes kids don't have books and stuff like that 'cause their parents can't afford it" (Teacher # 17).

For many students, "just to get to the door [of the school] is a major feat" (Principal). Some "come from horrific backgrounds" (Teacher # 16). Others "come to school and they haven't eaten since the day before … That's pretty common … [or] they haven't been home for two days" (Teacher # 17). Even for those whose basic requirements of food and shelter are met, the limited disposable income of their parents can make it difficult to supplement their children's schooling. As one teacher recounted, "you go into some of the [students'] houses and there's not a book anywhere to be seen, there's not a newspaper … so there's no back-up material for kids" (Teacher # 18). It is not uncommon for teachers to:

> carry a very big pencil case [for] those that don't have pens or pencils … There's also a resource hire scheme here. Now if your [parents] don't pay that … [or don't let the school know] if you're having trouble by the cut-off date … half-way through the year [the school] go through [the list of students] and take these textbooks off the kids … I was in this classroom … [in which] they had all their books taken off them and I thought, "This is useless. What are we going to do?" … And I thought about it and I said, "Well they can't have textbooks, [but] I can have textbooks." So I then went to the library and got about 12 of these books … I borrowed them in my name and I took them back … at the end of the lesson … That's what I do now … So you sort of get to know what they need and … you just find your own ways to make it easier. (Teacher # 21)

Illustrated here is the way in which the institutional habitus of the school can work against students' access to resources, how teachers are positioned in this and the stances that are available to them; what they can and cannot do. It is not simply that students in disadvantaged schools lack resources. It is also about how schools and school systems structure the learning environment and the spaces available within this for teachers to act in students' interests.

The socio-economic circumstances of students' families can also mean that they miss out on opportunities to be involved in extra-curricular activities. As one student told us:

> We're fundraising because we've got an all-girls soccer team … and we've got no transport to get [to the nearby regional city] … We had to pull out [of the competition after one game] this term because we had no transport … I think the idea is that we go down next term after we've fundraised a bit … or fundraise for the rest of the year and then start off fresh the next year. (Student # 25)

As with the classroom example, resource issues are the responsibility of individuals (students, parents, teachers, etc) rather than systems, which are structured in ways that require individuals to provide these resources in order for them to participate. The connection between under-resourcing and failure seems built into the system. Indeed, stories related to the adverse positioning of students as a result of their low socio-economic backgrounds are common in the school. To take just one illustration among several, consider the mother of more than ten children who struggles with the costs of their education. Resourcing their activities at school is all but beyond her capabilities. For instance:

> … they learn cooking. A lot of students can't really afford the cooking anyway … And school is expensive. It is very expensive. Now if you've got one child at school, you're pretty well laughing, but if you've got more than one child at school you're not laughing anymore, you're finding it very, very hard … Like with their books … I mean, let's face it, the price of books is ridiculous … Then you've got their costs in their travels … If they've got to travel [for excursions], okay, they've got to travel … Or if they're placed in a job placement you might have to find transport backward and forward [to the nearby regional city] for them if you haven't got [transport] yourself … But if you can't do it your kid is going to miss out. And a lot of times you really want to get hold of the government and the schools … and strangle them because it's so very hard for a child to do school nowadays. It's going back to [the days when] some could go to school and some couldn't. (Parent # 24)

In contexts such as this, where social, political and economic influences position students without resources, considerable adjustments need to be made to counteract the adverse impact of material poverty on students' academic achievement. It is not simply about giving these families more money. It is also about how schooling is arranged in ways that require this money and how money is positioned as the only or main resource. In this equation, those without money are bereft of all resources, which is clearly a false economy of disadvantaged communities.

Without Hope or Purpose; Without a Working Future

Context also positions students at Crimson Brook without hope or purpose; without a working future.[2] As discussed in Chap. 1, the students are conscious of their community's economic vulnerability and know that it will be difficult to obtain employment in town after they graduate. There tends to be disillusionment, especially among older students, about the real value of schooling, given the lack of employment opportunities. Indicative of this, rural and remote areas in Australia consistently demonstrate low retention rates and higher numbers of early school leavers (Kenyon et al., 2001). In 2005, the school's retention rate (final year enrolment as a percentage of the first year cohort) was 58% while for the state as a whole, it was 75% for boys and 85% for girls.

[2] Even aside from remunerated work, there are few community organisations within Crimson Brook. With little in the way of opportunities to undertake volunteer work in the town, some residents feel as though they don't have a functioning future or an employed future.

At the time of our research, the school's Principal suggested that roughly 3% of final-year students planned to go on to tertiary education, some planned on seeking employment, while many others intended to apply for unemployment benefits. Indeed, the lack of employment opportunities in the community seems to play on the minds of students, impacting on their future aspirations:

> There are some kids here who are second, third or even fourth, fifth generation unemployed … and they don't see a lot of activity around the place … there's not a lot of inspiration. They can't look out the window and see something going on like you can [in the city] … So there's nothing here for them to say, "That's where I'd like to work". (Teacher # 18)

Similarly, a lack of occupational role models in rural communities means that students have fewer images from which to draw in envisioning what they might become (Alloway et al., 2004). These factors also affect the value students place on schooling. As one parent pointed out, the town:

> is so small and there's not [many] job opportunities at all here when they leave [school]. Already you know [some of them are] just going to sit at home … on [unemployment benefits] … And there's always, "Why should we go to school? It's not going to get us anything". (Parent # 22)

Teachers also noticed that "sometimes the kids just can't be bothered to do anything so that's why they don't do well. They haven't got the motivation to try" (Teacher # 19). Another teacher spoke of two students who were in her class in the previous year:

> [They] dropped out [of school] … and I would see them walking around the streets … drunk or sniffing glue at 11 o'clock in the morning, doing absolutely nothing with their lives but they're not in school either. I worry about kids like that … I guess … they couldn't see any end in sight. (Teacher # 22)

Some parents alluded to the dilemma in sending their children to school, as there's "nothing to go for":

> You can't force them to go to school. You can't force them to learn and we're stuck between a rock and a hard place. The kids come home, "I don't want to go to school". And you say, "You've got to". "I don't want to". You know, you can sit there and say "you've got to" till the cows come home … but they just don't want to go anymore … There is nothing left for the kids to go for. (Parent # 24)

She also revealed how some students strategically plan, getting help from friends at times, to "make sure they get suspended" (Parent # 24). "They're very good at it … [When] they tell you they'll be home before the end of the day you know they're going to" (Parent # 24). As this parent recounted:

> The child goes to school but there is nothing there that the child wants to do or learn or can get his hands or sink his teeth into … so he doesn't want to do it. So he gets either (1) suspended, or (2) finds a little bunch of buddies and they go and have a smoke or they spray paint things and graffiti them or they break in and they burn and they destroy because there's nothing there for them and it's like, get even, you know, and that's exactly what they're doing, all the kids are doing is getting even on the system because there's nothing there for them anymore. So they destroy it because they don't want it anymore. (Parent # 24)

Picking up on the lack of employment opportunities in the area and consequent high unemployment, this same parent later commented:

> You can have degrees in God knows what today but you can't get a job … I know nurses out of work, doctors out of work … teachers … policemen. Where did their work get them? Still out of work and it's not getting any better, it's getting worse. So why push so much down their [throat] if it's not going to do them any good? You know, to me I think they ought to learn hands on because hands on may be the only thing that's going to give them any chance in life at all. (Parent # 24)

Much research confirms that students' willingness to continue with education is diminished by limited local employment opportunities or perceived poor future employment prospects (Black et al., 2000; Kenyon et al., 2001; Lupton, 2006). Similarly, research by James et al. (1999) suggests that rural students are significantly less likely than urban students to believe that a university course will offer them the chance of an interesting and rewarding career and significantly more likely to believe that there is no point in going to university. As one teacher recounted:

> In some cases … nobody in the family sees value in education so [the students] don't see any value in education … One kid I spoke to … he just didn't have an interest in anything and I said, "So why are you here? Because realistically, apart from the social aspects, you're achieving nothing … When you leave here you're gonna have a piece of paper that says you failed everything … That can't make you feel good" … He was never a behaviour problem and just did nothing virtually … I said to him, "So what are you gonna do when you leave school?" He said, "I'll stay home, go on [unemployment benefits]" … I found out that granddad and dad had both worked in the mine and had been [dismissed from work] … and they all lived in this one big house, grandma and granddad and mum and dad and about four or five kids … and they were all collecting various types of social security and nobody had bothered to do anything else. (Teacher # 18)

While we do not endorse the deficit discourses espoused by this particular teacher, the research suggests that students in rural contexts—and especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds—are more likely to experience little family or community encouragement to continue with their education (Alloway et al., 2004; James et al., 1999). While some rural Australians are not necessarily convinced of the value of post-compulsory education for their children—particularly when this education is likely to involve student relocation and additional financial burdens (Alloway et al., 2004; James et al., 1999; Kenyon et al., 2001)—"nor are they necessarily aware of the way in which changes in the world of work and in rural economies have given an added urgency to the need for young people to acquire skills and qualifications" (Alloway et al., 2004, p. 30).

Moreover, as Wilson (1987) points out, in a community such as this one:

> with a paucity of regularly employed families and with the overwhelming majority of families having spells of long-term joblessness, people experience a social isolation that excludes them from the job network system that permeates other neighbourhoods and that is so important in learning about or being recommended for jobs that become available in various parts of the city. And as the prospects for employment diminish, other alternatives such as welfare and the underground economy are not only increasingly relied on, they come to be seen as a way of life. (p. 57)

Giddens (1994, p. 185) similarly argues that welfare measures may create "exclusionary ghettos" where "what seem to be economic benefits serve actually to fix an individual in a social position or status from which it is difficult to escape".

In the school environment, then:

> Some of [the students] just don't even try. They don't even bother trying; they don't see the reason why they should try. They go home to parents who don't work … I'm not putting the parents down … but because of the type of town it is and because of the high unemployment rate, they're not seeing anything worthwhile in education; they're not seeing what education can do for them … We've got students … [who are] just there because they're bored shitless and [have] nowhere else to go. They don't know what to do … Some students have said, "I'm just here for the [social security payments], that's all", so they're not there for the fact of where they could go with their education. (Teacher # 16)

For some students, the broader social, political and economic influences induce an atmosphere of hopelessness. Irrespective of how well students do at school, it doesn't overcome the reality of limited employment opportunities in the town. In effect, schooling prepares these young people for a future of unemployment benefits, or for leaving the town.

It is this narrow imagination—that the single function of schooling is to provide access to employment—which is at the heart of the hopelessness and purposelessness that 'disadvantaged' students in such communities feel towards their schooling. For many of these students, it is blatantly obvious that schooling does not and cannot deliver on such promises. Schools and their teachers are not able to control or even significantly influence employment conditions within their local communities, let alone alter broader social, political and economic conditions. They cannot manufacture employment for their graduating students; certainly not on any large scale. Nor can they guarantee the longevity of or access to particular employment now subject to the vagaries of a global economy and a global workforce.

Taking a Stance

Hence, while these broader social, political and economic influences adversely position students from low socio-economic backgrounds, they also inform the stances that schools take in relation to their students.

Students Aren't Likely to Do Well and Parents Aren't Interested Anyway

In schools servicing disadvantaged communities, "low expectations and aspirations for student achievements are often endemic features of school cultures" (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 131). As one teacher explained to us, "within our school … we've got to watch that we don't water down the curriculum just because of the fact that … [it] is in a low socio-economic town" (Teacher # 16).

Indeed, a number of teachers expressed their concerns that "the junior curriculum has been dumbed down" (Teacher # 17). One teacher recalled that:

> When I [first] came here I really noticed it. I just felt that [lack of] intellectual rigour compared to my last school, I just couldn't believe it, comparatively … That was a really big focus [last year], trying to raise intellectual quality while still catering for everybody … It was really hard … So that's what we're trying to improve. (Teacher # 17)

Schools also adopt stances in relation to disadvantaged parents, often assuming (incorrectly) that they are not interested in the education (and under-achievement) of their children (see Chap. 8 for a full exploration of this issue). This can reinforce, even contribute to, student outcomes anticipated by schools and teachers. As one parent told us:

> Last year [my friend's son] failed English … It was an extreme shock. All through that year the boy thought he was doing okay … [and the parents] had no contact with the teacher, he'd never asked for parent interviews, he never let them know in any way whatsoever that [their son] was struggling. (Parent # 19)

Such parents were of the view that the school operated in the interests of 'good families' and that it was less concerned about the education of their 'bad' or 'deficient' children. These parents believed that teachers had very low expectations of their children and barely noticed when they were underachieving. In short, by explaining student under-achievement in terms of their lack of ability, and accepting poor academic results as natural or inevitable, the stances that teachers and schools take do not serve students' best interests. Rather, they tend to reinforce the perception that students in these schools are not 'cut out' for the academic demands of schooling.

An Academic Curriculum Is Not Everything—They Need Hands-on Alternatives

While teachers in the school believed in the importance of catering for students with different futures, for one teacher, this meant that: "Not all kids are meant … to be spending four years of their life in university because they'd be wasting their time … They can get apprenticeships and try different avenues where their abilities are" (Teacher # 16).

Similarly, it was the Principal's dream to build on the knowledges and skills of the marginalised in the community, and turn the school into a community education centre where the school might develop a:

> shop front where [students] get training and if it's a tourism venture, [learn about] interaction with people, how to deal with customers. If it's selling coffee, [learn about] how to bake cakes and how to work in that element … Showcasing the tables that my manual arts department produces. The stuff that they produce could be sold by the students … And I believe that by giving them that training in a sustainable business and teaching them how to set up businesses, they can then go out into the community and using the skills that they've got, such as gardening or making garden seats or baking cheesecakes, they can from their homes set up little businesses that will give them an income. (Principal)

Consider the similarities between the Principal's 'dream' and the 'alternative program' on offer within the school. Some of these students:

> can't cope with … having to sit down and read a book in class … [So] we take those kids out and give them to the alternative program teacher who … at the moment is planting [shrubs, flowers, trees, etc] and he tells them about chlorophyll and sunlight and things like that … [The alternative program teacher] refuses to do anything but hands-on stuff … so they basically work with him doing something around the school. (Teacher # 15)

The students also have classes with the Indigenous liaison officer who assists them with work prepared by the classroom teacher. Typically, teachers prepared tasks for students directed at developing their skills 'to be able to live in society':

> I just try and give them games to build up their language skills. I still try and give them work to do that's related to our class so that when they're in our class on a Monday and Friday, they're not feeling isolated, they're not feeling like, "Well, why am I here for?" So they still have work related to the unit and the theme but I try and do things like … [play] the language game on the computer; get them to use the internet. I make them spend time reading out aloud to [the teacher aide]. I make them do spelling words … They still need to know how to spell. They still need to know how to read. They still need to know how to communicate basic things to be able to live in society. (Teacher # 16)

While such programs and their facilitators may have the best of intentions, the message communicated to these students—who see themselves as not capable of doing the same work as their peers—is of low expectation. This reading of the futures that fit these students—that they *require* 'hands-on' alternatives to the academic curriculum—is illustrative of the deficit stance taken by the school. As Kalantzis, Cope, Noble, and Poynting (1990, p. 221) argue, 'alternative' courses for the 'less academically inclined', underpinned by the "rhetoric of choice, individual and community relevance, and democratically diversified curriculum … [have] an underside which in some other senses [is] not so democratic. In effect, it often [amounts] to a new form of streaming, dressed up in democratic garb". Indeed, "providing special programmes and personnel in behaviour units to maintain these young people in the margins of school life devoid of credentials which they can trade upon leaving school, is an impoverished reading of the nature of educational dysfunction" (Slee, 1995, p. 10). As valuable as general and vocational studies are, then, they should be accompanied by opportunities for students to also access areas of the curriculum of high cognitive demand (including within vocational programs)—and, in turn, the careers that depend on them (Teese, 2006).

Two Translations of the Same Sentence

While improving the quality of teaching for students from low socio-economic backgrounds is an important issue, it is not all we need do to 'fix' their underachievement. We also need to factor back in 'external constraints', and specifically, the broader social, political and economic influences that adversely position students and schools from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the way that this

positioning informs the stances that teachers and schools take in relation to their students. As has been illustrated in this chapter, the broader social, political and economic influences in this context position students from low socio-economic backgrounds without resources, without hope or purpose and without a working future; all of which help to explain student disengagement and under-achievement. In such contexts, institutional stances of low expectation for both student achievement and parent interest and involvement adopted by the school and its teachers do not serve students' best interests or work towards improving their academic outcomes.

However, we do not wish to suggest that schools and teachers are solely to blame for such arrangements. While teachers might be encouraged to have higher expectations, these cannot be divorced from the very real contextual constraints and realities faced by the students they teach. As Bourdieu himself suggests, and which is acknowledged above, the field of positions is methodologically inseparable from the field of stances. This is precisely why both spaces, that of objective positions and that of stances, must be analysed together, "treated as 'two translations of the same sentence' as Spinoza put it" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105). It remains, nevertheless, that, "in a situation of equilibrium, *the space of positions tends to command the space of position-takings*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105, emphasis original). It is this 'space of positions', what we have discussed here in terms of 'context', that requires our attention if the academic outcomes of disadvantaged students are to be improved. Similarly, 'the space of position-takings', what teachers (can) do, needs to be understood as constrained by this context.

In all of this, we recognise that there is:

> a fine line between highlighting the constraints imposed by poverty, social class, immigrant or refugee status, learning difficulties, residential transience or the experience of being in care so that schools can be equipped and teachers trained to deal with them better, and allowing them to become the excuse for low expectations and inequitable provision based on race, class or gender stereotypes. (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006, p. 318)

Regardless, we would argue that:

> a more serious recognition of context could give rise to fairer evaluation of school performance, a fairer distribution of resources, and the provision of more appropriate advice and support to schools in less favourable contexts. All of these, we argue, would enable better responses to the needs of marginalised school populations. (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006, p. 311)

Chapter 4
Where Are the Good Teachers When You Need Them?

This chapter examines what it means to 'do school' in a regional Australian town, explored through the eyes of its teachers, parents and students. As introduced in Chap. 1, like many disadvantaged schools, Crimson Brook Secondary College has difficulty attracting and retaining quality teachers, instead relying on a high turnover of often reluctant staff who are sent (or feel compelled) to fill positions unable to be resourced through teacher choice procedures. Overlaying this is a general lack of experienced staff, including four first year teachers, a Deputy Principal ten weeks into the position, and a Head of Department who is also a first year teacher. There are few mentors for staff other than the Principal and a second, slightly more experienced, Head of Department, who is responsible for the induction program for first year staff.

Our interest is in the way that disadvantage is reproduced for marginalised students in the school, which we explore through the transience and mobility of teachers working in this community, and the connections this has with teacher commitments to schooling in the town and parents' and students' understandings of the 'outside' value of their community. We argue that teacher mobility can influence the educational opportunities of students who are 'on the margins' of school success and of the socio-economic structure. In making this argument, we draw on Bourdieu's notion that, unlike economic capital, cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; that its accumulation requires an investment, above all, of time. Apart from problems associated with leaving school early or at best maintaining an absent presence, students on the margins of the schooling system are heavily reliant on their teachers: (1) having 'the right stuff', (2) being able to pass it on and (3) being around long enough for this to happen, at least in some minimal way.

Our basic argument is that teacher mobility is involved in reproducing disadvantage by limiting students' access to the dominant cultural capital of schooling. Educational policies and politics that reward teacher mobility or encourage teachers to move in and out of these communities, can work to disadvantage students. We conclude that what is needed is a transformation in policies governing staff placements to establish alternatives that redefine the reward system for teachers in ways that permit these students to succeed. It is not simply about changing staffing arrangements in the interests of students alone but it is about ensuring that students'

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_4, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

interests are not the last to be considered. In addition, opportunities for teacher growth and development need to be created so that the school is seen as a place worth going to, both professionally and personally. It is this kind of workplace that has real potential to attract and retain teachers for professional reasons, not simply because of the possibility of increased financial return or teacher transfer rating points that, in the end, are accumulated in order to aid moving out.

We begin our account with a brief rehearsal of Bourdieu's analysis of the schooling system as generally reproductive of disadvantage. This is followed by our focus on teacher mobility: first, on the difficulties that the school experiences in attracting 'good' teachers (those endowed with high levels of the dominant cultural capital); secondly, on the high levels of teacher turnover (even among those with low levels of dominant cultural capital); and thirdly, on teachers who reside in the community but choose not to be part of it.

Debunking Meritocracy

Bourdieu writes extensively about the central role that schools play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities. Once thought by some as capable of introducing a form of meritocracy by privileging individual aptitudes over hereditary privileges, the school system is viewed by Bourdieu (1998b) as an institution for the reproduction and legitimation of dominance through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage. With the cultural capital of the dominant group embodied in schools, educational differences are frequently 'misrecognised' as resulting from 'individual giftedness' rather than from class based differences.

The injustices of "allowing certain people to succeed, based not upon merit but upon the cultural experiences, the social ties and the economic resources they have access to, often remains unacknowledged in the broader society" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 216). Hence, the implicit demands of the educational system "maintain the pre-existing order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1998b, p. 20) in ways that are largely unrecognised by actors engaged in the school system—teachers, students, and their parents—and often against their will (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). That is, those involved in reproducing the social order often do so without either knowing they are doing so or wanting to do so (Bourdieu, 1998b). This is how we read much of the mobility of the teachers we examine below. As implied above and expanded below, teachers frequently do not see and often do not intend the social sorting that schooling imparts on students.

Bourdieu's further insight is that cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; its accumulation requires an investment, above all, of time. In other words, while cultural capital has the potential capacity to produce profits, it takes time to accumulate and is not readily available to everyone on the same basis. Hence, there is a clear imperative to "start early and to pursue its accumulation for as long as possible" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 97). But, according to Bourdieu (1997), "the

length of time for which a given individual can prolong his [*sic*] acquisition process depends on the length of time for which his family can provide him with the free time, i.e., time free from economic necessity" (pp. 49–50). Marginalised groups, such as some of the residents from Crimson Brook, are also those who are least likely to be free from the urgency of economic necessity. The reality is that time in school is a luxury for many poor, ethnic minority students.

We Need to Attract and Keep Good Teachers

Like many other schools in rural and regional Australia, one of the enduring characteristics of the college is that it experiences difficulty attracting and retaining quality staff. In this school:

> We find it extremely difficult to *keep* good teachers. And we find it extremely difficult to *get* good teachers. If we could in some way, I don't know how we'd do it, get and keep good teachers, I think kids would do better at school … [If I could change anything] I would try and attract and keep good teachers. Teachers who were good at what they did, were capable and cared about the kids. That would provide stability of staffing … [That's our problem.] We don't have quality teachers and so you either have to work with what you've got and have a real emphasis on pedagogy and supporting them and teaching them to teach in a different way that's more effective for kids, or we need to recruit better staff. (Teacher # 22)

While length of service is not a direct indicator of teacher quality, a high proportion of staff who work in the school are relatively inexperienced. The year in which the research took place was typical in this respect:

> We have four first year teachers this year [in a staff that is] under 20. Four brand new teachers. We have another two that have been teaching for a number of years and another one that's been teaching for probably three years part-time. So they're all getting used to the procedures in this school. (Teacher # 15)

One of the consequences of this early career staffing profile concerns student discipline, at least in the minds of students:

> It's a bit hard with all the first year teachers … with discipline and stuff … [If the teachers] don't sort of discipline the [disruptive students], they just run rank and then no one actually gets anything done and it sort of is hard on the students because there's a lot who want to do the work but there's a lot who don't and then they can't do it. (Student # 22)

Parents too are concerned about the kind of education available from beginning teachers. Within the community, there is:

> a perception that we haven't got experienced teachers in this school, that a lot of our teachers are graduates and I don't think they feel that they're getting as much from a graduate as they might do from say a teacher that's been here five or six years and knows the ropes and is confident in their position. That's just one perception that I have is that they don't feel that their kids are getting the best education. (Parent # 19)

Perhaps this concern has some grounding in that staff in the school, first year teachers included, find themselves teaching out of their areas of specialisation. As one

teacher confessed, "I'm a first year teacher … I teach English and Studies of Society and Environment but I'm qualified to teach English and Maths" (Teacher # 16). However, for the school's Principal, who is more acutely aware of the shortcomings of her staff and of the school's failure to adequately prepare its students, the issues are far closer to home:

> There are staff here who—and I'll be very honest—the schools in [the nearby regional city] won't have … Some of the staff were transferred here because either they were seen as not reaching benchmarks in performance at other schools or, because of their reputations and ability, the schools wouldn't take them. Whereas, we were desperate so we'd say, "Look, we'll have them". (Principal)

This difficulty experienced by the school in attracting and retaining quality staff is a challenge to students' access to the dominant cultural capital. As Bourdieu suggests, exposure to the educative effects of the cultural capital of dominant groups is necessary for success at school; it is the knowledge of and familiarity with middle class culture that is rewarded and recognised. For students from marginalised groups, whose families' cultural capital—their dispositions, competencies, attitudes and values—is not always highly valued in schools, access to its dominant forms is frequently limited to time at school. So while staff in the school are bearers of highly prized capitals with their knowledges, skills and modes of expression constituting the heritage of the cultivated classes, for some students their only exposure to this cultural competence is in the form of interactions with these very teachers. If we consider Bourdieu's observation that the acquisition of cultural capital involves, among other things, extended periods of time with those who are themselves endowed with 'strong' cultural capital, the importance of attracting and retaining quality staff in the school takes on a new significance for students' learning. Such transmission and accumulation is time-intensive, but it also relies on the quality of one's associations (with those who know). It is therefore not only time in association with teachers (as those who possess the cultural capital of the dominant) that is important, but time in the company of quality teachers.

Once We Get Them Here, They Move on

Coupled with the problems of attracting quality staff, which invariably means that those they do attract are often inexperienced first year teachers, the school also faces frequent teacher turnover. As one student mentioned:

> I don't know what the teachers are like at other schools but we're getting teachers in and out all the time … changing too much. Like this year in English we've had two teachers and we're on our third one already. And everyone has a different teaching style so you've got to adjust from one to the other. (Student # 20)

At least one teacher agreed that "we have a big problem at school with our staff turnover" (Teacher # 22). Indeed, some staff considered teacher mobility part and parcel of working in a regional school:

> It's always a fairly young staff here because being like any country school, it's not on the coastline and so you get a regular turnover … It was the same when I was in [another regional town]. The year I left, I was one of about 17 or something, you know, more than half the staff turn over in one year. It's very difficult for the kids. (Teacher # 18)

For Crimson Brook Secondary College, the year of our study was exceptional in this regard:

> We've been unfortunate this year, we've had just huge staff changes. For me, it's just been a nightmare, there's been seven teachers alone in [the first year of secondary school] this year … It's just huge. [The second year of secondary school] has also seen a total change in Humanities teachers. The two teachers that started the beginning of [the year], they don't have them now, they have two totally new teachers. (Teacher # 17)

Speaking about the impact of this teacher mobility on students, one teacher commented:

> I was speaking to a teacher today who teaches a senior class and he's their third teacher this year … I walked into his classroom yesterday … and he asked me to talk to the students because [they] had a bit of a crisis of confidence with [him]. He didn't think that they thought he could teach early childhood because he was a male so I asked him to leave the room while I spoke to the students and they told me that, basically, it boiled down to him having a different teaching style, and they had had their old teacher and then they had to adapt to someone new and then she came back, now they've got another one … So it really directly impacts upon them because they're the ones that have to deal with new teachers. (Teacher # 15)

Teacher turnover in this context poses a real threat to students' sustained access to dominant cultural capital and suggests that there is more to students' difficulties than what is particular to them alone. At times, educational institutions and their representatives actually construct students' difficulties, not just in how and what knowledge is privileged but also in its processes of transmission and accumulation. As Thomson (2000) points out:

> Schools with high turnover of teachers, casualised support staff, and/or high turnover of leadership may appear on the surface to be 'like' others. Yet is it hardly possible for a school to consider making a difference, when two thirds of the teachers leave each year—and that indeed is the situation in some of the schools. (p. 165)

Being There Without Being There: Mobility of Hearts and Minds

While attracting and retaining good teachers are important issues for schools located within Australian regional communities, parents and students in our study also desired staff willing to make the community their home. For example, one of the parents told us that she didn't "feel that [the Principal had] lived up to expectation" (Parent # 19). She went on to say:

> To start with she told [the school] that she wanted to make Crimson Brook her home, that this was going to be the school that she retired from, that she wanted this to be her final

> position and she was going to really make something out of it because she had so much that she wanted to offer the kids … Now she's talking about perhaps applying for a transfer so I just wonder did she [tell us] the things that we wanted to hear? … But this school is difficult. You know, the kids are difficult. The community is difficult. If they don't like you they'll never like you basically. So she's sort of pushing a big stone uphill really because I think the perception in the town probably is that she isn't the person that they wanted … She doesn't want to get involved with the town and yet that was what she said in the first place, she wanted to live in the town and be part of it. And there are functions that we have now and then, we ask her would she like to welcome [the people] and she says, "Oh no, that's P&C [Parents and Citizens' Association] business. It's got nothing to do with me". So she's basically putting a barrier up and you can't do that in a town like this. You've got to be a part of the town and that is what I thought we were getting. (Parent # 19)

Indicated here is a particular conception of the relations between school and community: a desire by the community for staff to get involved with the town and make it their home. However, because of its relatively close proximity, most of the school's teachers live in the nearby regional city and commute to and from Crimson Brook on a daily basis, interacting with the community as far as the boundaries of the school day dictate. This is desired both because of the approval and acceptance of the community that such acts convey and because it provides the community with greater access to privileged linguistic and cultural competencies, necessary in achieving success in social institutions.

For several members of the community, the mobility of teachers associated with the school communicated a low outside valuing of the community, and is a good example of what some perceived as educational experiences in less than satisfactory circumstances. More broadly, it exemplifies regional schools having to 'make do' because the necessary resources taken for granted in major cities—in this case, ready access to those with the cultural capital of the dominant—are in short supply.

Teachers who live in and are committed to the community are more respected by students. As one parent told us in relation to his son:

> I talk to some of the [teacher] aides over [at the secondary school] and I say, "Well, how'd he go with the English lesson there?" … And one of the [teacher] aides says, "He's good when I'm in the classroom". She's an [Indigenous Australian] and he respects her so when she says, "Do this", he'll do it … She's someone that he's grown up with. (Parent # 21)

Another Crimson Brook resident—one of the few staff to live in the community and one of three Indigenous staff members—told us of the positive relationship that she has with the school's students:

> I go to barbecues, or if one of the kids have a party, I'm actually invited because I know a lot of them. I've lived here for over 20 years see. A lot of the kids here they've known my kids and they hang around the same circle, same football team. So I know a lot of them. If someone has a going away party I'm usually invited and I know them. Like one's my nephew and my niece and my God-daughter and things like that. So I know 'em all. Mix in well. (Teacher # 21)

She finds that this helps her in her role as a teacher aide. For example:

> there [were] three kids. They were kids [who were receiving learning support] and another teacher aide had them and I was in the library with my class and they were playing up. They're pretty naughty kids and two of them were fighting, actually physically fighting.

> And the lady with them was saying, "Stop it. Stop it". And I just looked up and I thought, you know, they're fighting so I said to one who I knew personally, "You, stop it. Get up and stop it now", and he did. I'm very close to his father and his father is my husband's best mate, you know … I've got that good rapport with the kids and that helps. It really does. I mean if they hate you, you haven't got a chance. (Teacher # 21)

Bourdieu would argue that it is the profitability of the cultural capital of the dominant, and it is teachers' access to such cultural capital, that facilitate their relationships within the community. That is, their knowledges, skills, and modes of expression constitute the heritage of cultivated classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979); they are examples of the middle class culture, attitudes, and values the school assumes in all its pupils (Henry et al., 1988). The respect shown to such staff could be because some members of the community consider them to be bearers of highly prized capitals and recognise the importance of spending time in company with them.

Leaving as the Beginning Premise

So, how can such schools encourage staff to stay longer, or attract better staff to the school? In her efforts to address this, the Principal:

> worked very hard with the P&C to get our school's yearly [teacher transfer rating points] changed from 2, which is what the [nearby regional city] schools are rated, to 3 … But it's still not enough because [to transfer back to the capital of the state] you really need 20 or 21 points. For instance, we had a staff member here last year who'd been here 12 years and still didn't have enough points to get to [the capital of the state] … because there were people from out west who have higher ratings. (Principal)

These teacher transfer rating points are determined by the levels of complexity of the schools in question in combination with their geographical isolation. However, while increased teacher transfer rating points may help to reduce staff shortages in the community, they do not necessarily attract high quality or experienced teachers, or teachers who are inclined to stay. Moreover, the incentive scheme for teachers who work in remote areas of the state—which includes compensation cash benefits, incentive cash benefits to encourage teachers to remain in a particular location, extended emergent leave provisions and induction programs—does not apply to Crimson Brook Secondary College as the scheme operates for centres that have a transfer rating of 4 points or above. Yet the parents of the community try to encourage the Principal to appoint "teachers who are going to stay … [The Principal is] very aware that it would be a good idea for teachers to come to the school and stay for longer than a year" (Teacher # 15).

While the community desires staff who want to make the town their home, there are a number of reasons why the school has difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, including the poor standard and lack of subsidised departmental housing, and harassment from the community. From the Principal's own experience, the state's Education Department:

> can't offer [staff] decent housing [in this community]. I was in a house that up until a month ago was probably below anything any Principal in this state would live in … It's a very poor standard house. We pay the same rate per week as someone living in a Departmental house in any other city or town in [the state]. Other places have security and air conditioning and … we have none of that and … I've been broken into, I have been assaulted in my house through not having secure facilities … I can't even have my piano in my house because the roof leaks so badly … So I can't say to staff, "There's good houses". In addition to that there are only four [Departmental] houses in town so that doesn't house all my staff anyway. (Principal)

As for others on staff, "if you were a young staff member you wouldn't want to live in town either" (Principal), because:

> you are subjected to abuse … I've got one staff member who's had their tyres slashed three times in the past two years [while the car has been] housed in their garage … He has had windows broken, he has been assaulted, he has had [rocks thrown on his roof] constantly, he's exposed to verbal harassment constantly … And I've got a married staff member living in [Departmental] quarters that [has] had to cut down every ounce of greenery in the yard because ex-students were hiding and they were concerned about break and enter … So that's the atmosphere you live in … So I can't encourage families to live in my town. I can't encourage young females particularly to live in town. (Principal)

However, the Principal did suggest that her:

> position [in the community] has improved very much … When I first moved in I was treated like everybody else [who is new to Crimson Brook]. I'm treated very well by the community now and don't get any sort of harassment now but it's taken me two and a half years. (Principal)

Of course, it might not be a matter of being singled out for such treatment because one is a teacher. Rather, it could be a reaction to:

> anyone that's new to the community. In fact we're having difficulty attracting and maintaining outside students because they come to the school and they complain of harassment because they're not from the community or are different. In fact two that left, their parents bought a house in the community because it was low cost and they were looking at living here and the mother said to me, "I wish I would have known what the community was like before I moved in. I cannot live here". And the children are now going to [city] schools. Now not all of the community is like that but unfortunately there's enough of those type of people to make it difficult for the people who want to move here. (Principal)

Given that it is a community within an economically depressed area with high welfare dependency, transience—both of professionals (such as teachers) and of community members—is a real issue. Perhaps the response of some from the community who "make it difficult for the people who want to move here" could be interpreted as their reaction to a short lived, 'here today and gone tomorrow' commitment they encounter in many newcomers to Crimson Brook. Interpreting teacher commitments to schooling in this regional area as poor and understanding the low 'outside' valuing of their community, it is possible that these acts of harassment and abuse toward newcomers are physical enactments of their unspoken frustration at the evacuation of valued cultural capital from their community.

Worth Being There

Teacher mobility is an important issue for teachers and students in disadvantaged communities. This is not simply a matter of teachers' selective presence: there for a year or two and gone again. It is also about the scarcity of what teachers have to offer—the cultural capital of the dominant, often in short supply in marginalised regional communities—and the logic of its transmission bound up in extended periods of time in its company. These are significant issues when we consider that:

> we do not enter fields with equal amounts, or identical configurations, of capital. Some have inherited wealth, cultural distinctions from up-bringing and family connections. Some individuals, therefore, already possess quantities of relevant capital … which makes them better players than others in certain field games. Conversely, some are disadvantaged. (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 21)

For marginalised students in the school, teacher mobility poses a real threat to their access to the cultural capital of the dominant. While some people are born into hereditary privileges and cultural heritage that lead to scholastic aptitude, many others suffer educational repercussions for having a cultural capital that is in the wrong currency (Gewirtz et al., 1995).

Although exposure to the cultural capital of dominant groups is necessary for success at school, teacher mobility in this regional area means that students who are most in need of time in the company of the bearers of highly prized capitals may be less likely to experience this. For teachers to make a difference in such schools and communities, they need to redress their mobility and the messages this conveys. At the same time, however, we acknowledge the complexities surrounding issues of teacher mobility, given the harassment, hostility, and abuse reported by newcomers. The contradictions in this account are indeed perplexing: the very things the community would seem to want and need, work in ways to turn teachers away. Similarly, educational policies and politics that reward teacher mobility for moving out of these communities—what Connell (2009) describes as "perverse staffing policies that concentrate experience where it is least needed" (p. 222)—also work to disadvantage students. What is needed is a transformation in policies governing staff placements to establish alternatives that redefine the reward system for teachers in ways that permit these students to succeed.

The current solution to the problem is to offer increased financial returns to attract quality teachers to work in difficult schools and communities. But it is a misguided assumption that teachers in general, and particularly quality teachers, are driven by such inducements. Another way of reworking these arrangements is to rethink the social and cultural capital of teachers themselves. Why some teachers choose to be mobile is not simply related to their desire to be somewhere else: closer to family and friends, services and the familiar. It is also about their view of 'teaching as work' and the various opportunities afforded those who make strategic moves within the system. In this search for something better, 'bad' schools and communities are not necessarily 'the problem'.

Many teachers enter the profession seeking opportunities to make a difference in students' lives and in the school communities they encounter, and they enjoy the particular challenges involved in working with/in them. But this kind of work is difficult to do alone and is unsustainable without support, leading many good teachers to self-destruct (Connell, 2009). Within so-called 'problem' schools as well as in schools more generally, there is value in fostering a collaborative model of teachers' work, creating opportunities for teacher growth and development within a learning community. Such opportunities help to preserve the resilience of teachers in the face of tough teaching situations and are an important resource in disadvantaged schools (Connell, 2009). It is this kind of workplace that has real potential to attract and retain teachers for professional reasons, not simply because of the possibility of increased financial return or teacher transfer rating points that, in the end, are accumulated in order to aid moving out. Similarly, to treat would-be mobile teachers, those who long to be elsewhere, as recalcitrant (and requiring various forms of discipline) is to individualise 'the problem' and fail to recognise the benefits of a dynamic and collaborative staff for staff themselves as well as for school communities.

This kind of collaborative learning workplace is particularly important for teachers at the beginning of their careers and for teachers located in 'difficult' schools; a common combination, as illustrated above. Such learning environments provide opportunities for teachers to recognise and build understanding of issues of group difference often afforded them at the commencement of their career when they are first confronted by a multiplicity of cultures, communities, geographies, social classes, learning styles and so on.

It would be easy to read into this chapter a negative view of beginning teachers and teachers in general, but it is important to understand their comments and actions in relation to their current initiation into schools and school communities. How commencing teachers (particularly beginning teachers) are inducted into schools (especially disadvantaged and/or isolated schools) in ways that value their own contribution and enhance their ability to bridge differences (for example, mentoring, ongoing professional development) is important. Commencing teachers bring new ideas and new knowledge into schools as well as encountering local knowledges, but they can be frustrated by the lack of participatory forums and structures that would enable them to make a difference by sharing their knowledge with others and by learning from others. Instead, as shown here, there is often a focus on their ability to discipline and control students and on their induction into associated forms of teacher–student relationships. Such a focus on reinforcing institutional procedures inhibits the growth of teacher understanding and student development.

In brief, teachers need to see the school as a place worth going to, both professionally and personally so that the community is not regarded as a negative place to be. It is possible to reconceive of their placement and to recognise positives in working in such a school. For example, the fact that this is a school in which teachers really can make a difference for students and their communities, and that they have opportunities to do things, to take on responsibilities they probably could not do in another school because of their subservience to senior staff, can offer profes-

sional and personal challenges that are potentially extremely fulfilling. Encouraging community members to consider becoming teachers themselves is another way in which to make stronger connections between school and community, to reposition the school and its staff as centrally important to its community. Regional and disadvantaged schools also require structures to support the development of staff, through professional networks and so on. While education departments should continue to develop incentive packages for staff in rural schools, including housing, professional development and support opportunities, such packages should represent rural teaching as a long-term career option (Kenyon et al., 2001).

In all of this, what is important to understand is that while the extent to which teachers have a physical presence in these communities is important, the nature of that presence is possibly more important and it is this that teachers need to 'pin down'. The issue is that "external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, cannot be transmitted instantaneously" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 48). Redressing teacher mobility is not simply about being there. It also requires commitment to being there.

Chapter 5
What Should Effective Schooling Look Like?

To speak of an ideal is to lay claim to what ought or should be and to explain 'reality' as deviation. Ideals serve to provide direction towards some desired goal and judgment about how well a perceived reality approximates that desire. In more recent times, the postmodernist critique has provided its own 'reality check' on modernist ideals, challenging the notion that there is one best way to reach utopian ends. The emergence of postmodern theories has signalled a general shift in 'the structure of feeling' (Harvey, 1989) from acquiescence to censure of the universal. But it is not as if there are no postmodern ideals. In these accounts, utopianism is more cogently understood as 'heterotopianisms'. While we are convinced by such critique, that there are diverse goals of value and pathways to reach them, we admit to some uneasiness about a 'postmodern pluralism' in which ideals have the potential to wash away into relativism, where one ideal is as good as the next and ways of achieving them are also equally regarded. And we think that this tends to apply to some means and ends more than others.

In this chapter we take up these matters in the context of schooling, particularly as they relate to socially just ideals and practices. We begin by testing how effective schooling really is in advancing the interests of all students; asking for whom schooling is effective and the ways in which it recognises and deals with diverse interests. We then consider how things might be better, first in relation to what happens in classrooms and, second, with respect to what happens in school communities. In our view, these two interests—in who benefits (and who does not) by current social arrangements and what can be done about them—are the central tenets of a socially critical orientation. Given our disposition for recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000), we regard self-identity and respect, self-expression and development, and self-determination as necessary conditions for socially just schooling. They form the 'tests' we apply, particularly in relation to how students are connected to schools and how decisions are made within their communities. We recognise that these matters are primarily concerned with the means rather than the ends of schooling although we do not entirely agree with the separation. Following Fraser (1997), we assume "that 'distribution' and 'recognition' are not antitheses but intimately linked when it comes to studying what school does to produce fairness and unfairness, advantage and disadvantage, lesser and greater forms of social

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_5, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

equality" (Yates & McLeod, 2000, p. 62). Neither do we want to signal that a focus on recognitive justice is at the expense of distributive justice. 'Who gets what' remains an important issue. Here we address this from the perspective of 'how'.

Our analysis is confined to research and scholarship found in the academic literature rather than to data from Crimson Brook Secondary College. As indicated above, our purpose in this chapter is to identify ideals rather than what is. We begin with what we collectively (now) know about schooling and its effectiveness in moving beyond the goal of 'compensation' for the least advantaged and towards the reorganisation of the cultural content of education as a whole. Having made the judgment that things could be better, we then canvass areas in need of revision and draw out from the literature what those revisions might entail. Specifically, we ask: what should be the (learning) experiences of students in schools? And how and by whom should schools be managed? Rather than specific strategies for effective change, what we identify are principles to inform these strategies and beginning points for research that is cognisant of the uniqueness of specific educational contexts.

How Effective Are Schools for Students and Their Learning?

Success and failure at school are not distributed randomly among the population. Rather, there is a very well documented and strong correlation between social class and overall success in school (Henry et al., 1988). For some time, the blame for the academic failure of many children from working class backgrounds, ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups has been placed at the feet of culturally 'disadvantaged' or 'deprived' children and their families (Knight, 1994). Like McInerney (2002), we use the term 'disadvantaged' with some reservation, given its deficit connotations in some circles, but it still remains a powerful descriptor of educational inequality. In some accounts, deviations from the cultural ideal are viewed as deficiencies and imperfections, and 'deprived' children are seen to come from a group "with no cultural integrity of its own" (Boykin, 1986, p. 60). Terms such as 'minority' and 'marginalised' also tend to suggest that all such groups are in the same situation; that all of them are disenfranchised from the larger society in much the same way. Informed by the assumption that 'disadvantaged' students are growing up in "a web of social pathology and inadequate life experiences" (Boykin, 1986, p. 60), it has become the task of schooling to 'compensate' these children for their 'deficits' (Connell, 1994). While this model of deficiency and remediation still has many adherents, it does little except to find fault with students and their life experiences.

Explanations of educational failure need to move away from a concentration on the characteristics of individual children and their families and towards a consideration of the process of schooling (Ainscow, 1999). Education is often driven by political interests that seek to legitimate particular ways of life by regulating the selection, organisation and distribution of school knowledge (Giroux, 1990). In this process it is the values, experiences and perspectives of privileged groups that parade as universal in schools, with non-dominant groups disadvantaged by a

school system whose processes and curriculum operate to penalise them by systematically discriminating in favour of some students at the expense of others (Henry et al., 1988). This cultural imperialism renders the perspectives of non-dominant groups invisible and blocks their opportunities to exercise their capacities in socially recognised ways (Young, 1990).

Bourdieu likens these social arrangements to that of a game. What might appear to some as "simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 46), are really highly structured processes that favour some students more than others. McLaren's (1994) observation that "schools constitute a loaded social lottery in which the dice fall in favour of those who already have power and money" (p. 9), appears to ring true when the very organisation of schooling as an institution works differentially to the advantage of some types of families and the disadvantage of others. Below we suggest that there are at least four ways in which this game is played in schools, to greater or lesser effect: game plans alternatively enacted by the dominant and the marginalised and which we refer to as (1) stacking the deck; (2) beating the odds (the aberration that legitimates the game); (3) one rule for us, another rule for them; and (4) opting out.

Stacking the Deck

Both teachers and their students bring their cultural understandings into the classroom and school. In the best of circumstances, home, family, school, neighbourhood and society are complementary and reinforcing, "guiding children's positive development into informed citizens and economically independent adults" (Edwards & Young, 1992, p. 72). This is more often the experience of children from dominant groups in Australia (Anglo, middle-class) given that schools are largely staffed by teachers from similar backgrounds who reflect and authorise similar views. Children from families that reflect the attitudes, beliefs and knowledges of this dominant ethnic and middle-class culture are among those that tend to find themselves the most empowered by schooling; their dispositions closely matching those encouraged and rewarded by the school.

Bourdieu (1977a; 1977b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) argues that this is because schools tend to draw unevenly on the social and cultural resources of society; typically, on the cultural experiences in the homes of Anglo and affluent families, which facilitate their children's adjustment to school and their academic achievement. Many of these 'school ready' children have learnt skills that are useful in formal contexts of education and possess the habitus (ways of being and doing) that makes 'playing the game' of school easier (Comber & Hill, 2000). Perhaps the cruellest trick of all is that schooling, enshrined in the doctrine of equality of opportunity, can contribute to social inequality by giving success to those groups who possess existing cultural advantage, while appearing to reward individual intelligence and effort. Those who 'succeed' in society sometimes fail to question the social system from which they have profited; not realising that they are being rewarded for legiti-

mating—even embracing—the way the system operates. Indeed, many accept the notion that "most people have an equal opportunity to get into the top class if they have the ability and work hard" (Chamberlain, 1983, p. 140), even though they may be aware from their own experiences that the social world does not in fact operate in that way (Henry et al., 1988).

As discussed in Chap. 1, Berry (1977) describes it in this way:

> The Australian situation … more closely resembles the case where a few competitors start one metre from the finishing line, a few more fifty metres back up the track, a larger group are further back hammering in their starting blocks, others are still changing in a crowded dressing room, while the remainder are at home under the impression that the race starts tomorrow. (p. 43)

The ideology of meritocracy, then, serves to legitimate but at the same time obscure the structural inequalities that education helps to sustain and reproduce (Henry et al., 1988).

At the same time, the voices and experiences of marginalised groups tend to be excluded and students' inherited linguistic and cultural competencies (cultural capital) devalued (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Unfamiliar with the institutional routines of and lacking the cultural capital valued by schooling, these students are likely to do poorly at school. This is because not all cultural capital is equal in status: some groups and their particular dispositions are "socially dominant—carry[ing] with them social power and access to economic success" (Delpit, 1992, p. 297); whereas the cultural capital of others' homes and communities is significantly under-valued. Students in this second group can experience a mismatch or clash of cultures should the school impose a set of values and beliefs incongruent with those learned at home and can find that "educational knowledge is uncommonsense knowledge" (Bernstein, 1971, p. 58) that is removed from their everyday experiences and understandings. When this cultural difference between home and school is significant and little is done to recognise and ratify 'home practices', students are prevented from seeing their own experiences of life and family as relevant to their learning at school. The exclusion of the knowledge and experience of the marginalised can lead to children entering school poorly prepared to meet the requirements of what is predominantly a middle-class orientation to schooling, frequently resulting in their alienation and failure (Bernstein, 1990).

It is often through this 'hidden curriculum' of attitudes, values and authoritative relations that structural inequalities and existing patterns of social class are reproduced in schools (Knight, 1994). In such circumstances, the ideology of the prevailing group in society is taken for granted as 'natural' and serves to perpetuate the status quo. It can be seen, then, that in spite of the best of intentions, educators can very easily become agents of hegemony.

Beating the Odds

More often than not, irrelevant curricula is the norm for minority students, with schools rarely modifying their curriculum and teaching to meet individual needs.

However, this is not to imply that minority groups cannot do well in majority-culture settings. While the process of unequal educational opportunity and social and economic reproduction is deeply rooted and it cannot be denied that social class, race/ethnicity, and gender all impact on the educational outcomes of students, schooling is not a wholly deterministic process. Students do not pass through schools like pawns beholden to their parents' race and/or socio-economic class (Yonezawa, 2000). It is not as simple as that. Rather:

> the process of inequity is shaped by the complex interaction between people's past histories, group and individual identities, self-efficacy and self-esteem, and their relationships with one another and the ever-changing structures and cultures in which they find themselves. (Yonezawa, 2000, p. 133)

In short, students are actively involved in determining their own futures; cooperating with or resisting teachers and the school system (Knight, 1994). It should come as no surprise that some children will be "reluctant to give up the only way they know of interacting with the world and will resist having an alien set of styles imposed upon them" (Boykin, 1986, p. 78). Nevertheless, there is the possibility for teachers and students to play the game in ways that change the game itself, by beginning from the standpoint of the least advantaged, for example. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) explain:

> … players can play to increase or conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules of the game and the prerequisites of the reproduction of the game and its stakes; but they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game. (p. 99)

There are good reasons to play the game differently, even from the standpoint of the advantaged. As Connell (1993) notes, "an education that privileges one child over another is giving the privileged child a corrupted education, even as it gives him or her a social or economic advantage" (p. 15). That is, when a schooling system deals unjustly with some of its pupils, "*the quality of education for all the others is degraded*" (Connell, 1993, p. 15, emphasis original).

One Rule for Us, Another Rule for Them

While many argue that the curriculum should be an open space for exploring the world in which we live, the 'competitive academic curriculum' (Connell, 1994) functions to name and privilege particular histories and experiences and to marginalise or silence the voices of 'othered' groups (Giroux, 1990). When certain knowledge is selected and legitimated as *the* school curriculum, the dominant succeed in displacing other knowledges and experiences by ensuring that it is this 'real' knowledge that determines academic success in the education system and which is rewarded by society at large (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982). Rather than school being an important place for gaining new understandings of culture in a democratic society, an elitist and narrow notion of what counts is supported by this assimilationist paradigm (Hattam, Shacklock, & Smyth, 1998).

These hidden distinctions are readily apparent in relation to social class, for example. According to Brint (1998), "lower-class and minority students typically receive less instructional time, less demanding and lower-quality educational materials, and less imaginative teaching than other students" (p. 225). Attributed with deficits associated with their disadvantage, these students are often held to much lower standards than others. Clearly, those who are "disadvantaged by virtue of their social circumstances can be expected to fall still further behind" (Brint, 1998, p. 225). Indeed, schools contribute to and compound this educational inequality by encouraging some students to lower their expectations to conform to the assessments educators have of them (Clark, 1961). Often these assessments lead to the streaming or tracking of students: the practice of grouping them, according to their ability, into classes and courses marked by a differentiated curriculum (Yonezawa, 2000). Consistently, it is children who belong to low socio-economic and minority groups that are most likely to end up in lower tracks regardless of whether they are tracked by the school or whether choices are left up to the parents and students themselves (Brint, 1998). Whereas, students from dominant middle-classes usually have more school-related knowledge and are frequently placed more highly than their low socio-economic peers. This is despite research that suggests tracking is educationally harmful to students placed in the lowest tracks and of dubious value when it comes to promoting an equality of outcomes (Oakes, Gamaron, & Page, 1991).

Some parents' linguistic and cultural differences can make it difficult for them to help their children who are positioned by schooling in these ways, partly because of their lack of access to knowledgeable networks. Their families' social networks tend to be largely comprised of 'people like them': individuals of similar ethnic and socio-economic status who provide parents with limited assistance to help their children actively navigate the structures of schooling (Lamphere, 1993). These minority parents may have little knowledge of the kind valued by schooling and low self-efficacy in academic contexts. Hence, placements doled out by school officials are rarely contested. Instead, beliefs are often reinforced that their children belong in low-track classes, with their abilities to compete in regular or advanced classes questioned (Yonezawa, 2000). Whereas, their more well-to-do counterparts tend to have much more pro-active involvement in the school system (Curtis, Livingstone, & Smaller, 1992; Gamaron, 1992; Lareau, 1987, Useem, 1992) and use their more highly educated and wealthy social locations to manipulate placement of their child into higher tracks (Yonezawa, 2000).

As some of the most strategically placed people to effect change in the lives of children, teachers have a central role to play in attempting to redress these injustices. The academic literature suggests that holding high expectations of students and engaging in 'visible' pedagogical practices with high 'intellectual demandingness' (Newmann & Associates, 1996; Lingard, Mills, & Hayes, 2000) may be some of the keys to making a difference for disadvantaged students. By setting high standards for students, letting them know that they are expected to meet them, and providing intellectually challenging lessons corresponding to these expectations, teachers can have a considerable impact on achievement (Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995). Yet this research also suggests that students from disadvantaged

and traditionally underachieving backgrounds are those most likely not to be the recipients of schoolwork that requires rigorous intellectual inquiry, even though such inquiry improves learning outcomes. By way of illustration, Lingard et al. (2001) found intellectual demandingness to be lacking in many of the almost 1000 classrooms they observed in 24 case study schools throughout Queensland, Australia.

Reflecting on similar issues, Delpit (1997) argues that the unequal distribution of knowledge and skills to working class and minority students reflects their exclusion from the codes or rules of the culture of power operating in schools. Unlike middle-class students who have other sites in which to acquire the dominant cultural capital—the family, its communities and so on—children from marginalised groups find themselves doubly disadvantaged with their cultural capital diminished by the school (Bernstein, 1990). By regulating access to 'privileged and privileging' discourses, schools "reproduce the very inequalities they are ostensibly committed to diminishing by making into educationally profitable cultural capital what middle-class children are more likely to have acquired already" (Edwards, 2002, p. 530). In Bourdieu's (1973) terms:

> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (p. 80)

Teachers who are "frustrated by [the] lack of conditions for giving kids access to *powerful* knowledge" (Yates, 2002, p. 332, emphasis original) can make a difference for these students by using visible pedagogic models (Bernstein, 1975); making explicit the rules of that culture through examples, illustrations and narratives that facilitate the acquisition of school knowledge and, therefore, make the acquisition of power easier (Delpit, 1997). Bernstein (1990) suggests that the use of such pedagogies weakens the relationship between social class and academic achievement, while ensuring that the school provides all students with "the discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society" (Delpit, 1997, p. 585). Moss (2002) advocates explicit pedagogies for their more honest pedagogic settlement, "which by making explicit what is to be learnt stands a better chance of working, and working best in the interests of those who currently get least within the system" (p. 555).

Opting Out

Teachers in disadvantaged communities have an important part to play as "key mediators of wider social values, goods and practices" (Comber & Hill, 2000, pp. 86–87). Young (1990) similarly contends that it is the role of teachers to redress the oppressive institutional constraints that render the perspectives of students from non-dominant groups as invisible and which inhibit them from exercising their capabilities and expressing their experiences and ideas. Yet, despite repeated calls

for teachers to be aware of and build upon the literacies their students bring to classrooms (Heath, 1983; Cairney & Ruge, 1998), many schools continue to give priority to the stories of the lives enjoyed by "well-off, highly educated and socially conforming groups" (Hattam et al., 1998, p. 102). Historically, schools have tended to "connect best with, and work best for, students of middle-class, Anglo, male backgrounds" (Ladwig & Gore, 1998, p. 19), with the values, experiences and perspectives of these privileged groups parading as universal.

Others sometimes respond by rejecting the legitimacy of schools, dismissing them as institutions of dominant groups (Brint, 1998). Excluded rather than respected for their difference, they develop an identity of themselves as outcasts, displaying a pattern of low commitment to schooling and behaviour that is not at all irrational in an environment that is viewed as "uncaring, culturally incompetent, antagonistic, and oppressive" (Franklin, 2000, p. 12). Given the discontinuities between home and school, it is hardly surprising that these students choose to leave, perceiving schooling as irrelevant to their needs and interests and feeling as though they are not valued (Lamb, Dwyer, & Wyn, 2000). Unlike the experiences of many white middle-class children, the cultural mismatch experienced by minority students can impact on their motivation, beliefs and values (Boykin, 1986). With respect to academic achievement, these can affect their will to learn and impact adversely on their interest, persistence, and attention to activities promoted by schooling. Children may respond in this oppressive setting by:

> (a) decid[ing] that what they *should* do is not what the teacher thinks should be done; (b) act[ing] in such a way that they *will not* do what the teacher wants, and (c) display[ing]what they *can* do in ways that are not in accordance with what the teacher prescribes (Boykin, 1986, p. 79, emphasis original).

In the research of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) on African–American students and peer group influence, they found that the perception of schooling as a subtractive process—that is, as "one-way acculturation into the cultural frame of reference of the dominant group members of their society" (p. 201)—caused some students to resist and oppose achieving success in their academic pursuits. These students viewed success as 'white people's prerogative' and striving for success in school as 'acting white' at the expense of their own cultural and identity integrity. The resulting social pressures against striving for academic success can mean that some students who are academically able perform well below their potential. These students are choosing, either consciously or unconsciously, to maintain their view of their own identity in what they perceive as a choice between allegiance to 'them' or 'us' (Delpit, 1992).

What Should Be the (Learning) Experiences of Students in Schools?

While Fordham and Ogbu (1986) believe that schools should develop programs and offer counselling to help students learn to divorce academic pursuit from the idea of 'acting white', others suggest that schools need to create environments that

value and appreciate cultural differences and recognise education as a process that takes place both within formal institutions as well as within families and communities (Cox, 2000). Such advocates argue that mechanisms need to be established for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of all groups but particularly the oppressed and disadvantaged (Ladwig & Gore, 1998). Similarly, success at school "needs to be redefined to incorporate the lives and experiences of currently marginalised and materially excluded groups" (Hattam et al., 1998, p. 102). It would seem, then, that at least four ideals should govern the experience of students in classrooms. First, schooling should value and add to students' existing cultural repertoires. Second, it should value and give voice to who students are, as they identify themselves. Third, schooling should value and promote all students' participation in decision-making. And fourth, it should consult and involve parents and communities in its educative processes. We consider each of these positive classroom experiences in turn.

Schooling Should Value and Add to Students' Existing Cultural Repertoires

According to Ainscow (1999), educational difficulties result from an interaction between what the student brings to the situation and the program provided by the school. Ainscow (1999) believes that difficulties in learning "occur as a result of the decisions teachers make, the tasks teachers present, the resources teachers provide and the ways in which teachers choose to organize the classroom" (p. 26). This viewpoint is essentially an optimistic one.

> Unlike the traditional approach where the focus on child-centred causes of educational difficulty tended to create an air of despondency, the interactive perspective focuses attention on a range of factors that teachers can influence to encourage children's learning. It emphasizes the fact that what teachers do, the decisions they make, their attitudes, the relationships they develop and their forms of classroom organization, are all factors that can help children to experience success in school. (Ainscow, 1999, p. 30)

However, it is important to remember that while human agency can be operative and effective, it remains "constrained and shaped by historical, social and economic forces which form the context for that action. Teacher practice, while having the potential to transform, is at the same time similarly constrained" (Henry et al., 1988, pp. 8–9).

Nevertheless, the dominance of "a very narrow view of what is valued as being worthwhile educational standards and the continued use of various forms of selection systems still act together in ways that ensure that significant numbers of our young people experience failure in school" (Ainscow, 1999, p. 99). One way to contest the disempowering effects of the hegemonic curriculum is for schools to embrace the notion of multiple knowledges that are equally valid and embark on a strategy that Connell (1993) refers to as *inverting* hegemony. Connell's pursuit of 'curricular justice' involves the reconstruction of the mainstream curriculum by

incorporating content and pedagogy in ways that build on the interests and perspectives of the least advantaged in a program of common learning in schools. Curricula and pedagogies that take seriously this notion of student voice, build on and add to the diverse experiences and knowledges that students bring to the classroom (Giroux, 1990). Instead of being a site of 'disjunction and dislocation' (Comber & Hill, 2000), there should be transparent links between the classroom and the world beyond, with schools becoming an extension of home language and literacy practices by confirming "the language forms, modes of reasoning, dispositions, and histories that give students an active voice in defining the world" (Giroux, 1990, p. 94).

By relating school curricula to children's worlds, not only is the classroom made more inclusive by legitimating locally produced knowledge but students can see their everyday lives and experiences as relevant to their learning and success at school. Making meaningful links with children's experiences at home enables this experience to be used in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding in the context of school learning (Todd & Higgins, 1998). On this account, attention would be paid to the vast range of knowledges that students bring to school as a consequence of their backgrounds and the diversity of their community languages and literacies acknowledged and valued.

Heath (1983) recommends interaction with parents and involvement with community paraprofessionals as a place for teachers to begin to learn about these communities and their practices. This enables teachers to re-evaluate their school curricula and learning environments and modify these to acknowledge and respond to the needs and interests of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities they serve. As Edwards and Young (1992) suggest, "until schools acknowledge the range in dispositions, backgrounds, experiences, and strengths among families, efforts to establish sound home/school communication and partnerships will continue to falter" (p. 74). These partnerships between home, school and community are essential for ensuring the relevance of what is learned within the classroom to the world beyond.

But rather than teachers simply modifying their approach to fit the qualities or skills possessed by minority children, it is also important that a socially just curriculum equips students with complex collections of practices that make up the cultural capital valued by dominant groups. In this way, learning can open up ways of transforming the situation of the marginalised, equipping them with understandings that can empower them to act individually and together to improve their circumstances and to lead fulfilled lives (Australian Schools Commission, 1995). The point is not to eliminate the cultural capital that students bring with them to school or use it to limit their potential, but rather to add other cultural capitals to their repertoires (Delpit, 1992). This is epitomised in the following excerpt from a play produced by students in 1974 on language and cultural differences. In this excerpt, an adolescent black girl interacts with her teacher:

> My way of communicating may be different from yours but it fills my adaptive and emotional needs as I perform it. Why should my 'at home' way of talking be 'wrong' and your standard version be 'right'? … Show me … that by adding a fluency in standard dialect, you are adding something to my language and not taking something away from me. Help me retain my identity and self-respect while learning to talk 'your' way. (Heath, 1983, p. 271)

Schooling Should Value and Give Voice to Who Students Are, as They Identify Themselves

While effective schooling promotes the valuing of voices and experiences that students bring to the classroom, it also calls for appreciation and respect for individual students, evidenced in teacher–student relationships and characterised by active trust and mutual respect. Such relationships are made possible when there is positive regard for social difference and when social groups are recognised for who they are, as they identify themselves (Gale, 2000). This recognition of difference or 'democratic cultural pluralism' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Cunningham, 1987; Nickel, 1987) is linked to improving the academic outcomes of underachieving students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lingard et al., 2000). At the classroom level, it requires teachers to create opportunities to get to know their students, and for students to get to know themselves and to get to know and get along with 'the other' on the basis of who they are (Gale & Densmore, 2000), not how others might want to represent them.

The positive relationships and strong teacher–student rapport that ideally ensue from such practices have been found to have a positive influence on educational outcomes. Sammons et al. (1995) found positive effects when teachers showed interest in and communicated enthusiasm to children as individuals. Teacher–student relationships can also be enhanced outside the classroom. Shared teacher and student out-of-school activities have led to improved educational outcomes, as well as interpersonal openness and mutual understanding in their relationships (Sammons et al., 1995; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992).

Schooling Should Value and Promote All Students' Participation in Decision-Making

Knight (2000) has also found a sense of competence, a feeling of belonging and a sense of ownership central to student achievement. Having an active role in the life of the school is a key part of this. While Knight (2000) concedes that no teacher can walk into a classroom and instantly transform it into a democracy, every teacher can take meaningful steps toward making the class more democratic by bringing students into decision-making processes and moving in the direction of negotiable authority. Indeed, Connell (1994) suggests that to teach well in disadvantaged schools requires a shift towards more negotiated curriculum and more participatory classroom practices. Although the social skills developed will be of benefit to students in the world beyond schooling, studies in the UK have also shown enhanced behavioural and academic outcomes as a result of giving students positions of responsibility in the school system (Sammons et al., 1995). While conveying trust in students' abilities and, therefore, improving the teacher–student relationship, such practices give students greater control over what happens to them at school.

Despite these findings, teachers and schools more often than not underestimate the potential of students to participate in discussions about what happens in their schools. Consultation with students over issues can be tokenistic or students are left out of the dialogue completely (Edwards, 1999). Students are not ignorant of this. The contradictions, for example, "of requiring students to sit, by compulsion not choice, in classrooms in which they have little input or control, while we attempt to teach them to think for themselves and to participate in decision-making are clearly evident" (Ladwig & Gore, 1998, p. 18). Student councils are often promoted as forums in which to pursue such agendas; as places that give students opportunities to experience representative democracy firsthand. However, Schmuck and Schmuck's (1992) research in schools in small districts in the US did not find one school in which the student council had a discernible effect on aspects of school life other than entertainment and social events. Elected student leaders felt that they had very little influence over school operations and in most small districts student councils were slammed as "perfunctory and pallid sham[s] of representative democracy" (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992, p. 28). One possible explanation for this might be that when students do have a voice in such forums, this is seen as only reflecting the dominant voices within the school. That is, the student voices invited and listened to might simply be those that reflect the views of powerful groups; students who possess the social and cultural capital already valued by the school.

Schooling Should Consult and Involve Parents and Local Communities in Its Educative Processes

Involving parents and local communities in schooling presents its own challenges. In disadvantaged schools in particular, forging strong relationships between the school and its surrounding communities can be extremely difficult (Connell, 1993). There are several reasons for this and it would be wrong to assume that "working-class parents can simply be inculcated into what is essentially a bourgeois school culture in the relatively easy way in which middle-class parents are able to" (Lucey & Walkerdine, 2000, p. 46). Nevertheless, teachers tend to take parental performance in schooling very seriously. Involvement of parents in their children's education has long been advocated as integral to positive childhood development and school success (Griffith, 2001). Many teachers actively solicit parent participation, see their requests of parents—such as reading to children and helping them at home with school work—as reasonable and often assume that all parents, regardless of social and economic position, can help their children. In fact, in the schools studied in Lareau's (1987) research, teachers' methods of presenting, teaching, and assessing subject matter were based on a structure that presumed parents would help children at home.

However, while there are variations within as well as between social classes, many working-class parents feel that they lack the culturally valued educational skills and material resources to participate effectively in the educational process (Lareau, 1989). Indeed, "the standards of the school are not neutral; their requests

for parent involvement may be laden with the cultural experiences of intellectual and economic elites" (Lareau, 1989, p. 8). Everyone possesses cultural capital, but in itself it is arbitrary, with value being ascribed to particular forms (and not others) within particular fields (Vincent & Martin, 2002). Although parents may be willing to help with their children's education, this support does not always translate into an active relationship with the school. Their unfamiliarity with the tasks being asked of them means that they may have few ideas about how to provide this help and are, therefore, reluctant to comply with school requests. Further, the limited time and disposable income of some lower and working-class parents make it difficult to supplement and intervene in their children's schooling. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, often have educational skills and occupational prestige matching or surpassing that of teachers and have the necessary economic resources to more fully contribute to their children's schooling (Lareau, 1987).

While middle-class parents can call upon resources of social, cultural and economic capital in order to exercise their voice in relation to educational issues, working-class parents, "often lacking the sense of entitlement to act, and often the same degree of knowledge of the education system are more likely to be dependent upon professionals" (Vincent, 2001, p. 360). They may see school as "a separate sphere with its own language and procedures, which [are] distant and not easily available" (Vincent & Martin, 2002, p. 125). In much the same way that parents depend on doctors to heal their children, some working-class communities turn over responsibility for their child's education to 'professionals' (Borg, 1994). These parents see education as a discrete process that takes place on the school grounds under the direction of a teacher. Whereas, middle-class parents in Lareau's (1987, p. 81) study saw education as "a shared enterprise and scrutinized, monitored, and supplemented the school experience of their children" by reading to them, initiating contact with teachers and attending school events. These parents, with similar or superior educational skills and occupational prestige levels to teachers, conceived of schooling as a partnership between equals and saw it as their responsibility to reinforce, monitor, and supervise the educational experience of their children (Lareau, 1987). In short, working-class and middle-class parents often have different conceptions of the division of labour with respect to schooling their children.

Others trace unequal levels of parental involvement in schooling back to educational institutions, which are sometimes accused of making middle-class families feel more welcome than working-class and lower-class families (Lightfoot, 1978; Ogbu, 1974). Parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are also more likely to have had negative experiences as students themselves, and may already experience feelings of insecurity and intimidation in school settings (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). This makes community participation in disadvantaged schools via conventional channels difficult (Connell, 1993). Those who are unwilling or unable to become involved face marginalisation and risk being labelled as ignorant and neglectful (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). Attitudes among some teachers—that socio-economically disadvantaged parents lack skills, abilities, and interest to help in the school and in their children's education (Griffith, 2001)—have done nothing to improve the situation. Moreover, the lack of participation on the part of subordinate

groups leaves the door wide open for dominant groups to mobilise class advantage and lobby for their own agenda (Grimes, 1995; Henry, 1996). As Hallgarten (2000) points out, "in its current condition, parental involvement in children's learning is normally less of a protective barrier than a lever to maximise the potential of the already advantaged" (p. 18).

To add to these difficulties, many parents and teachers share a long history of tension and mistrust. They have even been described in the literature as 'natural enemies' (Waller, 1932), facing enduring problems of negotiating 'boundaries' between their 'territories' (Lightfoot, 1978). According to Briggs and Potter (1990), teachers have had negative attitudes about parents and parent participation, and have claimed that parents are apathetic and come to school only to criticise. This can result in the significant adults and institutions in children's lives pulling in opposite directions. Hence, attempts to develop participation programs to bring the school and its communities closer together are often ineffective and frustrating to both parents and teachers (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). One reason for this is that they do not equally share decision-making. Instead, parents have traditionally adopted the role of supporters or representatives, rather than full and equal partners (Borg & Mayo, 2001).

In these ways, parents (particularly those with backgrounds different from teachers) are often positioned in a binary relationship with teachers, as 'others'. Parental knowledge of the child is seen as anecdotal, subjective, ad hoc, individualised and applicable only to specific children. On the other hand, teachers' professional knowledge is seen as developmental, scientific, objective, norm-referenced and applicable to all children. Hence, parental knowledge is often characterised as inadequate (they are regarded as ignorant about what and how to teach their children), supplementary (and can therefore be ignored by teachers without their professional standards being compromised), and/or unimportant. In fact, many staff have little incentive to collaborate with parents, given that their claim to be professionals is seen by some to be undermined by giving credence to parental knowledge of the child. This frustrates the creation of equitable parent–teacher relationships (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000).

According to Todd and Higgins (1998), many teachers have a one-way view of parental involvement, viewing home–school relationships "almost entirely from their own and the schools' point of view, with little understanding that this is the case, or that there is anything problematic in such a situation" (p. 229). Clearly, some schools should think differently about what they expect from families and communities. Community participation should involve more than just a commitment to consult parents through the existing consultative procedures and structures (Nixon, Allan, & Mannion, 2001). Parents should be viewed as partners, and the vital role that they play in education recognised. Rather than seeking to determine what parents can do for teachers—such as filling a variety of unpaid teacher aide or custodial roles—teachers need to implement initiatives that recognise the complementary roles of parents and teachers and bring schools and communities closer together (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). The challenge is to develop ways in which both teachers and parents can see that they have complementary but contributive roles in the proc-

ess of building the learning community, particularly among parents whose children traditionally have low academic achievement (Griffith, 2001). Schools also need to engage with community concerns and reach out to parents in new ways, as parents without money or status are often wary or uncertain about approaching teachers and administrators (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). Schools should help parents connect to resources, create environments where parents feel welcome, and organise various avenues for participation (Edwards & Young, 1992). In this way, positive relationships with school communities could be established and maintained and community representatives drawn into the process of educational decision-making.

How and by Whom Should Schools Be Managed?

Although schools were once 'fortress-like' institutions with the purposes of education departments carried out "by principals and teachers with little negotiation with, and input from, school communities, including parents" (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2002, p. 7), there were efforts in the latter part of the twentieth century to devolve decision-making to schools and to experiment with more open and participatory relationships with parents and school communities. Devolution, as it was first implemented in Australian schools in the early 1970s, was strongly influenced by the Karmel Report (Karmel, 1973). Karmel's socially democratic agenda stressed the importance of bottom-up reforms and decision-making. The need for "more teacher and school level professional autonomy, combined with greater input from parents and community" (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 8) was championed by Karmel as giving schools and communities increased power to manage their own affairs and improving educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The ideal of devolution (with various hues) has now been widely accepted in schooling. However, it is a socially democratic view of devolution that provides real opportunities for people to participate in decision-making and, in so doing, have a say in how their lives are governed. It also suggests a closer association between school and communities. Despite the ascendancy of neo-liberal regimes and the spread of economic rationalist thinking in government social policy and education reform, and perhaps because of it, many teachers and parents are committed to a democratic version of devolution, believing that education can and should be a collective social activity, inextricably tied to communities (Lingard et al., 2002). Drawing on such a view, we argue for at least two ideals. First, that schooling should democratise its leadership structures to include teachers and, second, that it should democratise its participation structures to include parents and communities.

Schooling Should Include Teachers as Leaders

Educational institutions have long existed as closed systems with top-down structures, "characterized by rigidity, extensive rules and regulations, and excessively

tight norms that restrict creativity" (Whitaker & Moses, 1990, p. 128). While visionary leadership in an organisation is important, there is no evidence to suggest that the principal or head teacher is necessarily the best and/or should be its only source. Instead, the effective schools literature suggests that effective principals provide or cause others to provide strong leadership (Schlechty, 1990). The traditional, entrenched orthodoxy of principals as primary decision-makers needs to be challenged and the leadership role extended to many individuals and groups in a participatory style of management (Wheeler & Agruso, 1996). Vision is not the preserve and prerogative of those occupying designated leadership positions. Indeed, the sharing of leadership and the involvement more generally of teachers in decision-making is often recognised as helping teachers become more efficacious and contribute more productively to schools (Rosenholtz, 1990).

However, the empowerment of teachers may not come easily or quickly. Many teachers have been conditioned to accept dependent roles and the culture of schools reinforces this trend. Others are skeptical about the motives and sincerity of administrators when it comes to empowerment. Indeed, Whitaker and Moses (1990) suggest that a willingness to enfranchise teachers is lacking. While principals now tend to embrace and endorse the idea of participation, their behaviour—their controlling values and tendencies—can sometimes suggest otherwise (Wood, 1984). Some teachers suspect that their collegial energies may be harnessed less for the purpose of giving them a say than to "squeeze out dissentient voices and secure commitment and compliance to changes imposed by others" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 217).

As the front-line workers in schools, teachers are often expected to implement policies but not make them. Hence, they can often regard themselves as the "objects of policy interventions rather than as the authors of social change" (Connell, 1994, p. 133). But rather than their input being included as a token gesture, teachers should be centrally involved in the design of reform strategies. For this to happen, and as a first step, they need to become full partners in their own profession. Participation in collaborative decisions affecting their profession, their classrooms, and their students challenges top-down structures while teachers' ownership and endorsement of decisions fosters feelings of empowerment. Involving in the decision-making process those who will be responsible for implementation, appears to impact on their motivation to act upon and commit to the intended outcomes (Whitaker & Moses, 1990).

Schooling Should Meaningfully Involve Parents and Communities

Schools play a crucial role in the formation of democracy. However, "democratization *in* the school is not necessarily the same as democratization *of* the school" (Connell, 1993, p. 71, emphasis original). Given that the "notion of 'democracy' implies collective decision-making on major issues in which all citizens have, in principle, an equal voice" (Connell, 1993, p. 45), *all* those involved in schooling need to be involved in determining schooling's purposes. Clearly, "you cannot

have a democracy in which some citizens only *receive* decisions made by others" (Connell, 1993, p. 46, emphasis original).

Providing all members of the school community with access to forms of self-determination certainly requires an investment of time, energy and emotion. Nevertheless, within a context of participative democracy, Wheeler and Agruso (1996) see the development of collaborative relationships among teachers, students, parents and the schools' communities as crucial in ensuring success in schooling for disadvantaged students. In part, this is because when decisions are more relevant to those they affect, schools are able to provide a more appropriate education for all students. As well, such "devolution of power has the potential to reduce alienation from schools, increase job satisfaction of employees, promote direct participation of all relevant groups, and raise community understanding" (Department of Education, 1990, p. 41). This is apart from the fact that "the rule of some people over others, their power to make decisions that affect the actions and conditions of action of others" (Young, 1990, p. 112) is hardly democratic. The delegation of authority to some who are charged with making decisions in an 'impartial' manner can legitimate undemocratic, authoritarian structures of decision-making.

Giddens refers to an alternative response characterised by 'generative politics'. In the context of schooling, this "allow[s] individuals and groups to *make things happen*, rather than have things happen to them" (Giddens, 1994, p. 15, emphasis added) and opens up the processes of schooling to groups that traditionally have been excluded, by seriously engaging their views in decision-making. A governance structure supporting decision-making practices in concert with the entire school community also assumes more flexible leadership that enables participants to "exercise the power of their human agency in self-determining ways" (Millwater, Yarrow, & Short, 2000, p. 5). The shift and subsequent change in roles and responsibilities affords all members of the school community with opportunity for increased involvement that leads to a sense of ownership of school reform and control over the school agenda. These opportunities to be involved in collaborative decisions that affect schooling and, therefore, the lives of their children, empower families and assign value to all members of a school's community.

Moving Beyond Compensation and Towards Reorganisation

In casting a critical eye over the effective schooling literature, we do not mean to suggest that schooling practices that fall short of our ideals are necessarily inappropriate. We are still concerned to detail what we regard as socially just forms of schooling—and therein lies measures of what we regard as appropriate ends—but we also want to engage with matters related to how well these ends are pursued. Hence, while there might be agreement that schools should ideally equip students with the intellectual, cultural and social capital necessary to pursue a wide range of post-school opportunities, whether these capabilities and opportunities are distributed differentially or equitably is a key question (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod,

2000). If we are to take the conditions of recognitive justice seriously, it remains important for all schools to move beyond the goal of 'compensation' and towards the reorganisation of the cultural content of schooling if they are to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students (Connell, 1994).

Drawing on current research and scholarship, we have argued that such reorganisation necessarily entails modifying both teachers' pedagogies and school curricula, and adopting organisational styles that reconfigure teacher–student and school–community relations based on an appreciation and respect for individuals, as they identify themselves. As part of this agenda we have also argued for the devolution of decision-making in schools, in ways that promote open and participatory relationships among teachers, students, parents and school communities. That is, all those affected by school and classroom decisions need to be included in the decision-making process, particularly the voices of the least advantaged. Moving away from the principal or head teacher as the primary decision-maker to a participatory style of management is courageous work, as we have noted. The same is true for teachers who attempt to move away from their traditional positions as gatekeepers of legitimate knowledge. However, to maintain the status quo, to do nothing apart from tinker at the edges of schooling with compensatory programs that regard difference as a deficiency, is to continue the current reproduction of educational disadvantage across generations (Lingard, 1998). Surely this is not what we mean or want to mean by effective schooling. In this chapter we have identified broad principles for socially just schooling. The next step, then, is for practical, workable strategies, guided by these principles, to be explored in specific contexts.

Chapter 6
Competencies That Count

This chapter explores the unmerited advantage that students from dominant groups bring to education by virtue of their extended exposure over time to the cultural capital that is legitimated and rewarded by schools. While Crimson Brook Secondary College is a specific context with specific needs, in Northern nations (Connell, 2006, 2007) there are increasing numbers of communities and schools in similar circumstances. We argue that for teachers who desire to make a difference in such schools and communities, the challenge is in transforming the capital that counts: teaching the academic skills and competencies required to enable their students to succeed in mainstream societies, while also ensuring that this context acknowledges and responds to the needs and interests of the cultural diversity of the communities they serve and simultaneously engaging with the deep structures that generate injustice.

The Myth of Meritocracy

As we have argued in previous chapters, the blame for the academic failure of many children from working class backgrounds, ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups is often placed at the feet of culturally 'disadvantaged' or 'deprived' children and their families (Knight, 1994). Such failure is seen as evidence of "a deficit of the child or the home, as cultural deprivation, rather than as an indication of a deficiency on the part of the school to develop pedagogic practices responsive to the … dispositions such children bring to school" (Nash, 1990, p. 437).

Students from Crimson Brook are no exception, many viewing school failure as attributable to individual deficiencies. One student in our study commented that "you put the work in and you get the results" (Student # 22), so "if [we] get bad marks it's more than likely our fault because we can't blame anyone but ourselves" (Student # 22). Another with a similar 'false consciousness' believed that the students who are not successful at school are "the kids that just don't try and they just don't care so they don't do the work" (Student # 26). The student was of the view that "if you don't like school and you don't want to get good marks, you just won't.

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_6, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

So it's up to you if you want to learn or not" (Student # 26). So convinced of these apparent cause (individual irresponsibility) and effect (school failure) relations, she argued that the school should "get all the people that don't [want to learn] and say, do you want to learn or not? And if they don't, say … if you don't like it, don't come here" (Student # 26).

Crimson Brook students were not alone in their reduction of school success to the degree of individual effort. Teachers, too, spoke of students who are "going to do well regardless of what I do in the classroom … because they're determined and motivated and … they've got the intelligence to cope with whatever I throw at them" (Teacher # 19). Similarly, the Principal made it clear that "the capacity is there for any student who's willing to put in the effort to get [the highest possible tertiary entrance score]".

What is missing from these accounts is recognition that it is the values, experiences and perspectives of privileged groups that parade as universal in schools. This cultural imperialism renders the perspectives of non-dominant groups invisible and blocks their opportunities to exercise their capacities in socially recognised ways (Young, 1990). That is, the 'competitive academic curriculum' (Connell, 1994) functions to name and privilege particular histories and experiences and to marginalise or silence the voices of 'othered' groups. The result is that "what meanings are considered the most important, what experiences are deemed the most legitimate, and what forms of writing and reading matter are largely determined by those groups who control the economic and cultural apparatuses of a given society" (Giroux, 1990, p. 85).

In recognising these social arrangements as highly structured processes that favour some students more than others, Bourdieu's work offers us one way of advancing this discussion beyond simplistic attributions of blame. His notion of cultural capital, which "includes such things as acquired knowledge (educational or otherwise), cultural codes, manner of speaking and consumption practices and so forth, which are embodied as a kind of 'habitus' in the individual and are also objectified in cultural goods" (Bullen & Kenway, 2005, p. 52), is particularly important to this chapter. As a concept, cultural capital helps to illuminate inequalities of opportunity in schooling as well as the potential that teachers have for reproducing and/or transforming students' life futures through the decisions they make about the curricula they teach.

Cultural Capital: The Perfect *Inequality* of Opportunity

The argument that Bourdieu makes about the central role that schools play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities has already been established in Chaps. 2 and 4. Viewed as an institution for the reproduction of legitimate culture through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage (Bourdieu, 1998b), the school system subverts its touted ideologies of equal opportunity and meritocracy; instead producing agents capable of manipulating it in a legitimate and therefore misrecognised manner (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Cultural capital describes this familiarity with bourgeois culture, the unequal distribution of which helps to conserve social hierarchy under the cloak of individual talent and academic meritocracy (Wacquant, 1998). While all students bring their cultural capital—or their behaviours, competencies, values, knowledges, attitudes—with them to school, "the school assumes middle-class culture, attitudes and values in all its pupils. Any other background, however rich in experiences, often turns out to be a liability" (Henry et al., 1988, pp. 142–143). Indeed, as Nash (2002) points out, "students socialised into codes of communication derived from class-cultural communities recognized as illegitimate by the middle-class school, and incompatible with those that regulate the transmission of educational knowledge, are confronted with insurmountable barriers of incomprehension" (p. 42).

As explored in Chap. 4, Bourdieu's further insight is that cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; its accumulation requires an investment, above all of time. Prolonging the acquisition process for students is dependent upon their families providing them with time free from economic necessity (Bourdieu, 1997). Paradoxically, those who are most in need of time in school to accumulate the dominant cultural capital—as they are less likely to acquire it from their homes and communities—are also those who are least likely to be free from the urgency of economic necessity. As one teacher in our study observed about parent dispositions:

> [They think] education [is] really important for the kid and they've got to finish school … [but] they're also happy for the kid to go out and work X number of hours because they need an income … It's another impact of poverty I suppose. (Teacher # 18)

According to Grenfell and James (1998a), Bourdieu's whole mission seems to be "to render visible these invisible operations as a way of making available the possibility at least of democratizing the product and processes of the field" (p. 22). Similarly, this chapter attempts to make visible the unmerited advantage that students from dominant groups bring to education by virtue of their extended exposure over time to the cultural capital that is legitimated and rewarded by schools in order to shed light on the ways that teachers can make a difference for marginalised students.

The Limited Access of the Marginalised to the Cultural Capital of the Dominant

As highlighted in Chap. 4, exposure to the educative effects of the cultural capital of dominant groups is necessary for success at school. Students from marginalised groups, whose families' cultural capital is not always highly valued in schools, frequently find their access to dominant forms restricted to time in school. That is, for some students their only exposure to this cultural competence is in the form of interactions with the staff of the school: the bearers of highly prized capitals with their knowledges, skills and modes of expression constituting the heritage of the cultivated classes.

Cognisant of the importance of investing time in acquiring the cultural capital rewarded by broader society, Crimson Brook has recently introduced a new scheme:

> The teacher aides come in every morning and they'll check the absence list … They ring home to find out whether that kid is actually sick or whether they just don't want to come to school, to try and get them to come to school and to find out whether they've just gone shopping in [the nearby regional city] for the day or whatever. And that started in Term 1 or Term 2 this year and that lowered the absences a fair bit. Some of those kids that would just stay home when they felt like it, knew that someone was going to call and say, "Where are you? Come down to school. You've got stuff on today" or "You really need to be here. You can't just keep skipping out" and things like that. (Teacher # 15)

At Crimson Brook, there is an implicit understanding of the importance of time spent in the company of those who possess the dominant cultural capital. For example, many parents mentioned the value they placed on the school's smaller class sizes and possibilities for one-on-one interaction between teachers and students:

> There's a lot more interaction with the teachers … They've got more time to spend if one of the children has a hard time learning something or can't quite grasp it, they have more opportunities to help that child … whereas [in] a large classroom … there just isn't enough time to help the children that are [going] backwards. (Parent # 23)

A teacher who works predominantly in the middle years of the school agreed, noting that "having two teachers in the room with 30 students it makes it easier for us to cope with that because … one person can be taking the lesson while the other person could be focusing on these kids [with learning difficulties] and making sure they're on the right track" (Teacher # 19). In the higher year levels classes are even smaller, with one student commenting that "most of [my classes are no bigger than] three or four people" (Student # 22). While small class enrolments are positive in that they make increased time in the company of staff members possible—which in disadvantaged communities, in particular, is a valuable resource—they also draw our attention to the troubling fact that students are dropping out before the final years of schooling.

Perhaps it is the scarcity of what these teachers have to offer—the cultural capital of the dominant, often in short supply in marginalised regional communities—and the logic of its transmission bound up in extended periods of time in its company, which results in teachers doing:

> anything for [the students] and they're extremely appreciative. Whereas in a lot of other places I've worked, particularly in [large cities] you do things for the kids and they expect more. It's more like you're here to service me. You know, whereas here, the smallest little thing that you can do for them and they're just so incredibly grateful … Like, if a kid is away and you say to them, "Oh", you know, "You missed out on this stuff and that's going to be really important, I'll photocopy this stuff for you" or "I'll sit with you in the lunch hour and we'll go over it" … and you actually show genuine interest or care and concern for them, that's a really big deal for them … They're very appreciative of that. (Teacher # 22).

Although teachers in this context are the bearers of highly prized capitals, time in company with parents who are in possession of the dominant cultural capital is also a precious commodity. Some parents, for example, take an active role in supporting the work of the school by reminding their children that "'This is due' and 'You've got to

do this' … [Or] you ask them have they done their homework" (Parent # 22). Other parents help by "proof reading and … tell[ing] you to change some things to make it better … Just spelling and punctuation, all that sort of stuff … If you're stuck on something they give you an idea" (Student # 20). One parent, whose son had recently been surprised by a low result in mathematics on his report card, mentioned that:

> these holidays [my son and I are] going to … work through his Maths textbook and see where he's having problems … I thought I might ring [a private tutoring company] and see what they can offer or talk to his Maths teacher and see if there's anything else he can suggest. (Parent # 20)

Indeed, some "are heavily involved in anything that [the children] bring home" (Parent # 20) and suggest that those who are not "don't … see the value in a good education and in doing well" (Parent # 20). In a similar vein, one student commented that "some kids here, they hand in their assignment on a bit of paper all scrunched up and just scribbled down … Mine's always typed up in a little plastic pocket. You can tell that they've probably just writ[ten] it the night before and their parents haven't even looked at it … They probably don't care" (Student # 20).

Some suggested that parental attitudes towards and involvement in schooling was related to where they live:

> A lot of people in [this town], parents in particular, really don't care what's happening at the school and with their kids … Half of them are prepared to just drift along, and at the end of it they think, "Why didn't my child achieve something better?" But I really don't think that [the people from the township are] all that involved in the process as much as the farming community. (Parent # 19)

What is interesting about these comments is the inference that parents who are not involved in assisting their children with assignments and homework 'don't care'. Here the non-participation of parents is attributed to their own lack of interest and is viewed as a reflection of the lower value that these working-class families attribute to education compared with middle-class families (Deutsch, 1967). There seems little recognition that there could be parents who would like to be more involved and little understanding of the more complex reasons why they are not, including that it is the culture of the dominant group which is embodied in schools; a culture in which not all parents are equally knowledgeable. For example, one parent commented that when her son had had difficulty understanding his assignments, she had looked at questions "a few times last year and I couldn't tell you exactly what he had to do" (Parent # 22). These are matters we return to in Chap. 8.

As was the case with teacher mobility discussed in Chap. 4, marginalised students from Crimson Brook are at a disadvantage in the classroom by virtue of their reduced access to the cultural capital of the dominant. Again, while some are born into hereditary privileges and cultural heritage that lead to scholastic aptitude, many others suffer educational repercussions for having a cultural capital that is in the wrong currency (Gewirtz et al., 1995).

Time in the company of students who possess the cultural capital that is rewarded by society is also important for students from non-dominant groups. As outlined in Chap. 4, students:

> do not enter fields with equal amounts, or identical configurations, of capital. Some have inherited wealth, cultural distinctions from up-bringing and family connections. Some individuals, therefore, already possess quantities of relevant capital … which makes them better players than others in certain field games. Conversely, some are disadvantaged. (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 21)

At least one of the teachers from Crimson Brook Secondary College is aware of this, purposely seating students who do not do well at school next to "students who have pretty good grades" (Teacher # 16). Despite the richness and diversity of the cultural capital of the marginalised in this regional community, its value is considerably reduced in comparison to middle-class culture, attitudes and values for ensuring success in educational institutions.

While time in company with those who exude the knowledges, attitudes and values promoted by schools might be sought by some, others are more concerned that time in company with cultural capital of the wrong kind will influence their children in a negative way. One parent, for example, mentioned that:

> The class that [my friend's son is] in is … the worst ever [cohort of first year secondary school students] that [Crimson Brook Secondary College has] ever had and there's five particularly bad kids that this parent now feels is going to rub off on the other kids in the classroom. (Parent # 19)

Another parent noted that with whom her children spend time might impact on their future and this is:

> something that absolutely terrifies me as a parent … My son is … easily impressed and for a 12 year old boy just hitting secondary school, he just thinks the senior boys are Gods and he's seriously in some hero worship at the moment … [which is fine] as long as he continues to pick the [right] hero [to] worship. (Parent # 20)

This concern about spending time with the 'right' type of people is not isolated to parents. One student, who was from a fairly well-to-do family in the community, suggested that she would like the school to "just put all the bad kids in one class and all the good kids in the other" (Student # 26). Her justification was that:

> Sometimes I get real sick of it … You don't get as much work done because you have got the teachers trying to make the [other kids] listen and see what they've got to do and you only get half of the work done that you need to be doing and you could have got a lot more done … It just takes longer to learn. (Student # 26)

Such students fail to see the value of spending time in company with those in possession of cultural capital not legitimised and rewarded by the school, and see their own learning as impeded by their presence in the classroom.

The school also experiences something of a 'brain drain': it is regularly 'creamed' of its higher achieving students by thriving selective schools. These students "go to school in [the nearby city] because they want to do subjects that aren't offered at [Crimson Brook Secondary College]. Things like legal studies. So there's something of a brain drain there" (Teacher # 18). Some students with athletic ability are also lured away by 'football scholarships'. Others follow, believing that they will achieve a better tertiary entrance score by attending a selective private school. One teacher blamed the media for the exodus of students

from government funded public schools such as this one, suggesting that tertiary entrance scores are:

> a highly over-rated thing and the media are the ones who cause the problem … And you know this would be part of the reason why some of the kids leave … because they believe if you go to a private school you'll get a higher tertiary entrance score. I mean parents are silly enough to accept that without doing any further investigation. I think we still have a situation where most of our parents don't really understand what school's about. They didn't understand it when they were there and they still don't understand it. (Teacher # 18)

The Principal agreed, commenting that:

> the parents, even though they say that they want something different in education, judge the success of the school on the number of [top tertiary entrance scores] or the number of kids getting [passing grades] … The two don't align so whatever I do I can't appease any of the factions within my school. (Principal)

Schools "branded as failures see socially ambitious parents withdrawing their children and the average ability level of those who remain inevitably dropping" (Spooner, 1998, p. 144). The introduction of parental choice, coupled with the desire of many parents that their offspring should mix with 'socially more desirable' boys and girls, has meant that as the socially aspiring parents move out of these areas, the school's intake "increasingly consist[s] of pupils who [come] from impoverished, and in some cases, chaotic, backgrounds, many of whom [have] already fallen way behind academically before they [enter] the schools" (Spooner, 1998, p. 145). It appears that "well-resourced choosers now have free reign to guarantee and reproduce, as best they can, their existing cultural, social and economic advantages in the new complex and blurred hierarchy of schools" (Gewirtz et al., 1995, p. 23).

Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz (1996) describe this phenomenon as market forces moving the more 'desirable' pupils out of particular schools, and ensuring that other schools take in larger numbers of those children considered 'undesirable' in the market. Whether this decision to leave the school reflects an understanding of the importance of time in company with those who are also likely to experience success at school, the end result is reduced opportunities for students from marginalised groups to access and accumulate this cultural capital. When educational abilities measured by scholastic criteria are related to familiarity with bourgeois culture rather than individual talent, this limited access for the marginalised to the knowledges, values and attitudes of the dominant further reduces their chances of success on this unfair playing field.

Is the Cultural Capital of the School Even Relevant to These Kids?

While some see the teachings of the school as highly relevant and believe that "without [the kids] being taught the things they do, they just won't be prepared for the big outside world" (Parent # 23), others from Crimson Brook Secondary College were of the opinion that "some of the stuff we teach them is not relevant"

(Teacher # 16). Summing up the dilemma of the school well, another parent suggested that "there's a reason for everything they do" (Parent # 20). As a parent of "two kids that both want to go to university when they finish school" she recognises that "this would get them there, but I don't know how it would be for children that intend leaving at the end of Year 10. I don't know how relevant the education is for them" (Parent # 20).

As noted in Chap. 3, during our study, the Principal suggested that roughly 3% of the students planned to go on to tertiary education, some planned on seeking employment, while many others intended to apply for unemployment benefits. One teacher recounted, "Some of [the students] just don't even try … They go home to parents who don't work … [so] because of the high unemployment rate, they're not seeing anything worthwhile in education; they're not seeing what education can do for them" (Teacher # 16). She went on to say that "We've got students … [who are] just there because they're bored shitless and [have] nowhere else to go" (Teacher # 16). A second teacher confirmed, "I think sometimes they don't feel like there's an end in sight" (Teacher # 22). What the staff in the school find most troubling about this is that the students are not "there for the fact of where they could go with their education … they don't have goals, they don't have dreams" (Teacher # 16).

When completion of schooling in this community no longer delivers the certainty of employment that it may have provided in the past, we should consider how relevant the task of accumulation of the cultural capital of the dominant really is for these students. Indeed, many teachers mentioned that the context within which they work impacts on their teaching by making them question "Is this even relevant to them?" Their attention then turns to the "need to try and make the stuff that I teach relevant to them" (Teacher # 16). Others "don't see the point in teaching something that they're not even interested in" (Teacher # 16). Referring to the lack of employment opportunities in the town and the fact that in her view, "it's not getting any better, it's getting worse" (Parent # 24), one parent commented, "why push so much down their neck if it's not going to do them any good? You know, to me I think they ought to learn 'hands-on' because 'hands-on' may be the only thing that's going to give them any chance in life at all" (Parent # 24). The same parent mentioned that when her children refuse to go to school she sets "them to work down the backyard or painting or building" (Parent # 24). She does not:

> know how else to deal with it because I'm not qualified to be a teacher. There's a lot they teach them that I do not know and I don't understand myself … All I can give them is the basics. I can teach them how to cook. I can teach them how to put up a fence or put up posts or paint or fix things, you know, but I can't give them what the teachers can and what they need. But I can't make them go when they're not willing to either. (Parent # 24)

This parent believed that if teachers were to "just sit down and talk to the kids, listen to the kids, they'll find out what these kids want in school" (Parent # 24). It was agreed by another parent that if they are "trying to keep kids at school after the age of 15 they need to cater for kids that probably don't want to be here … [It's] not just [about] keeping them here, but making it meaningful for them" (Parent # 20). Especially considering:

> if they're not doing well academically … [and] if [they] don't have that family support and back up to keep [them] at school, they can't see the point when they see friends out receiving [unemployment benefits], even though they're not working and they're all out having fun. (Parent # 20)

As well as being relevant to the students and their futures, teachers suggested that teaching materials need to be relevant to students' past experiences. As one teacher pointed out, "you can't just assume that kids have certain experiences" (Teacher # 17). By way of example, "a lot of [the students] have never been to [the capital of the state] … Some of them haven't even been to [the beach]" (Teacher # 17). Reflecting on an assessment piece that he set for his students, another teacher said:

> We didn't modify the assessment for them which we probably should have, and I didn't even think about it … so we had traditional assignments and tests that may not have been as good for [them] as they could have … We gave them a holiday assignment whereas we may have been better off giving them an assignment where they could go up to a timber yard and look at different varieties of timber for making a house or something like that as most of them are very [good with] hands-on stuff … And the concept of going on a holiday around the country was a little bit abstract for them. (Teacher # 15)

It is particularly important in this context, then, that the school becomes:

> somewhere where [the students] can really get something out of it for their future and that's partly the responsibility of the parents, partly the responsibility of the students, but also a very big part of the responsibility of the school to make sure that what we're offering and the way we're offering it is the right thing for this bunch of kids. (Teacher # 20).

So, what exactly is "the right thing for this bunch of kids"? According to one parent, if it was in her power to change the school, she would:

> get the kids together and I would change the school to what the kids wanted, not what I wanted, not what the teachers wanted. I would run it the way they wanted … As far as I'm concerned it's the kids that have got to be in the school. It's the kids that have got to learn … Give the school to the kids. Say okay kids, we want you to learn … If you're not going to learn in this class, tell me what class you want to be in? What do you want to learn? Do you want to learn woodwork? Do you want to learn shop keeping, business training? (Parent # 24)

In a similar vein, one teacher suggested that:

> we've now got eight curriculum areas … I would move them to one side and in consultation with the elementary school and the community I would create domains of learning … and say what's important for us as a community? What do we want our kids to know and be able to do and then feed all of the outcomes from the curriculum areas into the community developed domains of learning. So for example, if they believe that active citizenship is really important because of the unemployment in this town, then we'd take all the bits and pieces out of the eight key learning areas that would allow students to demonstrate things critical to active citizenship and … we would offer active citizenship as a subject. (Teacher # 22)

This teacher believed that this would be "the best thing for the community because they could be creating their own curriculum for their kids" (Teacher # 22). In her opinion, this would "empower them. I think that they would be more interested in coming to school and being a part of that process … Kids would create their own curriculum" (Teacher # 22). Yet, while "on paper it says we negotiate, that students

have a say in the curriculum, that we access community members … I believe that in practice … there's very little of that going on" (Principal).

While giving students and community members a voice in decisions related to the curriculum is important, our concern with these types of user-determined curriculum models is that often, students and community members are not in possession of the cultural capital of the dominant, and therefore do not know the kinds of knowledges that are needed to succeed in broader society. It could be argued that modification of the curriculum based on the needs of the non-dominant, forms part of the "reproductive struggle … in which [dominated classes] are beaten before they start" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 168). Given that it is the culture of the dominant group that is embodied in the education system (Bourdieu, 1973; 1974) and which determines "the criteria which define success within it" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 22), the reality is that in schools "only certain kinds of readings and knowledge are prized, rewarded or even recognized" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 96). Dismissing the cultural capital of dominant groups as irrelevant and teaching only that which is considered 'appropriate' to non-dominant groups could be interpreted as a form of domination.

Indeed, as one teacher pointed out, when developing the curriculum in conjunction with the community and asking "'What is important for you to know?' … [the community] don't always know" (Teacher # 22). Her suggestion, then, was that "together with parents and kids and teachers and significant others in [this] community, I'm sure that we could come up with [a] fairly good model" (Teacher # 22).

With regard to the relevance of the offerings of the school, then, the consensus among the staff appeared to be that "we haven't got all the answers … for some of the kids it works really well … but I'm sure half the kids, given a choice, they'd say let's scrap the English, let's scrap the Maths, let's go and do something else" (Teacher # 20). In this teacher's opinion, though, "I don't think that's an option … [Some think] 'We've got enough English and Maths up our sleeve now, we'll be right.' And … for some kids it might be true, others I think they need more. The extra help … would do them some good" (Teacher # 20). The Principal, in contemplating the significance of schooling for some of the school's disadvantaged students, suggested that some of the staff:

> don't think past their own education and their own life and to be a teacher at the moment your life has been a very traditional one for most … Going for 12 years at school, going away to a university for four years and coming straight out and teaching. That in itself says you're a successful high achiever who has money. We are dealing with a clientele who are unsuccessful on the whole, lack money and are not achievers or they wouldn't be in the situation they're in. So we're mis-matching the people who are instructing them in life and we're pooling our ignorance in knowing what to give these people. (Principal)

So while the teachings of the school may not be considered relevant for everyone, some of the staff continue to be "concerned about [students'] life pathways. I'm concerned about them being literate adults who can make good decisions for themselves and that involves you being able to read well in a lot of cases" (Teacher # 22). Implicitly, such teachers realise that it is the values, experiences and perspectives of privileged groups that parade as universal in schools, while the voices and ex-

periences of marginalised groups tend to be excluded and their inherited linguistic and cultural competencies devalued (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As discussed in Chap. 3, it was the Principal's dream to build on the knowledges and skills of the marginalised in the community, and turn the school into a community education centre where the school might develop a:

> shop front where [students] get training … And I believe that by giving them that training in a sustainable business and teaching them how to set up businesses, they can then go out into the community and using the skills that they've got, such as gardening or making garden seats or baking cheesecakes, they can from their homes set up little businesses that will give them an income. (Principal)

However, even though some may wish to rebuild the curriculum based on what might be deemed relevant for these students' futures, to choose not to expose these students to the cultural capital of the dominant almost closes the door on their chances of 'success' in society.

The Challenge for Teachers: Responding to Community Needs and Teaching the Cultural Capital of the Dominant

While it is important that students are able to experience success at school, at the same time teachers from Crimson Brook Secondary College suggested that they need to make "sure that we still have a lot of academic rigour in what we do, because they still have to go and compete in the real world … for jobs" (Teacher # 22). As one teacher explained:

> within our school … we've got to watch that we don't water down the curriculum just because of the fact that … [it] is in a low socio-economic town and … there is a high percentage of people who are on [unemployment benefits]; there is a high percentage of parents that probably wouldn't be able to read either. (Teacher # 16)

Indeed, in schools servicing disadvantaged communities, "low expectations and aspirations for student achievements are often endemic features of school cultures" (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 131). As outlined in Chap. 3, a number of staff from Crimson Brook expressed concerns that "the junior curriculum has been dumbed down" (Teacher # 17). For example, a teacher who had experienced working in other schools before teaching at Crimson Brook recalled that:

> When I [first] came here I really noticed it. I just felt that [lack of] intellectual rigour compared to my last school, I just couldn't believe it, comparatively … That was a really big focus [last year], trying to raise intellectual quality while still catering for everybody … It was really hard … So that's what we're trying to improve. (Teacher # 17)

Similarly, another teacher, who was much newer to the profession, commented that:

> I've concentrated so much on making sure I have work for my learning difficulty kids … that I haven't concentrated on having work … that can advance kids … We've got 10 learning difficulty kids in my class … so that's where my concentration [has] been. (Teacher # 16)

Indeed, teachers face a real dilemma in modifying work to cater for low literacy or numeracy skills:

> I have kids in my class who are … 13 years of age and yet they're reading at what can be classed as an eight year old level … I [can] find ways around it to give them access to the stuff that we're doing in a different way but it doesn't improve them reading … [So] I can counteract to a certain extent the fact that they can't read very well, but ultimately they have to read well. (Teacher # 22)

Others experience frustration in trying to balance relevance of the school's teachings for this particular community with working to skill them to be able to succeed.

> [The Principal] throws stuff at us all the time … to make us think about what's relevant to these kids and this town … [Are] the assessment pieces that we're doing relevant to them or is it just a waste of time? And then I go, well what's … the use of school? … I mean, we've got to be able to educate them; they need to be able to read, they need to know how to spell, they need to know how to fill in forms … they need to know how to communicate, they need social skills and they need basic mathematics to survive. That's not even looking any further than just trying to get out there and get a job, so those things they still need so … it's frustrating. (Teacher # 16)

By way of example, there are four students in their first year of secondary school who are taken "out of some classes … [and] given … a slightly alternative program where they spend some time with one teacher doing different things, like making candles, really hands-on work" (Teacher # 16). Some of these students:

> can't cope with … having to sit down and read a book in class … [So] we take those kids out and give them to the alternative program teacher who … at the moment is planting [shrubs, flowers, trees, etc] and he tells them about chlorophyll and sunlight and things like that … [The alternative program teacher] refuses to do anything but hands-on stuff … so they basically work with him doing something around the school. (Teacher # 15)

The father of one of these students made it known that his son is "a problem, been a problem right from [the first year of elementary school]. He's had more suspensions and exclusions than just about any other kid I know" (Parent # 21). He is also "crazy about anything that has to do with the land … There's a fellow up the road used to take him up there and they'd make bridles [for horses] … from scratch" (Parent # 21). From this interest, the school has implemented an alternative program for him where once a week he:

> hops on the bus, goes … to [the city], they meet up with him … there and take him up to a property in [a suburb on the city outskirts]. He works all day on the property which is something that he looks forward to. He's up 6 o'clock in the morning. Gets up, he's dressed, he's got his bag ready and it's something that they can use for a behaviour management thing as well. You know, if you don't behave, you don't go … Of course he loves it so much so he's going to behave to the best of his abilities. (Parent # 21)

Our concern, though, is whether students who are being taken out of the classroom are still meeting the necessary outcomes for their year level, to which one staff member replied:

> They are getting some basic skills. Some of them may not match up directly with the Science syllabus outcomes for that year level but their situation is such that some of them missed so much school in elementary school because they've been suspended from

> elementary school for hitting other kids or whatever, that they've missed out on all this stuff … So if … we are teaching them Science outcomes for [their year level], they really have [a large] gap to make up … Like, basic reading … you couldn't get some of those kids to sit down and read a Science text book because they wouldn't understand most of the words. (Teacher # 15)

In the view of this teacher, "ideally, by the end of [the year], they … should hopefully have enough skills to go back in and do the subjects with the rest of the kids without feeling like they're stupid, because they don't understand or they can't do something" (Teacher # 15). Although "we still have to justify that in taking them out that they are learning stuff" (Teacher # 15), the school's justification for the alternative program is:

> For this particular group of kids, if we didn't do this for them, they would spend probably half their time at the school either suspended or in school but out of class or doing detentions or whatever. And it would be worse for them. I'd rather see them out of the class and doing something where they are learning something that's useful for them, than in class, not learning and disrupting other students. (Teacher # 15)

Contesting the disempowering effects of the hegemonic curriculum by embracing the notion of multiple knowledges that are equally valid, is certainly important. Reconstructing the mainstream curriculum by incorporating content and pedagogies that build on the interests and perspectives of the least advantaged is also a valuable acknowledgement of and response to the needs of the cultural diversity of the communities that schools serve. Rather than teachers simply modifying their approach to fit the qualities or skills possessed by minority children, it is also important that a socially just curriculum equips students with "the best of what contemporary society has to offer" (Comber & Hill, 2000, p. 80); complex collections of practices that make up the cultural capital valued by dominant groups. The challenge for teachers is to teach the academic skills and competencies required to enable their students to succeed in mainstream societies, while also ensuring that they value students' existing cultural repertoires.

Specifically, Delpit (1997) would argue that teachers from Crimson Brook Secondary College can make a difference for these students by using visible pedagogic models: taking nothing for granted and making explicit the rules of that culture through examples, illustrations and narratives that facilitate the acquisition of school knowledge. As discussed in Chap. 5, Bernstein (1990) suggests that the use of such pedagogies weakens the relationship between social class and academic achievement, while ensuring that the school provides all students with "the discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society" (Delpit, 1997, p. 585). In this way, learning can open up ways of transforming the situation of the marginalised. The point is not to eliminate the cultural capital that students bring with them to school or use it to limit their potential, but rather to add other cultural capital to their repertoires (Delpit, 1992). Indeed, parents from Crimson Brook suggested that teachers need to acknowledge and make connections in the classroom with the knowledges and experiences that marginalised students bring to school. As one parent pointed out:

> I have two nephews that are [some] of the worst [kids] at the school, but because they have a lot of younger brothers and sisters and they've helped raise [them] … they know a lot more than they might get credit for … They'd know a lot more than what they think they do even. Like they know how to budget nearly before they get to secondary school. They know how to shop … And [then they] come to school and have to sit in a classroom. That would be like being an adult at home and then coming to school and having to be a kid and sit in the class with all the others … Cooking, you know, involves a lot of science. But it's taught differently [at school] so, yeah, they'd know it they just don't realise they know it. (Parent # 22)

However, the species of capital, or more specifically the volume and structure of capital held by these students, defines their position in the space of play, and limits the moves that they can make in the game of schooling.

Teachers as Agents of Transformation

Despite repeated calls for teachers to be aware of and build upon the literacies their students bring to classrooms (Heath, 1983; Cairney & Ruge, 1998), many schools continue to give priority to the stories of the lives enjoyed by "well-off, highly educated and socially conforming groups" (Hattam et al., 1998). While irrelevant curricula is more often than not the norm for minority students, teachers *can* act as agents of transformation rather than reproduction. That is, depending on the pedagogy, curriculum and assessment on offer, schools and teachers can either:

> silence students by denying their voice, that is, by refusing to allow them to speak from their own histories, experiences, and social positions, or [they] can enable them to speak by being attentive to how different voices can be constituted within specific pedagogical relations so as to engage their histories and experiences in both an affirmative and critical way. (Giroux, 1990, p. 91)

Instead of being a site of 'disjunction and dislocation' (Comber & Hill, 2000), schools can relate curricula to students' worlds, making the classroom more inclusive by legitimating locally produced knowledge. We agree with Young (1990), who contends that it is the role of teachers to redress the oppressive institutional constraints that render the perspectives of students from non-dominant groups as invisible and which inhibit them from exercising their capabilities and expressing their experiences and ideas. By ensuring that there are transparent links between the classroom and the world beyond, teachers and schools can encourage and assist students to draw on their cultural experiences in order to succeed academically (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

However, recognising the cultural symbols that are important to their students does not mean that teachers "abandon their responsibility to make [academic] judgments … for the young, nor does it mean that they adopt a vacuous cultural relativism" (Dyson, 1997, p. 180). While schools need to create environments that value and appreciate cultural differences, it is also important that students have access to the cultural capital of the dominant. Teachers play a key role in this accumulation

process, particularly for students who have 'cultural capital in the wrong currency', like many of the marginalised students from Crimson Brook. Indeed, for the individuals and groups of students historically at risk in our education system—including rural and remote students, students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, and Indigenous students—"apart from family background, it is good teachers who make the greatest difference to student outcomes from schooling" (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006, p. 1). The challenge for teachers is to teach the academic skills and competencies required to enable their students to succeed in mainstream societies, while also ensuring that they acknowledge and respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities they serve.

Political philosophers such as Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young conceptualise this "as a tension between an impulse toward *redistribution* of power-elite capital on one hand; and, on the other hand, toward *recognition* and valuation of diverse social-cultural identity formations" (Zipin, 2005, p. 2, emphasis original). Fraser (1997) challenges us to move beyond redistribution and recognition and pursue a theory and politics of transformation by engaging with the deep structures that generate injustice. In pursuing "redistributive and cultural justice simultaneously, in ways that move beyond their contradictory logics … the aim is to remedy social disadvantage through problematising and restructuring the underlying frameworks that generate such disadvantage" (Keddie, 2005, p. 87). Keddie (2006) suggests that such "radical re-envisionings of curriculum and pedagogy … might work to dismantle and transform the inequitable power relations and underlying frameworks that generate … injustice within and beyond the contexts of education" (p. 21). For teachers concerned with making a difference, these principles are offered in the hope that they might inform strategies that are cognisant of the uniqueness of the specific educational contexts within which they work.

Chapter 7
Acquiring a Feel for the Game

This chapter examines the restructuring of marginalised students' habitus; specifically, the pedagogical messages of schooling that frame what it means to be identified as a student. We explore the tensions between how marginalised students see themselves and how they are seen by their peers, teachers and fellow community members. Specifically, it asks: how do marginalised students from Crimson Brook Secondary College see themselves? How do their peers, teachers and fellow community members see them? What do they want them to become? What do they expect them to become? The tensions in these issues are addressed with specific reference to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.

Habitus is not necessarily a unique or original concept, having been linked to writers such as Aristotle, Hegel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Weber and Durkheim. Bourdieu's version of habitus reflects his effort to escape the mechanistic tendencies of Saussure's structuralism without relapsing into subjectivism. It is ironic, then, that habitus has been subject to widespread criticism on the basis of its 'latent determinism'. While some of Bourdieu's concepts are better understood than others, habitus is less well known and is probably Bourdieu's most contested concept (Reay, 2004). As Reay (2004) points out, "there is an increasing tendency for habitus to be sprayed throughout academic texts like 'intellectual hair spray' (Hey, 2003), bestowing gravitas without doing any theoretical work" (p. 432).

As a way of accounting for the fact that there are other principles that generate practices beside rational calculation, habitus refers to "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. vii). As outlined in Chap. 2, the term characterises the recurring patterns of class outlook—the beliefs, values, conduct, speech, dress and manners—which are inculcated by everyday experiences within the family, the peer group and the school. Implying habit, or unthinking-ness in actions, the habitus operates below the level of calculation and consciousness, underlying and conditioning and orienting practices by providing individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives "without consciously obeying rules explicitly posed as such" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 76).

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_7, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

The dispositions (capacities, tendencies, propensities or inclinations) that constitute the habitus are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation, making it a complex amalgam of past and present. For Bourdieu, the body is a "mnemonic device upon and in which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood" (Jenkins, 2002, pp. 75–76), enabling it on the appropriate occasion to produce skilful social activity. The system of dispositions that individuals acquire depends on the position they occupy in society, which is related to their particular endowment in capital (Wacquant, 1998). Therefore, the dispositions produced are also structured in the sense that:

> they unavoidably reflect the social conditions within which they were acquired. An individual from a working-class background, for instance, will have acquired dispositions which are different in certain respects from those acquired by individuals who were brought up in a middle-class milieu. (Thompson, 1991, p. 13)

The habitus of some students will resemble more closely the values that the school seeks to transmit consciously (and also unconsciously) and to legitimate. As Grenfell and James (1998a) point out, "proximity to this orthodoxy at birth has a determinate effect on habitus not only in ways of thinking which more closely approximate that of schools but in terms of a whole cultural disposition" (p. 21). Indeed, "the most privileged students … owe the habits, behaviour and attitudes which help them directly in pedagogic tasks to their social origins" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964; in Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 21).

While the habitus disposes social actors to do certain things, it is a "strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 72). Although Bourdieu recognises the existence of objective structures—"which are independent of the consciousness and desires of agents and are capable of guiding or constraining their practices" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 123)—action is not "the mere carrying out of a rule, or obedience to a rule. Social agents … are not automata regulated like clocks, in accordance with laws which they do not understand. In most complex games … they put into action the incorporated principles of a generative habitus" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 9–10).

Cognisant of these dual imperatives of the habitus, we propose that the way students see themselves and the way they are seen by their peers, teachers and fellow community members, fall largely into two categories: those with a *reproductive habitus*, who recognise the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and tend to read the future that fits them; and those with a *transformative habitus*, who recognise the capacity for improvisation and tend to look for opportunities for action in the social field. Although some teachers appear to be attempting a transformation of students, in this chapter we argue that teachers should also value and give voice to who students are, as they identify themselves. While reproductive and transformative habitus are considered separately, we understand them as dialectically related; they are potentials within each agent.

The Reproductive Habitus

In providing individuals with a sense of how to act in the course of their daily lives, the habitus disposes actors to do certain things, orienting their actions and inclinations, without strictly determining them. This sense of what is appropriate and what is not means that certain ways of behaving seem altogether natural. In the habitus of students from Crimson Brook Secondary College there appear two broad senses of how to act. Some tend to (i) feel the burden of their circumstances, while others (ii) read the future that fits them.

Feeling the Burden of Their Circumstances

While some students from Crimson Brook face issues of poverty and homelessness on a day-to-day basis, many more feel the burden of their circumstances in the way the town and its people are perceived by others. This seems to influence how several of the town's inhabitants view themselves, impacting upon their self-esteem and future ambitions. For example, the spatial location of the community seems to influence how several of Crimson Brook's inhabitants view themselves. One teacher with whom we spoke drew a comparison between the school's community and her previous posting, both of which were "a little centre outside a big centre" (Teacher # 17). She believed that 'the kids' at Crimson Brook "feel that they're not as good as the people who come from the city" (Teacher # 17).

Many spoke of the constant uphill battle to improve the image of the town, which is perceived as a place "where everyone [has] three eyes and people have scars where the extra head used to be" (Teacher # 20). As one teacher pointed out, "they have very low self-esteem, these kids" (Teacher # 19). In fact, "you'll find that a lot of kids when they go to [the city], they don't want anyone to know that they're from [here]. They're … ashamed … to be seen in a school T-shirt" (Parent # 19). Further, "they get picked on in sport, picked on if they go away for different excursions" (Parent # 19).

But it is not just students from other schools in the region that contribute to perpetuating the negative stereotype of members of this community. During interview, the Principal mentioned an incident involving a staff member teaching in the local university bridging program. Around the time of the research, students from the school visited the university where "one of the lecturers actually stood up and asked to see the scar on the kid's shoulders because supposedly kids [from Crimson Brook] had two heads" (Principal).

Low expectations of the students from Crimson Brook Secondary College are also expressed, albeit inadvertently, by the principals of other schools in the region. After one of the leadership network meetings, where school leaders from around the region regularly gather together to share ideas, the Principal of the school "had probably two or three principals and representatives of schools ring her to say how

fantastic the kids were" (Teacher # 17). Although the Principal "congratulated the whole school community on it and put it in their [community newsletter] … we kind of thought, in a way it's saying they were surprised that the kids would be [like that]" (Teacher # 17).

The attitude towards the town's people appears to spill across into their adult lives, impacting on their opportunities for employment. As one parent commented:

> If [the kids] say they come from Crimson Brook the employers don't really want to know [about them] … But I did observe once there was a fellow got put on at the bank … and he said that the only reason he got that job was because he went to [a prestigious private school in the city]. He said if he'd finished his schooling at Crimson Brook he wouldn't have got the job. (Parent # 19)

In short, "attendance at a particular school—for staff and students—has its own value in the market place" (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 86). In feeling the burden of their circumstances, some find it difficult to transcend the way they are stereotyped and develop a more reproductive habitus. This affects the way they view themselves and also influences their aspirations for their futures. As one teacher commented, "I think these kids are just wonderful but … some of them just lack that confidence that you see in other kids from different towns" (Teacher # 19).

As highlighted in Chap. 4, the school also faces difficulties attracting quality staff, a problem which some believe is related to the way the community is perceived by outsiders. One teacher spoke about a student teacher, who was undertaking her practicum in the school but was "scared of coming here because she thought the kids would beat her up and that kids carried weapons here … other students at the [local] university have told her that" (Teacher # 17). The school Principal has had similar experiences: "Really bad incidents … are targeted and brought up all the time … even to the extent where we had university students … [believing] that actually a teacher had been killed in our school last year" (Principal). These are some of the things that the school and the broader community battle against and that continue to foster a reproductive habitus in some. It is telling that when one of the students interviewed as part of the research was asked what she would change if she could change anything at all about the school, she said, "Change it's reputation … [It's] really hard to deal with when you go away and everyone says Crimson Brook is really bad" (Student # 22). Still, she believes "that'll never happen … It's pretty much set in stone" (Student # 22).

The high unemployment rate in the community also contributes to students feeling the burden of their circumstances. As one parent pointed out:

> There's not [many] job opportunities here when they leave [school]. Already you know [some of them are] just going to sit at home … on [unemployment benefits] … And there's always, "Why should we go to school? It's not going to get us anything". (Parent # 22)

Teachers also noticed that some of the students "haven't got the motivation to try" (Teacher # 19). One teacher spoke of two students in her class in the previous year:

> [They] dropped out [of school] … and I would see them walking around the streets … drunk or sniffing glue at 11 o'clock in the morning, doing absolutely nothing with their lives … I guess … they couldn't see any end in sight. (Teacher # 22)

A reproductive habitus in some, then, induces a disposition of hopelessness. Their poverty "imposes itself on them with a necessity so total that it allows them no glimpse of a reasonable exit" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 61). Like the lads in Willis' ethnographic study of working-class boys in an industrial area of England in the 1970s, students with a reproductive habitus "understand schools as out of touch with their lived experiences and irrelevant to their future lives" (Nolan & Anyon, 2004, p. 144). Moreover, they "reject school culture because they see through the myth of meritocracy. They know that, as members of the working class, there is little chance that they will enter the middle class" (Nolan & Anyon, 2004, p. 139). In this way, they play an active role in their own class reproduction, even as they engage in resistant practices.

The lack of employment opportunities in the community, coupled with the fact that a number of generations within the town have had welfare dependency thrust upon them, could play an important role in shaping a reproductive habitus. As discussed in Chap. 3:

> There are some kids here who are second, third or even fourth, fifth generation unemployed … and they don't see a lot of activity around the place … there's not a lot of inspiration. They can't look out the window and see something going on like you can [in the city] … So there's nothing here for them to say, "That's where I'd like to work". (Teacher # 18)

These people feel constrained by their circumstances; a feeling or disposition that seems to reproduce these constraints. Indeed, they appear largely incapable of perceiving social reality, in all of its arbitrariness, as anything other than 'the way things are' (Jenkins, 2002). Lapsing into apathy or despair, they take themselves and their social world for granted. As pointed out in Chap. 3, in a community such as this one "with the overwhelming majority of families having spells of long-term joblessness" we find that "other alternatives such as welfare … are not only increasingly relied on, they come to be seen as a way of life" (Wilson, 1987, p. 57). Noel Pearson (in Grasswill, 2002) has made similar comments about the attitudes of many of his Indigenous peers (on the York Peninsula in Northern Queensland, Australia), that have been kept in dependency by often well-meaning welfare schemes. Giddens (1994) similarly argues that welfare measures may create "exclusionary ghettos" where "what seem to be economic benefits serve actually to fix an individual in a social position or status from which it is difficult to escape" (p. 185).

Moreover, linked processes of self-limitation and self-censorship mean that often, "too conscious of their destiny and too unconscious of the ways in which it is brought about" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, pp. 71–72), the dominated become consenting victims to bleak futures. As one teacher noted:

> Even kids who are being bashed by parents … would protect their parents because they don't have anywhere else to go. They're not old enough to say, "This is really crappy, I need to move on". And so they'll put up with it … People say, "They couldn't have been too worried about it". They were, but they didn't know what to do. It's the same with all these other circumstances. (Teacher # 18)

Although this is a dramatic illustration, it is indicative of the way that a reproductive habitus takes things for granted, rather than recognising that there are ways that

the situation could be transformed. Students, "even the most disadvantaged, tend to perceive the world as natural and to find it much more acceptable than one might imagine, especially when one looks at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of the dominant" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 130–131). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) understand such negative dispositions and predispositions which can lead to "self-elimination … self-depreciation, devalorization of the School and its sanctions or resigned expectation of failure or exclusion … as unconscious anticipation of the sanctions the School objectively has in store for the dominated classes" (pp. 204–205).

Reading the Future That Fits Them

Feeling the burden of one's circumstances is not the only expression of a reproductive habitus. For example, as discussed in previous chapters, the Principal suggested that roughly 3% of the students planned to go on to tertiary education, some planned on seeking employment, while many others intended to apply for unemployment benefits. The latter group are students who, according to Bourdieu, are reading the future that fits them, confining possibilities to those they see to be suitable for the social group to which they belong.

As one teacher explained, the kids who are full of confidence in the schooling environment still say, "Oh yeah but we're only from Crimson Brook, you know, as if to say we're really not worth much of anything" (Teacher # 19). A reproductive habitus, then, tends to be structuring, "defining limits upon what is conceivable as perception and practice" (Codd, 1990, p. 139). Another teacher explained this as the "kids don't have any self-esteem. The community doesn't have self-esteem; they don't believe in themselves as people. They don't think there is hope or they're able to achieve, and you can sense that within the kids" (Teacher # 16). Another teacher related a conversation she had with "one of the brightest girls in the school":

> She's really bright and could be [an 'A'] student so easily, has the intelligence, is very mature, critical thinker, but hands in her work late or will do it the day before … So I said, "What are you going to do next year?" because she could get into university and I said, "Are you going to go to uni[versity]?" to which she just laughed and said, "Why would I put myself in a position where I could go and sit in a room where I would be the dumbest person there?" And I was just floored … She is Indigenous but … she could just do so much and yet she's not going to. (Teacher # 17)

One reading of this is of a student resisting and opposing success in her academic pursuits, perhaps perceiving schooling as a subtractive process, as "one-way acculturation into the cultural frame of reference of the dominant group members of [her] society" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 201). As noted in Chap. 5, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) theorise that such students view success as 'white people's prerogative' and striving for success in school as 'acting white' at the expense of their own cultural and identity integrity. The resulting social pressures against striving for academic success can mean that some students who are academically able perform well below

their potential. These students are choosing, either consciously or unconsciously, to maintain their view of their own identity in what they perceive as a choice between allegiance to 'them' or 'us' (Delpit, 1992).

For those with a reproductive habitus, then, "outlooks on the future depend closely on the objective potentialities which are defined for each individual by his or her social status and material conditions of existence" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 53). In Bourdieu's (1977b) terms, the "subjective expectation of objective probabilities" (p. 72) are realised. This adjustment between "the individual's hopes, aspirations, goals and expectations, on the one hand, and the objective situation in which they find themselves by virtue of their place in the social order, on the other" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 28), means that those with a reproductive habitus know how to 'read' the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are said to be made (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Their aspirations are defined by objective conditions that exclude the possibility of hoping for the unobtainable, expressing it both as an impossibility and a taboo (Bourdieu, 1974). Experiencing their plight as inevitable and natural, they seem incapable of imagining the possibility of social change and fall back on their own perceived inadequacies as the explanation for their distress (Jenkins, 2002). "Realism about the future is engendered by the reality of the present" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 28) and through processes of self-limitation and self-censorship, they confine possibilities to those possible for the social group to which they belong.

For example, one teacher suggested that many of the students are not:

> there for the fact of where they could go with their education … They don't have goals, they don't have dreams … not that you have to when you're 13 years of age but just even to have role models and go, "I can be anything that I want to be", there's not that hope in them. There's not that place of going, "I can do this if I wanted to". (Teacher # 16)

For this particular teacher, the limits that a reproductive habitus imposed on her students in terms of what was conceived as possible for their futures, provided a major source of frustration. It is through this resignation that "the dominated manifest practically, without even considering the possibility of doing otherwise, their practical acceptance (in the mode of *illusio*) of the possibilities and the impossibilities inscribed in the field" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 112, emphasis original). Commenting on this "paring down of aspirations to what could 'realistically' be achieved rather than aspirations for something more, which were perceived as unattainable 'dreams' for students from their sort of family or community" (Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002, p. 51), this teacher said, "it comes back to self-esteem, some of them don't even think they've got ability" (Teacher # 16).

Individuals are therefore disposed to recognise and act in particular ways, although Bourdieu explicitly rejects the implication that habitus determines our actions or futures in a mechanistic way, as Jenkins (2002) suggests. Habitus goes beyond a simple formulation of biological determinism (Grenfell & James, 1998a). Yet the feel for the game is "an intentionality without intention which functions as the principle of strategies devoid of strategic design, without rational computation and without the conscious positing of ends" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 107–108). That is:

> dispositions durably inculcated by objective conditions … engender aspirations and practices objectively compatible with those objective requirements, the most improbable practices are excluded, either totally without examination, as *unthinkable*, or at the cost of the *double negation* which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway refused and to love the inevitable. (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 77, emphasis original)

These are also good examples of symbolic violence, a term Bourdieu uses to describe "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). Such violence, rather than being explicit or overt, is achieved indirectly. Indeed, "people play a role in reproducing their own subordination through the gradual internalisation and acceptance of those ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them" (Connolly & Healy, 2004, p. 15). Further, as Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) suggest, such complicity with "dominant vision[s] of the world [occurs] not because we necessarily agree with [them], or because [they are] in our interests, but because there does not seem to be any alternative" (p. 92).

Peer pressure also seems to play a part in students' self-limitation. One parent's observation was that students believe that "if you want to do well at school … you think you're better than what you are" (Parent # 22). She told us about her son who "wanted to be an architect and now he's changed his [mind] … because he doesn't think he's smart enough" (Parent # 22). In discussing this further, she revealed that "listening to others [saying], 'You're not smart enough'" (Parent # 22) has changed his ambitions. This pressure to read the future that fits them is a good example of the constraints of external reality or the "subjective expectation of objective probabilities" (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 72) being realised by the reproductive habitus. Bourdieu would explain this student's actions as succumbing to pressure to conform to the objective future defined for individuals 'like him'. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) point out that social agents are reasonable; they are not fools:

> They know how to 'read' the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are made (by opposition to everything that the expression 'this is not for the likes of us' designates), through practical anticipations that grasp, at the very surface of the present, what unquestionably imposes itself as that which 'has' to be done or said (and which will retrospectively appear as the 'only' thing to do or say). (pp. 129–130)

It can be seen then, that:

> The influence of peer groups … reinforces, among the least privileged children, the influence of the family milieu and the general social environment, which tend to discourage ambitions seen as excessive and always somewhat suspect in that they imply rejection of the individual's social origins. Thus, everything conspires to bring back those who … 'have no future' to 'reasonable' hopes … and in fact, in many cases, to make them give up hope. (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 35)

The value that parents and the community place on education can also work to engender a reproductive habitus in some. To borrow an example discussed in Chap. 3:

> In some cases … nobody in the family sees value in education so [the students] don't see any value in education … [I asked one of the students], "What are you gonna do when you leave school?" He said, "I'll stay home, go on [unemployment benefits]" … I found out that granddad and dad had both worked in the mine and had been [dismissed from work] …

> and they all lived in this one big house, grandma and granddad and mum and dad and about four or five kids … and they were all collecting various types of social security and nobody had bothered to do anything else. (Teacher # 18)

In the school environment, then, "Some of them don't see the reason why they should try. They go home to parents who don't work … [And] because of the high unemployment rate, they're not seeing what education can do for them" (Teacher # 16). This attests to the strength of parental influence in shaping a reproductive habitus in their children. Indeed, Kilpatrick and Abbott-Chapman (2002) argue that it is family members and their networks that are the sources of "information and advice that help shape the aspirations and expectations of young people as they forge pathways from school to further education and/or work, and assist them in raising or lowering their sights on work/study goals" (p. 45).

It is not only students' low self-esteem or the lack of employment opportunities in the area that perpetuate a reproductive habitus. It could be argued that teachers, too, can play a role in shaping a reproductive habitus in their students through communicating low expectations. For example, one parent mentioned her concern that her son's maths teacher saw no need for a parent–teacher interview in spite of his poor results in a number of areas:

> I think our expectations are different to the school 'cause we just got [our son's] reports on Friday so we're going to have to come up next week and have interviews and discuss 'cause he's done well overall but … I think it was in his maths he got an overall—he got a B plus or something but in a couple of areas he got D's … but because he got a B plus average, yes, they just said he's fine. (Parent # 22)

Another parent spoke of her friend, who was shocked to learn that her son had failed English:

> Last year [my friend's son] failed English … It was an extreme shock. All through that year the boy thought he was doing okay … [and the parents] had no contact with the teacher, he'd never asked for parent interviews, he never let them know in any way whatsoever that [their son] was struggling. (Parent # 19)

As discussed in Chap. 3, such parents were of the view that the school operated in the interests of 'good families' and that it was less concerned about the education of their 'bad' or 'deficient' children. These parents believed that teachers had very low expectations of their children and barely noticed when they were underachieving. In short, by accepting poor academic results as natural or inevitable, teachers are acting in ways that do not serve students' best interests.

The Transformative Habitus

Here—in the midst of reproduction—are the beginnings of a transformative habitus. A transformative habitus sees possibilities in what might otherwise appear constraining; invites agency and is generative of alternatives not immediately apparent.

According to Giddens (1994):

> involuntary unemployment, like unwanted divorce, is often traumatic because of the damage it does to an individual's sense of security and self-respect as much as because of the economic deprivation it causes … Just as what unemployment actually is depends substantially on subjective attitudes, so too do reactions to it; these flow from narratives of self-identity, as well as acting to disrupt or alter them. (pp. 186–187)

What one may experience as incapacitating, another may see as generative of opportunities for self-enhancement or self-renewal (Jordan, James, Kay, & Redley, 1992). The latter is true of the transformative habitus. In our research, for example, we heard of "kids who are determined not to let coming from Crimson Brook be any hindrance to what they plan to do" (Teacher # 17). Rather than confining possibilities to those deemed appropriate for the social group to which they belong, the beliefs, values and conduct of those with a transformative habitus are creative and inventive. Students with a transformative habitus recognise possibilities and act in ways that transform their situations.

Recognising Possibilities for Action in the Social World

Rather than defining limits upon themselves and working within the perceived constraints of social conditions and conditionings, the ways of behaving and responding that seem natural to those with a transformative habitus recognise the capacity for improvisation. Their *sens du jeu* or 'feel for the game' allows their habitus to generate strategies that are adapted to an endless number of possible situations (Mahar, 1990). It would appear that a transformative habitus can be nurtured by teachers by holding high expectations of students; wanting these students to see opportunities to change their lives rather than read the future that seems to be made for them. The Principal, for example, recounted that it was her ambition for the students from Crimson Brook to 'go on and make a life for themselves', which initially drew her to the job at the school:

> I never intended to be at Crimson Brook Secondary College because my impression of Crimson Brook from being an ex-[city] person was that it was very low socio-economic … [But] because I came from a similar community, I was interested in giving something back to people like me so that they could have similar opportunities … In hindsight I probably [thought] I could save some of the kids … I could see … the needs that the kids seemed to have that weren't being met and I thought, "I can help you". (Principal)

Another teacher touched upon how she makes an effort to:

> contact [the parents] to introduce myself or to have a chat about … the great things that [their] children are doing … I try to make them feel that I'm [available for] them to come and see me because they want the best for their child and I definitely want the best for their child … I want to work with them, just to see their kids grow up and have a better life. (Teacher # 16)

This teacher mentioned one particular occasion where she became quite angry with one of her students: "I have higher expectations of [these students] … If they're

[engaged in post-compulsory schooling], they should have intrinsic motivation to be here" (Teacher # 16). Her way of dealing with this frustration was to "say, 'I'm doing this because I think you're worth it' … It's saying to them … I want them to grow up and be something" (Teacher # 16). In Bourdieu's terms, the teacher's frustration is with the reproductive habitus she observes in some of her students and her battle to engender more transformative dispositions. While she may recognise possibilities, some of her students may not. This kind of transformative habitus is well explained by Certeau's (1984) analysis of the 'uses' that some find for imposed conditions; uses that are sensitive to *possibilities* (Gale & Densmore, 2003).

Many staff also realise that if they are "trying to keep kids at school after the age of 15 they need to cater for kids that probably don't want to be [there]" (Parent # 20). That is, it is not about "just keeping [the students] here, but making it meaningful for them" (Parent # 20). To this end, Crimson Brook established: "Traineeships for the seniors … where they're doing one or two days work experience a week towards the end of senior [schooling]. So that's got to be a [good thing] for those kids that don't intend to go on to university" (Parent # 20). Another parent agreed that the scheme is, "just brilliant, it really helps the kids to step into that job full-time after they leave school or to get that experience to go somewhere else" (Parent # 23). One of the teachers commented that the scheme makes a big difference to some of the 'problem students'.

> They might be problem students at school because they're doing subjects that they find boring and rigid. But they come back now a couple of days [a week] and … they seem to have grown up and broadened their world view a bit more so the opportunities that they can see are a bit more tangible for them now. (Teacher # 20)

Such schemes, while recognising the diversity of students and their futures, provide further examples of the way that some staff members are endeavouring to nurture a transformative habitus in students, encouraging them to make 'use' of their circumstances, to see the possibilities.

Acting in Ways to Transform Situations

While our dispositions "enable us to recognise the possibilities for action and at the same time prevent us from recognising other possibilities" (Codd, 1990, p. 139), those with a transformative habitus recognise opportunities for improvisation or 'tactics' (Certeau, 1984) and act in ways to transform situations. As Connell (1993) argues, "even dominant groups do not seek simple 'reproduction' through education. They know the world is changing, and they want the schools to help their children get ahead of the game" (p. 29).

According to one teacher, the lack of employment opportunities in the town has created two distinct attitudes among students. The first is:

> I'm going to go on [unemployment benefits] anyway. There's no jobs here, what am I going to do? The other theme would be, I've got to get out of here … Their whole aim is to get

> out of Crimson Brook … So some work really hard to go [on] to [tertiary education] … because they don't want to be like the person down the road with four kids and not able to pay bills. (Teacher # 22)

A third response is to create a future within Crimson Brook despite its apparent limitations. This attitude of some students wanting to do well at school and within the town is indicative of a transformative habitus, where "social life [is] no longer lived as fate" (Giddens, 1994, p. 185). Certeau's (1984) distinction between producers (those who dominate spaces) and consumers (those who occupy them) is useful here in explaining the disposition we have in mind. In brief, the transformative habitus 'acts on' rather than simply being 'acted on'. One student we spoke with illustrated this well. She had done all her schooling in Crimson Brook from preschool to secondary school and her ambition was to be a mechanic, but this had not always been the case:

> I'm in senior classes now and I really want to be a mechanic … Whereas the last couple of years I didn't care if I ended up in the street … I'm more committed to schooling [now] … But beforehand I didn't have any idea of what I wanted to be so I didn't really care where I ended up. (Student # 25)

Another student, who once viewed suspension as a holiday, told us, "Just thinking about how I am going to be when I'm older with no job … That's what I don't want to do" (Student # 23). By acting in ways that will transform their situations, we could analyse the actions of these students as an attempt to *make things happen*, rather than have things happen to them. This is what Giddens (1994) refers to as a generative politics.

Teachers in the school had their own views on what required transformation and how it could be achieved. As noted above, several believed in the importance of catering for students with different futures, and supporting them in their various endeavours. For one teacher, this meant that: "Not all kids are meant … to be spending four years of their life in university because they'd be wasting their time … They can get apprenticeships and try different avenues where their abilities are" (Teacher # 16). This view of 'transformation' looks very similar to the reproduction noted above. While there is merit in the notion that all students should experience success in their schooling, such comments do not necessarily take account of the broader social and political influences that prepare students for some futures and not others. Several of these issues are evident in the comments of the following teacher:

> Some of our assessment regimes are fairly antiquated and I'd like to work fairly heavily with staff on making the assessment different so that kids can experience success but at the same time make sure that we still have a lot of academic rigour in what we do, 'cause they still have to go and compete in the … real world for jobs. (Teacher # 22)

In a similar vein, one parent said, "I would love the kids to participate in more things … I don't want this school and this town to be their whole world" (Parent # 20). She went on to say:

> I think any experiences [children] have gives them a broader view of things … Just trying to get them to meet different people and go to different things makes them more thoughtful … Some people who have been here forever, they really don't have that broad view and

> they're very narrow minded and we're trying to bring our kids up so that they're not [like that]. (Parent # 20)

One teacher referred to a family who had "been in Crimson Brook for a hundred years or so" (Teacher # 18). He believed that:

> Even thinking about leaving would be [traumatic] … I think the thought of pulling up stumps and going somewhere else turns them into shivering wrecks … And what we do with those kids is … we make sure they go on excursions and expose them to the outside world so they get to see what other people do. (Teacher # 18)

These are better examples of schools working towards countering a reproductive habitus with a transformative one, by exposing students to possibilities and opportunities; 'countering' in the sense of counter-hegemony. The need for such 'countering' is illustrated in the experience of one teacher who mentioned an experience she had had the previous year when she took students on an excursion to the nearby city to visit the cinema:

> The [new] cinemas in [the city] had been open [for about a year and a half before] … I took the kids there [on an excursion] … Some of them hadn't even been there … We got off the bus … and these boys said, "We haven't been here, it's huge" … I was dumbfounded … A lot of [the students] have never been to [the capital of the state] … Some of them haven't even been to [the beach]. (Teacher # 17)

This teacher wished that "it was easier for us to get kids into [the city] 'cause they miss out on a lot of things … I would like to see more opportunities for them. I think that would make a difference" (Teacher # 17). For some students, who have never been to a cinema or a beach and know nothing but the town in which they live, perhaps such "awakening of consciousness" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 116) will be the only way that they might come to recognise other opportunities, instead of confining their futures to those deemed possible for the social group to which they belong.

Transformatory Possibility?

In this chapter we have suggested that the way students see themselves and the way they are seen by their peers, teachers and fellow community members, place students into two broad categories: those with a reproductive habitus (who recognise the constraint of social conditions and conditionings and tend to read the future that fits them) and those with a transformative habitus (who recognise the capacity for improvisation and tend to generate opportunities for action in the social field).

While in this chapter the reproductive and transformative habitus have been considered separately for analytical purposes, we understand them as dialectically related; they are potentials within each agent, "the products of opportunities and constraints framing the individual's earlier life experiences" (Reay, 1995, p. 355). Within the Bourdieuian literature, habitus is both "generative (of perceptions and practice) and structuring (that is, defining limits upon what is conceivable as perception and practice)" (Codd, 1990, p. 139). Bourdieu's attempt to "undermine

the dualisms of objectivism and subjectivism, structure and agent, determinism and phenomenology" is a central element of his work (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 528). This creative yet limited capacity for improvisation reveals both the dynamic structure of social reality and the constraint of social conditions where many of us believe there to be choice and free will (Bourdieu, 1990a).

As explored in Chap. 2, and as Kenway and McLeod (2004) point out, "there remains much contestation over the extent to which this is ultimately an account of social determination and reproduction, where the habitus is reducible to the effects of the field, or whether there is space for the improvisation of agents" (p. 528). Jenkins (2002), among others, argues that despite Bourdieu's best efforts to "transcend the dualistic divide between 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism' … [he] remains caught in an unresolved contradiction between determinism and voluntarism, with the balance of his argument favouring the former" (p. 21). Although concerned to give to practice an active, inventive intention by insisting on the generative capacities of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990a), some suggest that Bourdieu does not give nearly enough credit to agency and the revolutionary potential of agents. In this view, his world is far more reproductive than transformative; his social universe "ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 91).

We agree with Harker (1984), who argues that "Bourdieu's critics who claim that his theory is structurally 'frozen', with no room for human agency misperceive the basis of the theory" (p. 117). Bourdieu's project has been consistently misinterpreted as theoretical advances made in his more recent work have not been considered (May, 1994; Harker, 1984). While Bourdieu's arguments are well known,

> because Bourdieu writes predominantly in French, and is also constantly revising his work, there is often a time lag between the current development of his ideas and their publication in English. Consequently, what has tended to happen in the past is that Bourdieu has been criticised for holding ideas which he has, in fact, long since discarded. It has only been recently that the English-speaking academic world has begun to appreciate the development of Bourdieu's later thought, and his extensive ethnographic research, with commentaries which more effectively summarise his overall work. (May, 1994, p. 26)

To label Bourdieu as a 'structuralist', then:

> (a description Bourdieu specifically rejects) … is not only quite inaccurate, but also misses the point of what [he] is trying to accomplish—i.e. to account for agency in a constrained world, and to show how agency and structure are implicit in each other, rather than being the two poles of a continuum. (Harker & May, 1993, p. 177)

Like Harker and May (1993), we believe that habitus "sets the boundaries within which agents are 'free' to adopt strategic practices. These practices, based on the intuitions of the practical sense, orient rather than strictly determine action" (p. 174). That is, habitus shapes, but does not determine our life choices. It is true, nonetheless, that "Bourdieu's agency is not unconstrained. He can be seen as pessimistic only to the extent that there would appear to be no possibility of truly novel human agency" (Harker, 1984, p. 122). While choice is at the heart of habitus, at the same time the choices inscribed in the habitus are very clearly limited (Reay, 1995). In this sense, habitus *lends* itself to reproduction rather than transformation, although

the latter possibility is not excluded. Dillabough (2004) argues that it is here that Bourdieu "sheds light on a theoretical notion of identity that does not foreclose action or agency, yet accepts that such notions can never be seen as unconstrained action … or as individual acts of liberal freedom" (p. 498).

Such agentic notions of habitus are evident in the research of Lisa Adkins, who addresses change and continuity through the re-inscriptions of gender in new social and political times, and Lois McNay, who seeks to account for instability and change in gender (see McLeod (2005) for an account of such work). Similarly, Reay, David, and Ball's (2005) work on student choice in higher education employs notions of habitus as both reproductive and transformative. McLeod (2005) argues that understanding habitus in this way is less an issue:

> of choosing either side of the binary, than of rethinking the usual terms (freedom or resistance) of … analytical debate. In other words, the critical dilemma becomes not simply one of freedom from the social field, or determination by it, or cultural reproduction versus cultural resistance … The more pressing political and analytical challenge is attempting to theorize both change *and* continuity … (p. 24, emphasis original)

However, it is important to ask whether it is appropriate for some teachers to attempt a transformation of students, projecting onto them identities without regard for the communities they embody. Some would argue that it is through these "symbolic and cultural mechanisms that working-class existence, in large part, becomes pathologized" (Lawler, 1999, p. 4). Indeed:

> The 'working classes' have been the source of much disappointment and disgust for the middle-class observers who have studied them, and, in large part, this is marked out through the lack of legitimacy granted to working-class cultural capital. Ian Roberts (1999) notes how sociological accounts of working-class life have historically positioned working-class people as untrustworthy, disgusting, apolitical (or right wing) and chaotic. They do not *know* the right things, they do not *value* the right things, they do not *want* the right things. (Lawler, 1999, p. 11, emphasis original)

In addition, then, teachers should value and give voice to who students are, as they identify themselves. While they should endeavour to develop in students a sense of transformative possibility, they should also be concerned to transform *schooling*; to provide educational opportunities that transform the life experiences of and open up opportunities for all young people, especially those disadvantaged by poverty and marginalised by difference (Lingard et al., 2003).

Chapter 8
Letting Parents in on the Rules of the Game

The involvement of parents or other important caregivers in their children's schooling is an ideal that informs much contemporary practice in schools. In Lareau's (1987) research, for example, teachers' methods of presenting, teaching, and assessing subject matter were based on a structure that presumed parents would help children at home. For some parents, such expectations are taken for granted and energetically pursued. They see education as "a shared enterprise and scrutinize, monitor, and supplement the school experience of their children" (Lareau, 1987, p. 81). However, other parents—often those from working class and ethnic minorities—do not necessarily share these understandings, at least not in ways legitimated by schools. Indeed, many of the mothers interviewed in the research of David, Davies, Edwards, Reay, and Standing (1997) thought there was an unfair degree of responsibility placed on them for their children's educational learning in the classroom. David et al. (1997) found that "reactions to the division of labour existing between mothers and school staff ranged from disquiet, guilt, through to resentment and, in a few cases, open expressions of anger. Mothers got angry when they felt the school was delegating large areas of educational work to them" (p. 408). This array of reactions was also evident in our research. Given these different understandings of the role of parents in schools, facilitating community participation in disadvantaged communities in schools can be extremely difficult (Connell, 1993).

The main opportunity for parent participation at Crimson Brook Secondary College is through formal committees: recognised forums for communication between parents, the school and the community. The Parents and Citizens' (P&C) Association is the predominant forum in the school for parent-principal liaisons. Any interested parent or community member is welcome to attend the meetings of the P&C Association, which sees itself largely as a fundraising body. Whereas, the School Council—constituted by the President of the P&C, two parents, two students and two staff representatives, as well as the Principal—is responsible for making decisions regarding policy within the school. This is a more closed forum with representatives responsible for taking the concerns of the school community to the Council. Finally, the school has a federally funded Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) Committee, which is responsible for the disbursement of ASSPA funds allocated to the school and its Indigenous students. The Committee

C. Mills, T. Gale, *Schooling in Disadvantaged Communities,*
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3344-4_8, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010

relies heavily on the commitment of two or three parents to keep it going. Despite these opportunities, parents are under-represented on most of the school decision-making bodies. Most parents tend to deal directly with the Principal or with teachers, rather than through the school's collection of governing bodies.

While traditional explanations for parents' non-participation in schooling—such as 'they just don't care', 'they're too busy', and/or 'they think that schooling is not their concern'—are affirmed in our research, we also report on accounts that address parental involvement in schooling from the standpoint of parents, particularly those positioned as not involved. In this way, this final chapter of the book seeks to give voice to those largely silenced in this discussion of who determines the practices of schooling. What emerges from these accounts are relations between school and parents characterised by feelings of inadequacy, impotence and tokenism, even when this is contrary to the explicit statements and intent of the school. In interrogating the research data for reasons why parents do not participate in schooling, two identifiable explanations become clear. In particular, the reasons parents give for their non-participation tend to be very different to the reasons imagined by those for whom participation is part of their schooling experience.

We begin our analysis with this second set of responses: largely traditional explanations for the non-participation of parents. We then explore the explanations of these parents themselves; the reasons they give for not getting involved in the life of the school. Finally, we consider their responses to what can be done to increase the involvement of parents in schools. In doing so, this chapter draws the book to a close by identifying agendas that serve socially just purposes for schools and their communities.

Throughout this analysis, we draw upon Bourdieu's notion of field because of its explanatory power in elucidating the the complex relations between schooling and socio-cultural contexts which can lead to inequalities of opportunity for parent participation in schooling. In his definition of field, Bourdieu explodes the vacuous notion of society, replacing it with "an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of 'play'" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 16–17). Advanced societies are a plurality of worlds, "differentiated, partially totalized entities made up of a set of intersecting but increasingly self-regulating fields" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 52). The concept of field that Bourdieu uses is therefore not to be considered as a field with a fence around it, but rather as a 'field of forces' that is dynamic and in which various potentialities exist (Mahar et al., 1990). While the field structures and predisposes, at least in Bourdieu's own account, there is space for improvisation (McLeod, 2005).

A field is also an arena of struggle; the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for power and influence between the dominant and dominated who are unequally endowed in the objects and the weapons of struggle: capital. While positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence to each other by virtue of the access they have to the capital at stake in the field (Jenkins, 2002), agents struggle to transform or preserve these force fields by defending or improving their positions. Hierarchy is continually contested and the very principles that undergird the structure of the field can be challenged and revoked (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Participants in these struggles therefore have differing aims—"some will seek to preserve the status quo, others to change it—and differing chances of winning or losing, depending on where they are located in the structured space of positions" (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). Yet, this does not simply imply that "all small capital holders are necessarily revolutionaries and all big capital holders are automatically conservatives" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 108–109). Nevertheless, position in the field inclines agents toward particular patterns of conduct: "those who occupy the dominant positions in a field tend to pursue strategies of conservation (of the existing distribution of capital) while those relegated to subordinate locations are more liable to deploy strategies of subversion" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 222). If we picture each player as:

> having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds … the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99)

This final chapter of the book attempts to make visible the structural constraints which work to maintain disadvantage for marginalised students and their parents, with a view to moving beyond attributions of blame and thinking through ways in which we can engage with the current arrangements. We conclude that what is needed is a transformation of the field "to establish alternative goals and … completely … redefine the game and the moves which permit one to win it" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 172).

'They Just Don't Care'

At Crimson Brook Secondary College, teachers tended to be the strongest critics of parents, although not all of them and not of all parents. Still, many observed that "there's generally a small band [of parents] that will continually have their say and others who … don't care … don't really want to … have an input" (Teacher # 15). To some extent, teachers tended to be fatalistic about these arrangements. As one teacher commented in relation to the problem of "parents of 20 or 30 children out of 200, 250" (Teacher # 20) turning up for parent-teacher interviews: "That's about what we expect. And it's usually the same ones and often it's those coming from … the country areas [not the town] to see the teachers and I guess that could be because some of them just couldn't care" (Teacher # 20).

Lareau (1989) suggests that teachers view parents' attendance at such 'ritualized' events as "evidence that parents value educational success, appreciate the actions of teachers and respect teachers' professionalism" (p. 180). The 'support' demonstrated by 20 or 30 middle-class parents attending parent-teacher interviews would reinforce teachers' perceptions of having them 'on their side' (Crozier, 1998). Students, too, spoke of the difficulties associated with encouraging parent involvement in schooling:

> If they're not interested you can't really make them interested. Like, I mean for years they've been trying to get all the parents to be involved and they've had, like, parent-teacher functions and stuff but it just doesn't happen. So, I don't know, I don't think there's anything that you can really do unless they're interested. It's like students, you know, if they don't want to do it then it's really hard to get them to do it. (Student # 22)

Even among parents, parent participation in schooling was seen as a matter for parents themselves. As one noted, "it's up to the parents I suppose. If they want to be involved they will" (Parent # 22). Some were particularly scathing of their fellow parents and their lack of interest in their families and communities:

> Well I think a lot of people in Crimson Brook, parents in particular, really don't care what's happening at the school … Half of them are just prepared to just drift along … and at the end of it they think, "Why didn't my child achieve something better?" But I really don't think that they're all that involved in the process as much as [parents from] the farming community. (Parent # 19)

This is a good example of the way that some parents, particularly mothers, constrained by poverty and lone parenting, are 'blamed' for their children's performance at school. Research undertaken by Miriam David et al. (1997) found that a lack of resources is the key structural constraint on these mothers' possibilities and leads to them "feeling frustrated about their lack of time and resources, and perennially guilty" (p. 409). There is a strong sense of resignation in these comments by teachers, students and parents. The sentiment is that some parents 'just don't care' and that 'there is nothing that can be done about it. We've tried'. As explored in Chap. 6, the non-participation of parents is attributed to their own lack of interest and is viewed as a reflection of the lower value that these working-class families supposedly attribute to education compared with middle-class families. In contrast, Soliman (1995) suggests that:

> Social class differences may explain how separate from or how connected with the school families feel and what action they take on behalf of their children, but not how much they value education. Teachers often mistakenly assume that parents who have not progressed far in their own formal education do not value it for their own children (Lareau, 1989) or that those parents who do not attend the school on specific occasions when they are invited are uninterested in their children's education (Bridges, 1987). (p. 162)

Yet Bourdieu (1990a) argues that interest is the precondition of the functioning of every field; it is the admission fee demanded by every game. The very existence and persistence of the game or field presupposes "a total and unconditional 'investment', a practical and unquestioning belief, in the game and its stakes" (Thompson, 1991, p. 14). A field can only function if there are agents who are socially predisposed to invest in it, who commit their resources to it and pursue their objectives to obtain the prizes it offers, thus helping either to maintain or transform its structure (Bourdieu, 1990a). By sending their children to the school, parents are agreeing to participate in the game, and in so doing, tacitly recognise the value of its stakes. Believing in the game they are playing, it is difficult to suggest that these parents are not interested in the schooling of their children. However, all 'products' and actions within a field have value, and "ultimately value is assigned according to a base rate; expressed on the basis of the proximity to and distance from the present orthodoxy

or the legitimate" (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 20). When 'legitimate' parent participation is largely defined by the school and by parents from dominant groups, parent participation that differs from this orthodoxy will be negatively valued.

There seems little recognition, then, that there could be parents who would like to become more involved in schooling and little understanding of the more complex reasons why they are not, including the role of the school in fostering non-participation. Moreover, the assumption that having a voice is really just a matter of choice ignores the complex matrix of power relations that define living in Australian society and that enable some and inhibit others from having their say in what counts as 'good' schooling. To do so is to laminate over the extent to which some individuals or groups are effectively disempowered or marginalised as a consequence of their classed, gendered and racialised identities (McInerney, 2002). It is interesting that the parent in the above excerpt alludes to a link between parent participation in schooling and student achievement. Non-participation by parents, it is implied, can be attributed to these parents' poor attitudes and, eventually, to their children's poor academic achievement. Like much deficit discourse, the problems are located in parents and their children, with little that can be done by teachers, schools and systems to alleviate them.

'It's the Cargo Cult Mentality'

On several occasions in our research, this non-participation by parents was seen as indicative of a more widespread disposition within the community: a 'cargo cult mentality' that anticipates the 'shipping in' of goods and services but is also critical when circumstances do not match their expectations. The Principal used this analogy to compare the Crimson Brook community to the cargo cults of Papua New Guinea, who were renowned for their worship of the ships that brought supplies to their country. The following student points to the criticisms expressed by some parents as evidence of such a mentality at Crimson Brook. As she puts it:

> A lot of the parents don't support the school and the students … At the functions when there's good things happening, not many parents turn up, but when there's bad things happening, all of them turn up and whinge but they never do anything about it. (Student # 22)

It is interesting in these remarks that criticism is not seen as a legitimate form of parent participation, particularly when juxtaposed with parents' apparent lack of support for 'good things'. Indeed, Briggs and Potter (1990) have suggested that such participation only serves to fuel teachers' negative attitudes towards parental participation in schools. While the problem of parent non-participation is framed above as a lack of interest, here it is also understood as laziness: "they never do anything about it". Moreover, from this student's perspective, parents' non-participation discounts the legitimacy of their criticism. As the following comments illustrate, what is viewed as parents' critique is often turned against them, again in ways that question their commitments to the community and the school:

> I call it the 'cargo cult mentality' which is probably derogatory but it's how I feel … They want to see the ship come over the horizon bringing the goods as long as they don't have to do anything to get the goods … All the Government agencies are finding [that the community] want us to do the job for them … [The attitude seems to be] "What are you going to do?" It's not, "What can we do to help us increase our capacity to do the job ourselves?" … Sport is a good example. They want lots of sport and I'm limited by the number of staff I've got and last night I was very much taken to task by a parent because we didn't support football but we didn't have the staff to do it … and I asked for [parents to] volunteer and got none so I couldn't run that sport. Soccer was another one that we started … but I just didn't have the staff and I couldn't get a community volunteer or parents to even drive the kids [to the city] in the car, it was all my staff doing it. (Principal)

Sport is also representative of the kinds of 'good things' for which Student # 22 (above) would like more parent support. But notice, too, how the Principal's comments narrowly conceive of parent participation as volunteerism. This conception of the role of parents was confirmed later in our conversation: "one of the things I say about Crimson Brook is that it's got the … highest unemployment rate in the state and the lowest volunteer rate in the state … the lowest number of people volunteering to do anything" (Principal). Illustrated here is that legitimate forms of participation are those that involve parents resourcing their own and their children's needs and desires, irrespective of their abilities to do so. Driving students to soccer games may seem a simple contribution, for example. Yet, this needs to be understood in the context of the town having one of the lowest rates of car ownership in the country; very few parents own cars. In short, the kinds of parent participation desired by the Principal may not be what parents are able to deliver. This provides a different way of understanding the Principal's frustration at not being able to satisfy the school's demands:

> I asked last night [at the P&C Association meeting] for someone to help … could there be someone who would volunteer to be a PR [public relations] person who would gather in from the community the sorts of things the P&C wanted. No one volunteered. That's back to me to do it. So I think the avenues are definitely there [for parents to participate] but people don't take that opportunity. (Principal)

What appear as opportunities to participate are those most often constructed from within the school, not by parents themselves, and, therefore, are constrained. For those parents who share the school's agenda this may be acceptable, but others are left without a voice (Crozier, 1998). Even in situations where parents may want to contribute to school activities, the lack of appreciation for their particular abilities provide further constraints on their participation. That is, the species of capital possessed by marginalised groups in the community are not those that are at stake in the field. With their own capital significantly under-valued, their position in the field stands in subordination to parents who come from a cultural background that is closer to the orthodox school culture and are therefore more able to impose their cultural norms on the field. By treating everybody as if they were equal when, in fact, the competitors all begin with different handicaps based on cultural endowment (Jenkins, 2002), the system places at a disadvantage all except those whose habitus is embodied in the school (Harker, 1990). Parents who do participate in the life of the school are able to recognise these constraints, to some degree. Yet such

recognition is also tempered by their own successful participation. These two almost contradictory discourses are well demonstrated in the comments of one parent interviewed in the research:

> I think [some parents] don't really want to get involved with P&Cs and stuff because they don't want the responsibility of being put in an executive position. I don't think they like the pressure that could be put on them if they ever came to an AGM [annual general meeting] and stuff like that, so most of them tend to stay away. I think … even though they don't like the decisions that are made they're not prepared to come up and front up and say, "Hey", you know, "I want my say too". They're just prepared to go along with it but bitch about it behind your back … Some of them aren't really happy but they're not prepared to be visible about it. They'd rather whinge instead of coming out and saying something. (Parent # 19)

Such easy recourse by teachers and others to a 'deficit' view of the local area and the capacity of its inhabitants (Nixon et al., 2001) as the dominant explanation of parents' non-participation, is an important issue in understanding the 'problem'. Conceived in this way, parent participation in the school seems destined to remain a problem. However, moving beyond explanations that understand parents' non-participation as a function of their character flaws and towards the inclusion of different ways of conceiving of participation, seem more fruitful avenues to explore.

'Getting Involved Is Not Really an Option for Me'

One such explanation apparent in the research data was parents' lack of time to participate, something that was acknowledged by parents and teachers alike. As one teacher commented, "parents are busy people" (Teacher # 22). Family commitments were common examples of these time constraints that prevented the participation of some parents: "a lot of [parents] have little kids" (Parent # 22). There were also others, like the following mother of more than ten children (introduced in Chap. 3), who commented, "if my kids are sick or they're in trouble then I'm here. But if I'm not needed for that, I try to keep as far a distance as possible because while they're at school that's my special time" (Parent # 24).

The tendency for working-class parents to intervene actively on their child's behalf over disciplinary matters but not to be involved in any other aspect of the school is supported by Crozier's (1998) research, who also found that such parents felt dissociated from the school and its teachers.

Other parents in our research made references to pressure from their children not to be involved at the school, or at least this was their interpretation of their children's wishes. In their view, "the kids don't want you there. When they're in secondary school they don't want their parents anywhere near the place" (Parent # 20). Clearly, this is a different accounting of the problem of parent participation. Rather than attributing blame to these parents, there is recognition that family and other commitments (including the limited time and disposable income of lower and working-class parents) make it difficult to supplement and intervene in their children's schooling. This can prevent the participation of some who otherwise may be quite

willing to play some kind of formal role in their children's education. It is a good example of the way that fields are relatively autonomous, but do not exist in isolation; instead, connecting with other fields. Action in one field can impact on the ability to act in another. As discussed in Chap. 5, middle-class parents, on the other hand, often have the necessary social and economic capital—for managing child care and transportation, hiring tutors and meeting with teachers—to become actively involved in their children's schooling (Lareau, 1987).

'My Experiences of School Are Not That Good'

Another reason discernible in the data for the non-participation of parents concerned their negative experiences of schooling, either as a parent of a student or as a student themselves. As is the case in this school, Cairney and Munsie's (1995) research confirms that it is the working-class and lower-class families that are more likely to have had negative experiences as students themselves, and who may experience feelings of insecurity and intimidation in school settings. As one parent reflected:

> I don't know why [they don't get involved]. I don't know whether it's their own experience at secondary school was pretty horrible when they were kids, but they do seem to be a lot less willing to be involved in the secondary school than they are with the elementary school. (Parent # 19)

The following teacher's comments also demonstrate an awareness that prior experiences in educational institutions can impact on parents' willingness to be involved: "I think some parents don't want to come because schooling for them [wasn't] particularly successful and school is like, 'I don't want to go back in there' … I don't think they feel comfortable being there" (Teacher # 22).

Recent experiences in the school as a parent can also impact on parent participation. One student told us of a confrontation between her mother and the former Principal and how this had led to what is now a very minimal level of involvement: "[My Mum] doesn't go to P&C meetings. She only signs forms when she has to … She doesn't help fundraise … She said one day to the [former] Principal … she can put the school somewhere where the sun don't shine" (Student # 21).

The decision to participate in schooling is certainly easier for those who have had positive experiences in school, either as students themselves or more recently as parents. And it is no surprise that more often those with positive school experiences are from dominant groups; schools are largely staffed by teachers from similar backgrounds who reflect and authorise similar views (Boykin, 1986). Lareau (1989) explains this phenomenon as 'interconnectedness': "middle-class parents speak about education in the same language as the teachers; they have similar expectations of the education system; they have the same views on what one needs to do in order to achieve within the educational system" (Crozier, 1998, p. 130). In contrast, for some parents, the school may be "an instrumentality of a dominant government and a symbol of an alien culture" (Gilbert & Dewar, 1995, p. 13).

This illustrates well the ways in which the rules of the game are accepted, making it appear as if everyone is free to play and everything is negotiable. More often, it is "a game in which the dominant determine at every moment the rules of the game (heads, I win; tails, you lose) by their very existence" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 153). Everyone plays, but differential structures ensure that not everyone is equal. The dominated allow this competitive struggle to be imposed on them when they accept the stakes offered by the dominant. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) suggest, it is a "*reproductive* struggle, since those who enter this chase, in which they are beaten before they start … implicitly recognize the legitimacy of the goals … by the mere fact of taking part" (p. 97, emphasis original). Moreover, the rules or regularities of the field are "only ever partially articulated, and much of the orthodox way of thinking and acting passes in an implicit, tacit manner" (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 20). The legitimate is never made fully explicit. If the marginalised do not know the rules of the game, how then can they fully understand the moves that permit them to win?

'I Don't Have the Necessary Skills'

Yet, even those from dominant groups experience barriers to participation in schooling. Feelings of inadequacy were expressed and identified by both teachers and parents in our research as possible contributing factors to low levels of parent participation. As one parent commented:

> I've always been involved with P&C in one way or another throughout my children's school years … In the second year that I was at Crimson Brook Secondary College … I [volunteered to be part of the executive of the P&C] … Four years later I'm still [part of the executive] … Sometimes I think I'm a little bit inadequate in places … but I think I do a good job. (Parent # 19)

If this particular parent experiences feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, one must wonder whether there are some who have never attended a meeting out of fear that they will be out of their league.

Some suggest a link between low academic achievement and feelings of inadequacy that deter parents from becoming more involved in their children's education. For example, when asked about whether the school encourages parents to be involved in its operations, one parent responded, "I really can't answer that one because I tend to take a back seat … I don't feel that I have the education myself" (Parent # 23).

Parents who are prevented by their own level of education from helping their children are much more reliant on teachers' judgments and often speak about them 'knowing best' with regard to academic work (Crozier, 1998). Teachers, too, saw a correlation between low levels of education and feelings of inadequacy, particularly in relation to parent participation in schooling alongside 'well-educated' teachers: "Others [don't participate] because they wouldn't feel that they'd be able to communicate with teachers, they would see the teachers as well educated [people]" (Teacher # 20).

The fear that some parents harbour, that 'they wouldn't … be able to communicate with teachers', is a very real one for those members of the community who are illiterate or have a poor record of academic achievement themselves. What these parents recognise is that they lack the culturally valued educational skills necessary to participate effectively in the educational process (Lareau, 1989). As discussed in Chap. 5, in their struggle to improve their child's position in the field, and in much the same way that parents depend on doctors to heal their children, many working-class communities turn over responsibility for their child's education to 'professionals' (Borg, 1994); their expert status assured by virtue of their access to the capital at stake in the field. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, often have educational skills and occupational prestige matching or surpassing that of teachers and see education as a partnership between equals. For them, the education of their children is a shared enterprise. They see it as their responsibility to reinforce, monitor, and supervise the educational experience of their children by reading to them, initiating contact with teachers and attending school events, for example (Lareau, 1987). These parents are clearly more comfortable engaging with professionals and becoming involved in the education of their children.

Reay (1998), for example, found that white middle-class mothers in Britain were engaged in "an extensive, systematic programme of generating educational capital through tuition, cultural capital through art, dance, drama and music classes, or social capital through orchestrating regular slots for their children to develop their own social networks and practice their social skills" (p. 70). While the situation of middle-class mothers provided "material and social conditions under which cultural capital could be generated" (Reay, 1998, p. 62), parents who were recent immigrants felt inadequate for the task of compensating what they perceived to be gaps in their children's educational provision.

While the teacher in the following excerpt tells us more about her perceptions of the feelings of inadequacy experienced by some, she also offers suggestions on how to do things differently to change the situation:

> I think we need to teach parents how to be active participants in education. I don't think we do that. We invite them and they don't come and then sometimes we [chastise] them 'cause they don't come but maybe they don't know how. Some of them might not want to go to a P&C meeting in case they look stupid or don't know what to say or are asked to read something and they can't read … How daunting would it be to walk into a room [with] four teachers, the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the head of the P&C, three … parents [from the farming communities] who are extremely intelligent articulate people, why would you want to come? It would be very intimidating. So I think we need to … do things differently to (a) teach them how to be more actively involved and then (b) make it so that they feel comfortable to do that and practice what we've taught them to do … I think that … sometimes as teachers we … only hear certain voices … And I think that that's because we don't teach people how to … use their voice. So a lot of the Indigenous parents and a lot of the extremely poor parents they just aren't heard. (Teacher # 22)

Here is recognition that there is a tendency for educators to assume that "non-participation implies an apathetic or passive citizenry lacking in both expertise and motivation" (Blackmore, 1995, p. 59). As Blackmore (1995) notes, like Carole Pateman (1989), the teacher sees "non-participation as a manifestation of feelings of disempowerment

experienced by most citizens, particularly women, resulting from the exclusionary nature of the political process and institutions and from their lack of experience in formal decision-making, rather than apathy" (Blackmore, 1995, p. 59).

Although these parents may be willing to help with their children's education, their unfamiliarity with the tasks being asked of them means that they may have few ideas about how to provide this help. In the teacher's comments above, there is also a hint of changing the habitus of the school, "mak[ing] it so that they feel comfortable". In this way, what this teacher proposes is positive in two aspects. Not only is there an attempt to educate others in the dominant cultural capital—that which is legitimated in schools and required for success in the wider society—but there is also an appreciation that the habitus of the school needs to be changed if we are to entice more parents and community members to enter its doors. By letting marginalised parents in on 'the rules of the game', this teacher is involved in a struggle to transform the field rather than seeking to preserve the status quo. Her location in the field and access to the valued forms of capital within it also means that she has a better chance of succeeding in her attempt at transformation than a parent endowed with little of the capital at stake in the field. While the dominant in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage, this teacher is evidence that they do not automatically have a propensity to orient themselves actively toward conservation.

'They Seem to Know What's Best for the Kids'

Related to these feelings of inadequacy are doubts about whether parents would be listened to anyway, particularly when there appear to be an abundance of highly educated staff who seem to know what is best for students and the town. Contemplating the lack of parent participation, the Principal comments:

> So I don't know … whether they feel that … no-one's going to listen, so why bother … People might say, "[The Principal] lets us know all the time that we can come up and have a say but we don't feel they're going to listen anyway". (Principal)

In fact, earlier research undertaken in the school suggested that the school's rhetoric did not support its practice when it comes to negotiation and consultation with parents, students and community members:

> The study said that practice doesn't appear to match what's on paper … On paper it says we negotiate, that students have a say in the curriculum, that we access community members and I believe that in practice … there's very little of that going on. (Principal)

Both parents and teachers tended to agree that parents were often left out of the consultation process. As one parent commented:

> I don't feel that [the teachers and administration are] always ready to listen to ideas that we might have … I think [it's] because they're trained, they've done their degrees and they know what they're doing about that kind of thing. Sometimes some of them feel that we're not qualified to offer that kind of advice. (Parent # 20)

In support of this parent's perceptions, the following teacher was very clear in setting the ground rules for community participation in schooling:

> As long as they don't try to interfere with the curriculum I don't have a problem, because I work on the theory that everybody's an expert in their own field. I don't mind the community having an involvement in suggesting that we should be trying something new … But when it comes to actually designing the curriculum … I would rather look to something like … the university than the community because if they were the experts, they'd be doing the job, wouldn't they? (Teacher # 18)

This is a good example of what Waller (1932) typifies as the relationship between teachers and parents, as 'natural enemies' facing enduring problems of negotiating 'boundaries' between their 'territories' (Lightfoot, 1978). In this sense, parents may represent a threat to teachers' professionalism and be seen as not capable of:

> contributing anything of value about curriculum and teaching for their children. It is observable that many parents accept this still, particularly those of humble occupational status … They accept that they will be invited (summoned) to the school as a body from time to time but that there are quite definite limits to what will be discussed. As Goodacre remarks: "(P)arental suggestions about curriculum, teaching methods, staff appointments, etc … are unthinkable" (p. 51). Sociological research into social role relationships in education have shown this attitude to be encouraged by many teachers, generally tacitly but sometimes quite specifically (see Musgrave & Taylor, 1969). (Claydon, 1973, p. 122)

The Principal sums up well this 'I know what's best for them' attitude: "We have a number of staff who want to do good for the community … [But they] believe that [the community has] got to accept what's best for them … A number of staff think, 'No, we know better. We are the teachers'" (Principal).

Both parents and teachers pointed to a lack of qualifications, and hence expertise, as the reasons behind teachers' unwillingness to take on board ideas from parents, with teachers possibly feeling that their claim to be a professional is undermined should they give credence to parental knowledge (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000). Teachers in the school who hold to this position have little incentive to collaborate with parents and believe that parent knowledge can be ignored without their professional standards being compromised.

Bourdieu would explain these teachers' actions as struggles to preserve the field and strategies to defend their dominant positions within it, with teachers struggling against parents to maintain monopoly over the legitimacy of what counts as school knowledge. In the end it is the teachers who hold the trump cards in the form of educational qualifications which derive their social value and therefore yield profits of distinction for their owners through their scarcity (Bourdieu, 1997). Among some parents, this results in feelings of impotence in their interactions with professionals and again to less than ideal parent participation in the school. However, there are indications among teachers more broadly of an 'emergent' professionalism (Nixon, Martin, McKeown, & Ranson, 1997) in which their "sense of professional identity is derived from their capacity to listen to, learn from, and move forward with the communities they serve" (Nixon et al., 2001, p. 334). Such community-led change is driven by "the concerns and the agency of community members and groups rather than by the interests of the professional groups involved" (Nixon et al., 2001,

p. 335). In the same way, professional teachers need to work *with* communities and facilitate their meaningful involvement in the future direction of schooling.

'The Principal's Ideas Are the Ones That Really Matter'

According to some of the parents and students we spoke with, the Principal could also be accused of 'knowing what's best' for the community. One parent viewed the P&C as "just there for fundraising" and while "the P&C is supposed to be somewhat of a partner in making decisions … I don't feel often that they are" (Parent # 20). Indeed, the dominant historical 'image' of parent involvement in education is one of "voluntaristic, largely middle-class organisations, organisations which have little interest in educational policy making but which have primarily assumed a fundraising function to assist individual schools" (Blackmore, 1995, p. 54). One student, when speaking about his mother's previous involvement in the P&C, even went as far as to say, "I think [the Principal] … [made] important decisions … because they were hers and did not really listen to anyone on the P&C. Like, if there were five people [who] wanted one thing on the P&C and [the Principal] didn't, well it wouldn't happen" (Student # 20). He went on to say, the Principal would "say that so many people decided on this but it was really her idea … So Mum just doesn't go anymore … [My parents] don't want anything to do with [the school]" (Student # 20). And as another parent summed up, "I still think [the Principal] tries to get everybody's opinion but … when it really comes to the crunch, she's still doing what she wants to do" (Parent # 19).

These are good examples of the culture of schools that reinforces the trend of parents being conditioned to accept tokenistic roles. Such comments also reveal the power of the Principal's position, and parents' conventional understandings of a highly hierarchical way of making decisions. The consequence is that parents feel unable to question this authority even when they want to (Gilbert & Dewar, 1995). It is little wonder that there is a legacy of mistrust by locals of professionals (Nixon et al., 2001) and that as a result, many are sceptical about the motives and sincerity of administrators when it comes to empowerment. While many principals tend to embrace and endorse the idea of participation, Wood (1984) contends that their behaviour—their controlling values and tendencies—suggests otherwise. Indeed, Hargreaves' (1992) research suggests that some teachers suspect that collegial energies are harnessed less for the purpose of giving them a say than to "squeeze out dissentient voices and secure commitment and compliance to changes imposed by others" (p. 217).

The "entrenched power of the educational bureaucracy means that, within their own school communities, principals remain the most influential and powerful individuals" (Gilbert & Dewar, 1995, p. 6). It is the scarcity of the capital held by the Principal that authorises the dominant position they occupy in the field. Indeed, the Principal is able to exert an effect of domination only because of the acknowledged value status of the capital she/he possesses. Bourdieu calls this power to dominate disadvantaged groups 'symbolic power'. The acknowledged value status of these capitals (the Principal's accent, qualifications, social position and so on) as legitimate,

"is a recognition which maintains and reproduces a strict hierarchy to the advantage, and disadvantage, of factions within it" (Grenfell & James, 1998a, p. 23). That is:

> Even those who benefit least from the exercise of power participate, to some extent, in their own subjection. They recognize or tacitly acknowledge the legitimacy of power, or of the hierarchical relations of power in which they are embedded; and hence fail to see that the hierarchy is, after all, an arbitrary social construction which serves the interests of some groups more than others. (Thompson, 1991, pp. 22–23)

Dominated individuals, such as staff and parents from within the school community, are "not passive bodies to which symbolic power is applied … Rather, symbolic power requires, as a condition of its success, that those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of power and the legitimacy of those who wield it" (Thompson, 1991, p. 23). The Principal, drawing on this symbolic power, enables relations of domination to be established and maintained through strategies which are "softened and disguised, and which conceal domination beneath the veil of an enchanted relation" (Thompson, 1991, pp. 23–24). It is an invisible power that can be exercised "only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–164). As Gilbert and Dewar (1995) suggest, the role of the Principal, and the power which accompanies it, are key issues in the process of community involvement in decision-making:

> Constructed by bureaucratic regulation, professional expertise, and everyday assumptions about authority and decision-making, the position of principal is a focus of many of the problems of participation. More generally, studies of the principal's role illustrate the typical political processes by which schools run, and which need to be countered if decision-making is to become more participatory. (Gilbert & Dewar, 1995, p. 7)

For decision making to become more participatory in Crimson Brook Secondary College, what is needed are 'democratic leaders', those who:

> acknowledge the greater expertise of others, including that of nonprofessionals, in certain situations. They demonstrate their willingness to accept decisions that are genuine outcomes of democratic procedures within an overall context that prioritizes the eradication of inequalities in students' academic achievement, school financing and public participation in educational decision making. (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p. 69)

All schools would do well to consider a reconceptualisation of leadership which includes "practices that are dispersed across the school and that are not explicitly associated with formal leadership roles. Indeed … leadership needs to be exercised across the school and its communities to achieve the best educational outcomes for all" (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 53).

Transforming the Field

Drawing on Bourdieu, we have argued that inequalities of opportunity for parent participation in schooling work to maintain disadvantage for marginalised students. One approach to increasing parent participation is to educate parents in the skills of

participation. It is presumptuous to assume that parents have these skills as a matter of course, particularly when the cultural context of this specific community and of schooling in general are so disparate and foreign in many ways and when the experiences that parents have of school serve to extenuate these differences. Skilling parents in how to participate in school, however, is itself presumptuous. It presumes that schools know best and it doesn't move beyond the notion that it is parents who need to change, not schools.

Thinking differently about these cultural and political aspects of knowing may produce different ways of doing school. Indeed, this is to be expected if the particularities of a school's community are taken into account. Increasing parent participation, then, may require us to "do things less traditionally. So why have a parent/teacher night if noone turns up. We have to find another way of talking to parents" (Teacher # 22).

While traditional notions of parental involvement in schooling suggest that the conversations between schools and their communities should begin from the school, as Cairney and Munsie (1995) found in their research, and as is suggested by interviewees in our own, such attempts to bring the school and its communities closer together have been ineffective and frustrating to both parents and teachers and little has been achieved. In this school-centred model of school-community relations, parents and educators do not necessarily work well together and they do not equally share decision-making. Those who are unwilling or unable to become involved in schooling face marginalisation. Moreover, the lack of participation on the part of subordinate groups leaves the door wide open for the dominant—who are equipped with the cultural capital legitimated by educational institutions—to mobilise class advantage and lobby for their own agenda (Grimes, 1995; Henry, 1996). While the dominant are enabled to reproduce a situation that benefits them, this is hardly an optimal situation for others (Hatton, 1995).

Schools need to think about what they expect from families and communities and respond in ways that serve socially just purposes. Recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000), informed by the work of Young (1990) and Fraser (1995), with its positive regard for social difference and the centrality of social democratic processes, offers one way of advancing this discussion beyond simplistic attributions of blame. In particular, a politics of recognition is concerned with improving access to and participation in education by opening up the processes of schooling to groups, including marginalised or disenfranchised parents, who often have been excluded and for their views to be seriously engaged within decision-making processes. Such politics aims at "overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with other members" (Fraser, 2001, p. 24). For this to happen, parents must be viewed as partners, and the vital role that they play in education recognised.

Teachers need to implement initiatives that recognise the complementary roles of parents and teachers, and bring schools and communities closer together (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). One way to do this is to involve the community in the development of the curriculum, which ideally should be responsive to local as well as global cultural and economic contexts, and encourage and assist students to draw on

their cultural experiences to succeed academically (Gale & Densmore, 2000). The development of curriculum should encourage critical and collaborative reflection among all those involved in education, and be "an ongoing and continuous activity that belongs to the whole community and has its roots in the attitudes, aspirations, dreams and biases of its people" (Middleton, 1995, p. 195).

Bourdieu would argue that these suggestions are examples of transforming the field. Indeed, agents are not "particles" that are "mechanically pushed and pulled about by external forces" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 108–109). To return to Bourdieu's analogy of a game, players can play to:

> increase or to conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules of the game and the prerequisites of the reproduction of the game and its stakes; but they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game. They can, for instance, work to change the relative value of tokens of different colors, the exchange rate between various species of capital, through strategies aimed at discrediting the form of capital upon which the force of their opponents rests … and to valorize the species of capital they preferentially possess. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 99)

Rupture and transformation occurs when there is no longer acceptance of the rules of the game and the goals proposed by the dominant class. By letting marginalised parents and students in on the rules of the game, teachers can be involved in transforming the field rather than seeking to preserve the status quo. As Bourdieu (1988) posits, this is what happens when teachers "take up a struggle which we may call revolutionary in so far as it aims to establish alternative goals and more or less completely … redefine the game and the moves which permit one to win it" (p. 172). Bourdieu would argue that if we are to move beyond the reproduction of disadvantage for those who play the game of schooling from the back of the field, such a revolutionary struggle is needed.

References

Ainley, J., & McKenzie, P. (1999). *The influence of school factors*. Paper presented at Australia's young adults: The deepening divide, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Sydney.

Ainscow, M. (1999). *Understanding the development of inclusive schools*. London: Falmer Press.

Alloway, N., & Gilbert, P. (2004). Shifting discourses about gender in higher education enrolments: Retrieving marginalised voices. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *17*(1), 103–118.

Alloway, N., Gilbert, P., Gilbert, R., & Muspratt, S. (2004). *Factors impacting on student aspirations and expectations in regional Australia*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

Alston, M. (2004). 'You don't want to be a check-out chick all your life': The out-migration of young people from Australia's small rural towns. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *39*(3), 299–313.

Appadurai, A. (2004). The capacity to aspire: Culture and terms of recognition. In V. Rao & M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and public action* (pp. 59–84). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Australian Schools Commission. (1995). *Quality and equality*. Canberra: Commonwealth Schools Commission.

Ball, S. J., Bowe, R., & Gewirtz, S. (1996). School choice, social class and distinction: The realisation of social advantage in education. *Journal of Education Policy*, *11*(1), 89–112.

Barnard, H. (1990). Bourdieu and ethnography: Reflexivity, politics and praxis. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 58–85). London: Macmillan.

Beder, H. (1991). *Mapping the terrain*. Paper presented at the Convergence XXIV, 3, ICAE, Ontario.

Benhabib, S. (1986). *Critique, norm and utopia: A study of the foundations of critical theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bernstein, B. (1971). On the classification and framing of educational knowledge. In M. F. D. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and control* (pp. 47–69). London: Collier-Macmillan.

Bernstein, B. (1975). *Towards a theory of educational transmissions*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bernstein, B. (1990). *The structuring of pedagogic discourse*. London: Routledge.

Berry, M. (1977). Inequality. In A. F. Davies, S. Encel, & M. J. Berry (Eds.), *Australian society: A sociological introduction* (3rd ed.). Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Black, A., Duff, J., Saggers, S., Baines, P., Jennings, A., & Bowen, P. (2000). *Rural communities and rural social issues: Priorities for research*. Canberra: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Blackmore, J. (1995). Participating parents? A feminist discussion of the historical relationships between parents, schools and community in Victoria. In B. Limerick & H. Nielsen (Eds.), *School and community relations: Participation, policy and practice* (pp. 53–68). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.

Borg, C. (1994). Sehem il-genituri fl-edukazzjoni taz-zghar [Parents' participation in early childhood education]. In R. G. Sultana (Ed.), *Genituri u ghalliema ghal edukazzjoni ahjar. Gwida ghal shubija gdida* [Parents and teachers for a better education. Guide for a new partnership]. Msida: Mireva.

Borg, C., & Mayo, P. (2001). From 'adjuncts' to 'subjects': Parental involvement in a working-class community. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *22*(2), 245–266.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, education and cultural change* (pp. 71–112). London: Tavistock.

Bourdieu, P. (1974). The school as a conservative force: Scholastic and cultural inequalities. In J. Eggleston (Ed.), *Contemporary research in the sociology of education* (pp. 32–46). London: Methuen.

Bourdieu, P. (1977a). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487–511). New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977b). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1979). *Algeria 1960: The disenchantment of the world, the sense of honour, the Kabyle house or the world reversed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo academicus*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1989). *La noblesse d'Etat. Grrands corps et Grandes écoles*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. (1990a). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990b). *The logic of practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990c). The scholastic point of view. *Cultural Anthropology*, *5*(4), 380–391.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sociology in question*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1997). The forms of capital. In A. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, & A. S. Wells (Eds.), *Education: Culture, economy and society* (pp. 46–58). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998a). *On television and journalism*. London: Pluto.

Bourdieu, P. (1998b). *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Participant objectivation: Breaching the boundary between anthropology and sociology—how? (Huxley Memorial Lecture 2000)*. Paper presented at The Royal Anthropological Institute, University College, London.

Bourdieu, P., Accardo, A., Balazs, G., Beaud, S., Bonvin, F., Bourdieu, E., et al. (1999). *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bourdieu, P., & de Saint Martin, M. (1974). Scholastic excellence and the values of the educational system. In J. Eggleston (Ed.), *Contemporary research in the sociology of education* (pp. 338–371). London: Methuen.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1964). *Les Héritiers*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1979). *The inheritors: French students and their relation to culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. in Wacquant, L. (1989). Towards a reflexive sociology: A workshop with Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory*, *7*(2), 26–63.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bowser, D., Danaher, P. A., & Somasundaram, J. (2007). Indigenous, pre-undergraduate and international students at Central Queensland University, Australia: Three cases of the dynamic tension between diversity and commonality. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *12*(5–6), 667–679.

Boykin, A. (1986). The triple quandary and the schooling of Afro-American children. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives* (pp. 57–92). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bridges, D. (1987). "It's the ones who never turn up that you really want to see": The "problem" of the non-attending parent. In J. Bastiani (Ed.), *Parents and teachers: Perspectives on home-school relations* (pp. 234–247). Windsor: National Foundation for Educational Research-Nelson.

Briggs, F., & Potter, G. (1990). *Teaching children in the first three years of school*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Brint, S. (1998). *Schools and societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Bullen, E., & Kenway, J. (2005). Bourdieu, subcultural capital and risky girlhood. *Theory and Research in Education*, *3*(1), 47–61.

Burke, P. (2002). Towards a collaborative methodology: An ethnography of widening educational participation. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *29*(1), 115–136.

Cairney, T., & Munsie, L. (1995). Parent participation in literacy learning. *The Reading Teacher*, *48*(5), 392–403.

Cairney, T., & Ruge, J. (1998). *Community literacy practices and schooling: Towards effective support for students*. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Calhoun, C. (1993). Habitus, field, and capital: The question of historical specificity. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, & M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical perspectives* (pp. 61–88). Cambridge: Polity.

Carlson, D., & Apple, M. W. (1998). Introduction: Critical educational theory in unsettling times. In D. Carlson & M. W. Apple (Eds.), *Power, knowledge, pedagogy: The meaning of democratic education in unsettling times* (pp. 1–38). Boulder: Westview Press.

Carspecken, P. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.

Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (Vol. 1). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chamberlain, C. (1983). *Class consciousness in Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Clark, B. (1961). The "cooling-out" function in higher education. In A. H. Halsey, J. Floud, & C. Anderson (Eds.), *Education, economy and society: A reader in the sociology of education* (pp. 513–523). New York: Free Press.

Claydon, L. F. (1973). *Renewing urban teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Codd, J. (1990). Making distinctions: The eye of the beholder. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 132–159). London: Macmillan.

Collins, C., Kenway, J., & McLeod, J. (2000). Gender debates we still have to have. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *27*(3), 37–48.

Collits, P. (2000). *Small town decline and survival: Trends, causes and policy issues*. Paper presented to the 'Future of Australia's Country Towns' conference, Bendigo.

Comber, B., & Hill, S. (2000). Socio-economic disadvantage, literacy and social justice: Learning from longitudinal case study research. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *27*(3), 79–97.

Connell, R. (2006). Northern theory: The political geography of general social theory. *Theory and Society*, *35*(2), 237–264.

Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Connell, R. (2009). Good teachers on dangerous ground: Towards a new view of teacher quality and professionalism. *Critical Studies in Education*, *50*(3), 213–229.

Connell, R., Ashenden, D., Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G. (1982). *Making the difference: Schools, families and social division*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Connell, R. W. (1993). *Schools and social justice*. Leichhardt: Pluto.

Connell, R. W. (1994). Poverty and education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *64*(2), 125–149.

Connolly, P., & Healy, J. (2004). Symbolic violence, locality and social class: The educational and career aspirations of 10–11 year old boys in Belfast. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *12*(1), 15–33.

Corbett, M. (2004). "It was fine, if you wanted to leave": Educational ambivalence in a Nova Scotian coastal community 1963–1998. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *35*(4), 451–471.
Corbett, M. (2005). Rural education and out-migration: The case of a coastal community. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *28*(1&2), 52–72.
Cox, T. (2000). Introduction. In T. Cox (Ed.), *Combating educational disadvantage: Meeting the needs of vulnerable children* (pp. 1–14). London: Falmer Press.
Crozier, G. (1998). Parents and schools: Partnership or surveillance? *Journal of Education Policy*, *13*(1), 125–136.
Cunningham, F. (1987). *Democratic theory and socialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Curtis, B., Livingstone, D. W., & Smaller, H. (1992). *Stacking the deck: The streaming of working-class kids in Ontario schools*. Toronto: Our Selves Education Foundation.
David, M., Davies, J., Edwards, R., Reay, D., & Standing, K. (1997). Choice within constraints: Mothers and schooling. *Gender and Education*, *9*(4), 397–410.
Delpit, L. (1992). Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master? *Theory into Practice*, *31*(4), 296–302.
Delpit, L. (1997). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. In A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, & A. S. Wells (Eds.), *Education: Culture, economy and society* (pp. 582–594). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Department of Education. (1990). *Focus on schools: The future organisation of educational services for students*. Brisbane: Department of Education.
Department of Education, Science and Training. (2007). *Institutional student equity performance data 2005*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
Department of Employment, Education and Training. (1990). *A fair chance for all: National and institutional planning for equity in higher education*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs and National Board of Employment, Education and Training.
Deutsch, M. (1967). The disadvantaged child and the learning process. In M. Deutsch (Ed.), *The disadvantaged child* (pp. 39–58). New York: Basic Books.
Dillabough, J. (2004). Class, culture and the 'predicaments of masculine domination': Encountering Pierre Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*(4), 489–506.
Dyson, A. H. (1997). *Writing superheroes: Contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Edwards, J. (1999). *Students-as-researchers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education and New Zealand Association of Research in Education, Melbourne.
Edwards, T. (2002). A remarkable sociological imagination. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *23*(4), 527–535.
Edwards, P. A., & Young, L. S. J. (1992). Beyond parents: Family, community, and school involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *74*(1), 72–80.
Figueroa, P. (2000). Researching education and racialization: Virtue or validity? In H. Simons & R. Usher (Eds.), *Situated ethics in educational research* (pp. 82–100). London: Routledge.
Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "Burden of 'acting White'". *Urban Review*, *18*(3), 176–206.
Franklin, W. (2000). Students at promise and resilient: A historical look at risk. In M. G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents* (pp. 3–16). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Fraser, N. (1995). From redistribution to recognition: Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist' age. *New Left Review*, *212*(July), 68–93.
Fraser, N. (1997). *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the 'postsocialist' condition*. New York: Routledge.
Fraser, N. (2001). Recognition without ethics? *Theory, Culture & Society*, *18*(2–3), 21–42.
Gale, T. (1997). *Policy production and the Australian state: Higher education entry in Queensland, March 1987–March 1996*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Gale, T. (2000). Rethinking social justice in schools: How will we recognize it when we see it? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *4*(3), 253–269.
Gale, T. (2005). *Rough justice: Young people in the shadows*. New York: Peter Lang.
Gale, T. (2006). How did we ever arrive at the conclusion that teachers are the problem? A critical reading in the discourses of Australian schooling. In B. Doecke, M. Howie, & W. Sawyer (Eds.), *'Only connect …': English teaching, schooling, and democracy*. Kent Town: AATE & Wakefield Press.
Gale, T., & Densmore, K. (2000). *Just schooling: Explorations in the cultural politics of teaching*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Gale, T., & Densmore, K. (2003). *Engaging teachers: Towards a radical democratic agenda for schooling*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
Gale, T., & McNamee, P. (1994). Just out of reach: Access to equity in Australian higher education. *The Australian Universities' Review*, *37*(2), 8–12.
Gale, T., & McNamee, P. (1995). Alternative pathways to traditional destinations: Higher education for 'disadvantaged' Australians. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *16*(4), 437–450.
Gamaron, A. (1992). Access to excellence: Assignment to honors English classes in the transition from middle to high school. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *14*(3), 185–204.
Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. J., & Bowe, R. (1995). *Markets, choice and equity in education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Giddens, A. (1994). *Beyond left and right: The future of radical politics*. Cambridge: Polity.
Gilbert, R., & Dewar, J. (1995). Community and the politics of participation. In B. Limerick & H. Nielsen (Eds.), *School and community relations: Participation, policy and practice* (pp. 3–16). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.
Giroux, H. (1983). Theories of reproduction and resistance in the new sociology of education: A critical analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, *53*(5), 257–293.
Giroux, H. (1990). Reading texts, literacy, and textual authority. *Journal of Education*, *172*(1), 85–103.
Goodacre, E. (1970). *School and home*. London: N.F.E.R.
Grasswill, H. (2002). The Cape crusade. In H. Grasswill (Producer), *Australian Story*: ABC.
Grenfell, M., & James, D. (1998a). Theory, practice and pedagogic research. In M. Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and education: Acts of practical theory* (pp. 6–26). London: Falmer Press.
Grenfell, M., & James, D. (1998b). The practice of theory. In M. Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and education: Acts of practical theory* (pp. 122–149). London: Falmer Press.
Grenfell, M., & James, D. (1998c). Theory as method. In M. Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and education: Acts of practical theory* (pp. 152–178). London: Falmer Press.
Griffith, J. (2001). Principal leadership of parent involvement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *39*(2), 162–186.
Griffiths, M. (1998). *Educational research for social justice: Getting off the fence*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Grimes, J. (1995). *Cultural capital, ethnicity and early education*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford.
Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Hallgarten, J. (2000). *Parents exist, OK!? Issues and visions for parent-school relationships*. London: IPPR.
Harding, S. (1998). *Is science multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, feminisms and epistemologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Hargreaves, A. (1992). Cultures of teaching: A focus for change. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development* (pp. 216–240). New York: Teachers College Press.
Harker, R. (1984). On reproduction, habitus and education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *5*(2), 117–127.
Harker, R. (1990). Bourdieu: Education and reproduction. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 86–108). London: Macmillan.

Harker, R., & May, S. (1993). Code and habitus: Comparing the accounts of Bernstein and Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *14*(2), 169–178.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Harvey, L. (1990). *Critical social research*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Hattam, R., Shacklock, G., & Smyth, J. (1998). Doing critical cultural studies: An antidote to being done to. In J. Smyth, R. Hattam, & M. Lawson (Eds.), *Schooling for a fair go* (pp. 97–114). Leichhardt, NSW: The Federation Press.

Hatton, E. (1995). Devolution and division: Lessons from New Zealand. In B. Limerick & H. Nielsen (Eds.), *School and community relations: Participation, policy and practice* (pp. 245–259). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.

Hayes, D., Mills, M., Christie, P., & Lingard, B. (2006). *Teachers and schooling making a difference: Productive pedagogies, assessment and performance*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henry, M. (1996). *Parent-school collaboration: Feminist organisational structures and school leadership*. New York: SUNY Press.

Henry, M., Knight, J., Lingard, R., & Taylor, S. (1988). *Understanding schooling: An introductory sociology of Australian education*. Sydney: Routledge.

Hey, V. (2003). *Identification & mortification in late modernity: New Labour; alpha femininities & their dis/contents*. Keynote Address at the 2003 International Conference of Gender & Education, University of Sheffield.

Hughes, P., & MacNaughton, G. (2000). Consensus, dissensus or community: The politics of parent involvement in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *1*(3), 241–258.

James, R. (2002). *Socioeconomic background and higher education participation: An analysis of school students' aspirations and expectations*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

James, R., Baldwin, G., Coates, H., Krause, K., & Mclnnis, C. (2004). *Analysis of equity groups in higher education 1991–2002*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

James, R., Wyn, J., Baldwin, G., Hepworth, G., Mclnnis, C., & Stephanou, A. (1999). *Rural and isolated school students and their higher education choices: A re-examination of student location, socioeconomic background, and educational advantage and disadvantage*. Canberra: National Board of Employment, Education and Training.

Jenkins, R. (2002). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Johnston, R. (2000). Whose side, whose research, whose learning, whose outcomes? Ethics, emancipatory research and unemployment. In H. Simons & R. Usher (Eds.), *Situated ethics in educational research* (pp. 69–81). London: Routledge.

Jordan, B., James, S., Kay, H., & Redley, M. (1992). *Trapped in poverty?: Labour-market decisions in low-income households*. London: Routledge.

Kalantzis, M., Cope, B., Noble, G., & Poynting, S. (1990). *Cultures of schooling: Pedagogies for cultural difference and social access*. London: The Falmer Press.

Karmel, P. (1973). *Schools in Australia. Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Keddie, A. (2005). A framework for gender justice: Evaluating the transformative capacities of three key Australian schooling initiatives. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *32*(3), 83–102.

Keddie, A. (2006). Negotiating and enabling spaces for gender justice. *Issues in Educational Research*, *16*(1), 21–37.

Kenway, J., & McLeod, J. (2004). Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and 'spaces of points of view': Whose reflexivity, which perspective? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*(4), 525–544.

Kenyon, P., & Black, A. (Eds.). (2001). *Small town renewal: Overview and case studies*. A report for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Canberra: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Kenyon, P., Sercombe, H., Black, A., & Lhuede, D. (2001). *Creating better educational and employment opportunities for rural young people: A report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme*. Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

Kilpatrick, S., & Abbott-Chapman, J. (2002). Rural young people's work/study priorities and aspirations: The influence of family social capital. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *29*(1), 43–67.

Kincheloe, J., & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 138–157). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Knight, J. (1994). Social justice and effective schooling. *Education Views*, *3*(8), 8.

Knight, T. (2000). *Longitudinal development of educational theory: Democracy and the classroom*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

Ladwig, J., & Gore, J. (1998). Nurturing democracy in schools. In J. Smyth, R. Hattam, & M. Lawson (Eds.), *Schooling for a fair go* (pp. 15–26). Leichhardt, NSW: The Federation Press.

Lamb, S., Dwyer, P., & Wyn, J. (2000). *Non-completion of school in Australia: The changing patterns of participation and outcomes* (Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report Number 16). Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Lamphere, L. (1993). *Structuring diversity: Ethnographic perspectives on the new immigration*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of Education*, *60*(2), 73–85.

Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. London: Falmer Press.

Lawler, S. (1999). 'Getting out and getting away': Women's narratives of class mobility. *Feminist Review*, *63*, 3–24.

Lenzo, K. (1995). Validity and self-reflexivity meet post-structuralism: Scientific ethos and the transgressive self. *Educational Researcher*, *52*(1), 17–23.

Lightfoot, S. L. (1978). *Worlds apart*. New York: Basic Books.

Lingard, B. (1998). The disadvantaged schools program: Caught between literacy and local management of schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *2*(1), 1–14.

Lingard, B., Hayes, D., & Mills, M. (2002). Developments in school-based management: The specific case of Queensland, Australia. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *40*(1), 6–30.

Lingard, B., Hayes, D., Mills, M., & Christie, P. (2003). *Leading learning: Making hope practical in schools*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., et al. (2001). *Queensland school reform longitudinal study: Submitted to education Queensland by school of education, university of Queensland*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Department of Education).

Lingard, B., Mills, M., & Hayes, D. (2000). Teachers, school reform and social justice: Challenging research and practice. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *27*(3), 99–116.

Lucey, H., & Walkerdine, V. (2000). Boys' underachievement: Social class and changing masculinities. In T. Cox (Ed.), *Combating educational disadvantage: Meeting the needs of vulnerable children* (pp. 37–52). London: Falmer Press.

Lupton, R. (2006). *How does place affect education?* London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Mahar, C. (1990). Pierre Bourdieu: The intellectual project. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 26–57). London: Macmillan.

Mahar, C., Harker, R., & Wilkes, C. (1990). The basic theoretical position. In R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes (Eds.), *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The practice of theory* (pp. 1–25). London: Macmillan.

Maude, A., & Hugo, G. (1992). Mining settlements in Australia. In C. Neil, M. Tykkyläinen, & J. Bradbury (Eds.), *Coping with closure: An international comparison of mine town experiences* (pp. 66–94). London: Routledge.

May, S. (1994). *Making multicultural education work*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

McClelland, A., Macdonald, F., & MacDonald, H. (1998). *Young people and the labour market disadvantage: The situation of young people not in education or full time work*. Paper presented at the Australia's youth: Reality and risk, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Sydney.

McGaw, B. (2006). *Achieving quality and equity education*. Lecture, The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, University of South Australia.

McInerney, P. (2002). *'We've changed the rules now': Counting and accounting for social justice in the devolved school*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane.

McLaren, P. (1994). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. New York: Longman.

McLeod, J. (2005). Feminists re-reading Bourdieu: Old debates and new questions about gender habitus and gender change. *Theory and Research in Education*, *3*(1), 11–30.

Middleton, M. (1995). Managing curriculum change collaboratively. In B. Limerick & H. Nielsen (Eds.), *School and community relations: Participation, policy and practice* (pp. 195–208). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.

Millwater, J., Yarrow, A., & Short, J. (2000). *Restructuring and reculturing schools: Addressing the data*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney.

Moss, G. (2002). Literacy and pedagogy in flux: Constructing the object of study from a Bernsteinian perspective. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *23*(4), 549–558.

Musgrave, F., & Taylor, P. M. (1969). *Society and the teacher's role*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Nash, R. (1990). Bourdieu on education and social and cultural reproduction. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *11*(4), 431–447.

Nash, R. (2002). The educated habitus, progress at school, and real knowledge. *Interchange*, *33*(1), 27–48.

Nash, R., & Prochnow, J. (2004). Is it really the teachers? An analysis of the discourses of teacher effects on New Zealand educational policy. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *39*(2), 175–192.

Newmann, F., & Associates. (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Josey Bass.

Nickel, J. W. (1987). Equal opportunity in a pluralistic society. In E. Frankel Paul, F. Miller, J. Paul, & J. Ahrens (Eds.), *Equal opportunity* (pp. 104–119). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Nixon, J., Allan, J., & Mannion, G. (2001). Educational renewal as democratic practice: 'new' community schooling in Scotland. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *5*(4), 329–352.

Nixon, J., Martin, J., McKeown, P., & Ranson, S. (1997). Towards a learning profession: Changing codes of occupational practice within the 'new' management of education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *18*(1), 5–28.

Nolan, K., & Anyon, J. (2004). Learning to do time: Willis's model of cultural reproduction in an era of postindustrialism, globalization, and mass incarceration. In N. Dolby, G. Dimitriadis, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Learning to labor in new times*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Oakes, J., Gamaron, A., & Page, R. (1991). Curriculum differentiation: Opportunities, outcomes, and meanings. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research in curriculum* (pp. 570–608). New York: Macmillan.

OECD. (2004). *Learning for tomorrow's world: First results from PISA 2003*. Paris: OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Ogbu, J. (1974). *The next generation*. New York: Academic Press.

Onyx, J., Wood, C., Bullen, P., & Osburn, L. (2005). Social capital: A rural youth perspective. *Youth Studies Australia*, *24*(4), 21–27.

Ozga, J., & Gewirtz, S. (1994). Sex, lies and audiotape: Interviewing the education policy elite. In D. Halpin & B. Troyna (Eds.), *Researching education policy: Ethical and methodological issues* (pp. 121–135). London: Falmer Press.

Pateman, C. (1989). Feminist critiques of the public/private dichotomy. In S. Benn & S. Gaus (Eds.), *Public and private in social life*. London: Croom Helm.

Pollitt, K. (2002). Pierre Bourdieu, 1930–2002. *The Nation*, *274*, 10.

Postone, M., LiPuma, E., & Calhoun, C. (1993). Introduction: Bourdieu and social theory. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, & M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical perspectives* (pp. 1–13). Cambridge: Polity.

Reay, D. (1995). 'They employ cleaners to do that': Habitus in the primary classroom. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *16*(3), 353–371.

Reay, D. (1998). Cultural reproduction: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling. In M. Grenfell & D. James (Eds.), *Bourdieu and education: Acts of practical theory* (pp. 55–71). London: Falmer Press.

Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*(4), 431–444.

Reay, D., David, M., & Ball, S. (2005). *Degrees of choice: Social class, race and gender in higher education*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Roberts, I. (1999). 'Bring 'em back alive'. In H. Beynon & P. Glavanis (Eds.), *Patterns of social inequality*. Harlow: Longman.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1990). Education reform strategies: Will they increase teacher commitment? In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now* (pp. 79–102). New York: Falmer Press.

Sammons, P., Hillman, J., & Mortimore, P. (1995). Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness research. In J. White & M. Barber (Eds.), *Perspectives on school effectiveness and school improvement* (pp. 77–124). London: Bedford Way Press.

Schirato, T., & Webb, J. (2003). Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity as metaliteracy. *Cultural Studies*, *17*(3/4), 539–552.

Schlechty, P. (1990). Schools for the twenty-first century: The conditions for invention. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now*. New York: Falmer Press.

Schmuck, R. A., & Schmuck, P. A. (1992). *Small districts, big problems: Making school everybody's house*. Newbury Park: Corwin Press.

Seddon, T. (1995). Defining the real: Context and beyond. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *8*(4), 393–405.

Slee, R. (1995). Education for all: Arguing principles or pretending agreement? *Australian Disability Review*, *2*, 3–19.

Slee, R., & Weiner, G. (1998). Introduction: School effectiveness for whom? In R. Slee, G. Weiner, & S. Tomlinson (Eds.), *School effectiveness for whom? Challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements* (pp. 1–9). London: Falmer Press.

Smyth, J., & Hattam, R. (2001). 'Voiced' research as a sociology for understanding 'dropping out' of school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *22*(3), 401–415.

Soliman, I. (1995). From involvement to participation: Six levels of school-community interaction. In B. Limerick & H. Nielsen (Eds.), *School and community relations: Participation, policy and practice* (pp. 159–173). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.

Spooner, B. (1998). A tale of two schools in one city: Foxwood and cross green. In R. Slee, G. Weiner, & S. Tomlinson (Eds.), *School effectiveness for whom? Challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements* (pp. 144–156). London: Falmer Press.

Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B., & Henry, M. (1997). *Educational policy and the politics of change*. London: Routledge.

Teese, R. (2000). *Academic success and social power: Examinations and inequality*. Carlton South: Melbourne University Press.

Teese, R. (2006). Condemned to innovate: Policy. *Griffith Review*, *11*, 150–159.

Teese, R., Nicholas, T., Polesel, J., & Helme, S. (2006). *The destinations of school leavers in Victoria: Report of the 2005 on track project*. Melbourne: Department of Education & Training.

Teese, R., & Polesel, J. (2003). *Undemocratic schooling: Equity and quality in mass secondary education in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Thompson, J. B. (1991). Editor's introduction. In P. Bourdieu (Ed.), *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.

Thomson, P. (2000). 'Like schools', educational 'disadvantage' and 'thisness'. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *27*(3): 157–172.

Thomson, P. (2001). The sound of one hand grasping at straws? Struggles for quality and equity in public school education. In P. Nursery-Bray & C. Lee-Bacchi (Eds.), *Left directions: Is there a third way?* (pp. 178–192). Perth: University of Western Australia Press.

Thrupp, M., & Lupton, R. (2006). Taking school contexts more seriously: The social justice challenge. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *54*(3), 308–328.

Todd, E. S., & Higgins, S. (1998). Powerlessness in professional and parent partnerships. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *19*(2), 227–236.

Tripp, D. (1998). Critical incidents in action inquiry. In G. Shacklock & J. Smyth (Eds.), *Being reflexive in critical educational and social research* (pp. 36–49). London: Falmer Press.

Troyna, B. (1995). Beyond reasonable doubt? Researching "race" in educational settings. *Oxford Review of Education*, *21*(4), 395–408.

Useem, E. L. (1992). Middle schools and math groups: Parents' involvement in children's placement. *Sociology of Education*, *65*(4), 263–279.

Vincent, C. (2001). Social class and parental agency. *Journal of Education Policy*, *16*(4), 347–364.

Vincent, C., & Martin, J. (2002). Class, culture and agency: Researching parental voice. *Discourse*, *23*(1), 108–128.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1993). Bourdieu in America: Notes on the transatlantic importation of social theory. In C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma, & M. Postone (Eds.), *Bourdieu: Critical perspectives* (pp. 235–262). Cambridge: Polity.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1998). Pierre Bourdieu. In R. Stones (Ed.), *Key sociological thinkers* (pp. 215–229). New York: New York University Press.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2002). An inventive and iconoclastic scientist. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, *47*, 177–186.

Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching*. New York: Wiley.

Walker, R. (1983). Three good reasons for not doing case studies in curriculum research. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *15*(2), 155–165.

Warner-Smith, P., & Lee, C. (2001). The life choices, aspirations and well-being of young rural women. *Youth Studies Australia*, *20*(3), 32–37.

Webb, J., Schirato, T., & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Wheeler, N., & Agruso, R. (1996). *Implementing school centered decision making*. Paper presented at the Summit on Education, Nashville, Tennessee.

Whitaker, K. S., & Moses, M. C. (1990). Teacher empowerment: A key to restructuring. *The Clearing House*, *64*(2), 127–130.

Williams, R. (1961). *The long revolution*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Wilson, S. (1977). The use of ethnographic techniques in educational research. *Review of Educational Research*, *47*, 245–265.

Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wood, C. J. (1984). Participatory decision-making: Why it doesn't seem to work. *Educational Forum*, *49*, 55–64.

Yates, L. (2002). Effectiveness, difference and sociological research. *Discourse*, *23*(3), 329–338.

Yates, L., & McLeod, J. (2000). Social justice and the middle. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *27*(3), 59–77.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Young, M. (2006). Reforming the further education and training curriculum: An international perspective. In M. Young & J. Gamble (Eds.), *Knowledge, curriculum and qualifications for South African further education*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.

Yonezawa, S. (2000). Unpacking the black box of tracking decisions: Critical tales of families navigating the course placement process. In M. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents* (pp. 109–137). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zipin, L. (2005). *The pedagogical challenge: Facing the aporetic madness of social justice*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, Parramatta.

Index